

EU funding guide
for amusement parks
and attractions

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Foreword

As a vital part of tourism, the amusement parks and attractions industry contributes significantly to the entire European economy. Businesses represented in the membership of the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (IAAPA) are examples of investors, employers, innovators and often drivers for entire regional economies.

While the EU's competencies in the tourism area are limited, there are numerous policy issues that impact our business, VAT being one example. There are numerous EU funding opportunities too, which offer considerable resources and opportunities to the entire leisure and tourism sector.

At IAAPA, we recognize these opportunities and present this guide to help our members navigate the EU funding mechanisms. It is in the interest of the entire economy that our sector thrives and EU financial means can be a part of future growth.

This funding guide is intended to serve as an introduction to EU funding opportunities for businesses in the amusement park, attractions, tourism and leisure sectors and provide basic information necessary to get started with EU funds.

We gathered case studies to illustrate the use of funds. We share the stories of entities active in tourism that secured EU funding. The guide mentions a selection of major EU funding lines and lists practical information for applying and obtaining more details.



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1. Introduction

The EU provides funding for a broad range of projects and programmes covering areas where amusement parks and attractions are active.

Eligible actions may include fostering higher employment, combating youth unemployment or developing skills, so it is easy to find convergence between EU aims and the amusement park industry. IAAPA EMEA offers this guide to help members benefit from these opportunities.

This document introduces the EU funding mechanism, offers an overview of the most relevant EU funding lines and gives step-by-step instructions for applications.

2. EU funding in a nutshell

The EU's budget's¹ (€157.86 billion for 2017) large portion is spent through funds that are available through a broad range of projects, grants, tenders and contracts.

Amusement park & attraction operators, park groups, theming companies, in fact businesses of any size **are eligible** for EU funding. As are entrepreneurs and companies of any size or sector, NGOs, researchers and individuals. The most relevant fields where funding is available are: Employment and social inclusion, urban and regional development, agriculture and rural development, maritime affairs and fisheries, research and innovation and humanitarian aid.

Amusement park & attraction operators, park groups, theming companies, businesses of any size are eligible for EU funding.

The financial packages vary, but there are three important common principles:

- The funding only supplements other funding – the EU **will not fund 100% of a project**
- Their objective is **not to create profit**, but to help the beneficiary strike a financial balance
- Funding **cannot be granted retroactively** for activities that have already been finished

The added value of EU funds – besides the financial incentive – is the trust and confidence they bring. Financing a project which involves EU funding is regarded as an achievement as the selection is prudent, the process thorough and the competition tough. EU funding often encourages other partners to express interest in collaboration and broadens the horizons of beneficiaries.

3. Funding opportunities

There are five main EU funds that potentially offer opportunities to the amusement park & attractions industry.

National and regional authorities play a crucial role in managing and selecting the beneficiaries of EU funds.

Most of these funds are under so called 'shared management' - run in partnership with national and regional authorities (some 80% of EU funds are managed like this). Consequently, national ministries play a crucial role in managing and selecting the beneficiaries of many EU funds.

¹ The EU budget is **funded** from three main sources: Member State contributions, based on a percentage of their Gross National Income. Import duties on goods entering from outside the EU. A percentage of each Member State's national VAT rate.

The five main EU funds are commonly known as the “European Structural and Investment Funds” (ESIF):

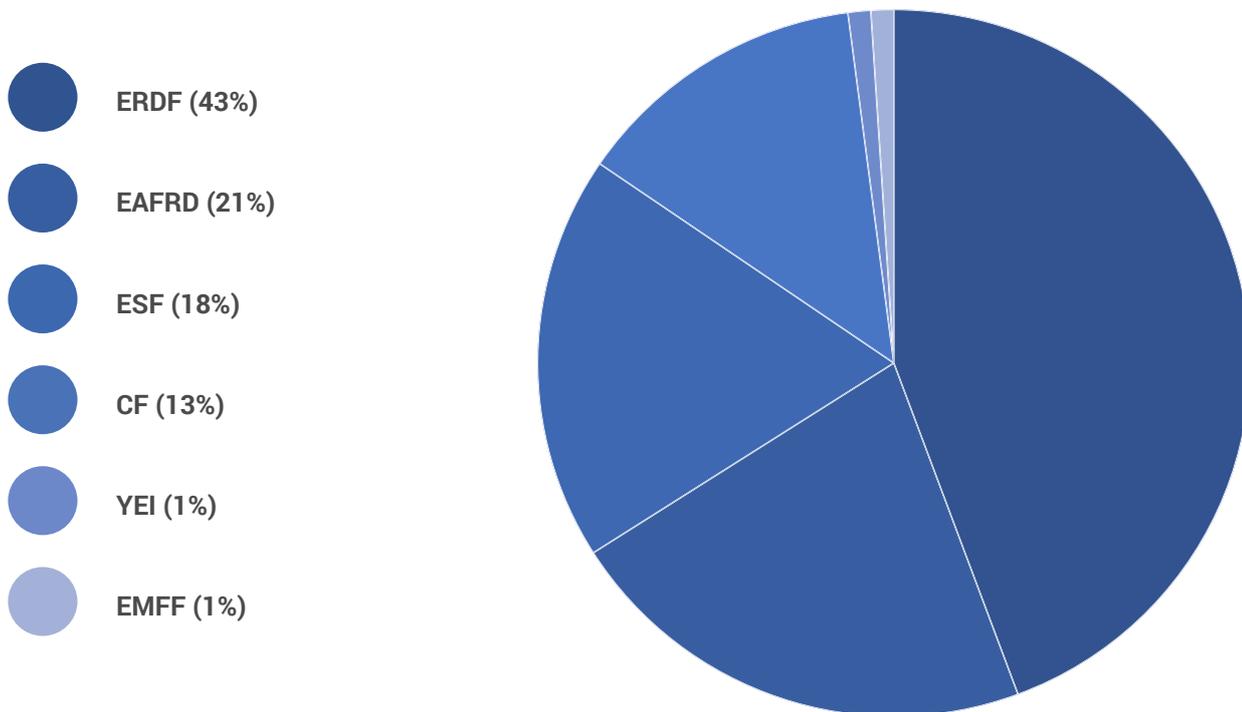
- [The European Regional Development Fund \(ERDF\)](#) - correcting imbalances between EU’s regions
- [The European Social Fund \(ESF\)](#) - employment and education
- [The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development \(EAFRD\)](#)
- [The European Maritime and Fisheries Fund \(EMFF\)](#) - sustainable fishing practices
- [The Cohesion Fund \(CF\)](#) - economic convergence of regions within the EU – for Member States whose Gross National Income (GNI) per inhabitant is less than 90 % of the EU average

