

European Social Fund - investment priority 2.2

Improving the labour market relevance of education and training systems, facilitating the transition from education to work, and strengthening vocational education and training systems and their quality, including through mechanisms for skills anticipation, adaptation of curricula and the establishment and development of work based learning systems, including dual learning systems and apprenticeship schemes.

ID	Specific Objective	Results that the Member States seek to achieve with Union support
2.2.1	To promote improvements in the labour market relevance of skills provision through active engagement with relevant institutions and employers, particularly SMEs and Micro businesses.	The additional support from this investment priority will enable the design of skills provision which will help individuals gain skills and qualifications relevant to the needs of the labour market.

Actions to be supported under this investment priority

To maximise its contribution to smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, ESF will support projects that make education and training provision more responsive to the needs of the economy, so that employers' skills needs are more quickly and more effectively met, and individuals receive better designed skills provision which equips them for the world of work. ESF will not fund activity that duplicates or cuts across national policy on grants and loans for tuition for skills activities. Exemptions to this principle will be considered only where a market failure has been demonstrated and where the activity falls within the scope of the Operational Programme.

Activities to be supported within this investment priority include:

- support for collaborative projects, placements, internships or other activities with SMEs that enable students and graduates to gain industry relevant experience and skills;
- building capacity in SMEs to provide project/placement/internship opportunities and enhance the contribution of advanced skills to SME growth, including programmes to specifically engage the most disadvantaged groups or those who face particular local disadvantages in utilising advanced skills;
- brokering opportunities to encourage and increase work experience, work placements, traineeships, apprenticeships, and graduate placements particularly through wider employer engagement and involving supply chains;

- promoting apprenticeships (especially at advanced levels in manufacturing and other priority sectors) by developing a supportive environment for employer engagement;
- developing better links with business to equip students with the skills to start and grow a business to meet local business needs.

Where appropriate, training may complement activities delivered within the thematic objectives relating to innovation, low carbon, climate change, ICT and SME competitiveness, especially where improving intermediate and advanced skills can contribute to these thematic objectives. The focus on SMEs complements ERDF priorities, reflects the lower level of leadership, management and enterprise skills in smaller businesses and takes account of the fact that larger businesses in the UK are already eligible for skills support.