Other noteworthy funds include:

- [Youth Employment Initiative \(YEI\)](#) - supports young people in regions where youth unemployment was higher than 25% in 2012
- [European Fund for Strategic Investments \(EFSI\)](#) mobilizes private investment in projects of strategic importance for the EU – run jointly by the European Investment Bank (EIB and the Commission

EU funding mechanisms seem complicated at first. Funds break down further into several dimensions with numerous sets of priority axis, operational programmes, regional action plans, inter-regional plans, multi-annual action plans and priority areas creating an interlinking web of calls, grants, tenders etc. Each funding line may require considerably different procedures, with varying timelines.

Chart 1: Main EU Funds, 2014 - 2020



Source: European Commission

The next section contains more information for the ERDF, ESF and the EFSI. It provides useful information on who can apply, how, the fund’s priorities and for each of the three funds separately.

3.1. The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)

The European Regional Development Fund ([ERDF](#)) is one of the five European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF). ERDF support may go to 11 “thematic objectives and investment priorities”, here are a few selected ones that could apply to attractions & parks:

- Shift to a low-carbon economy
- Employment and support for labour mobility
- Education, skills and lifelong learning

*Over €196 billion
available*

3.1.1. Activities eligible for funding under ERDF

- The development of tourism services in peripheral regions dependent on tourism
- The development of high value-added products and services in niche markets (ecotourism, health, cultural, gastronomic and sports tourism, etc.)
- The development of tourism-related ICT products (apps, data mining, ...)
- Measures to improve energy efficiency at parks
- Promotion of entrepreneurship and vocational training activities.



3.1.2. Where and how to apply?

With your national authority, the so-called ‘managing authority’ (could be ministries, municipalities and similar regional/national authorities). Here is a comprehensive [list](#) (select your country).

*Your application starts with
the national authorities*

You might be eligible for (ERDF) funding if you believe your facility could participate in a project within the above-mentioned priorities and activities. To discover concrete funding calls, you get in touch with your local managing authority.

This section offers an example for the procedure, which might be slightly different across EU Member States.

The managing authorities draw up multi-annual Operational Programmes (OP) - detailed plans in which they decide how will EU money be spent during a certain period. They can be drawn up for a specific region or a country-wide thematic goal (e.g. Environment). OPs can bring together projects and funding from other funding lines too (e.g. European Cohesion Fund, Social Fund etc.).

Find the relevant authority

Park operators interested in regional (ERDF) EU funding can find their most relevant managing authority [here](#) and browse through [available programmes \(OPs\)](#) divided according to EU Member States. It is possible to filter the programmes according to keywords (e.g. tourism).

There are great many transnational and [interregional \(InterReg\) projects](#) too (e.g. Alpine Space, Danube region, or the below example from the Czech/German border region; see case study on next page).

Identify relevant opportunities

Managing authorities usually set up a website dedicated to the programme/fund which serves as the central information and reference point for all involved.

See, this example from Baden-Württemberg in Germany:

Managing Authority	Ministry for Rural Areas and Consumer Protection (Ministerium für Ländlichen Raum und Verbraucherschutz Baden-Württemberg Referat 40 EFRE);
Operational Programme	Innovation and energy transformation (2014-2020)
Website	https://efre-bw.de/
List of open opportunities	https://efre-bw.de/foerderaufrufe/

The managing authorities publish:

- Current calls for proposals; results of past calls
- Application documents
- Manuals and instructions
- General information about the programmes and calls

They provide general support to local entities to get involved. Some managing authorities accept applications on an ongoing basis, others at certain times only.

3.1.3. Who can apply from the amusement & attractions sector?

All legal persons (any public body, company and in particular SMEs, tourism clusters ...)

3.1.4. Getting help

Your local/regional authority is the point of contact for all funding related inquiries.

3.1.5. ERDF case studies

3.1.5.1. Case study: SuperPark, Kainuu, Finland

Jump-started by EU's Regional Development Fund (ERDF), SuperPark is a concept allowing the entire family to enjoy memorable moments together. Taneli Sutinen, the concept's founder's vision was a place where he as a parent could join his kids at play instead of waiting for them sipping coffee. Founded in 2012 in Kainuu - rural Finland - the park is now a network of eleven 'all in one multi- activity park' across the country and opening branches in Sweden, France, China and beyond. The first international park opened in December 2017 in Kong Kong.

According to Taneli, Kainuu is an area of Finland, where endurance gives rise to ingenuity and creativity. A significant proportion of the startup capital was provided by the European Rural Development Fund. The total content investment was €1.500.000 and other development investment (outsourced services, salaries etc) was €363.600 while **the EU contributed €706.800**.

More about SuperPark [here](#).

3.1.5.2. Blackpool. UK: Multimillion pound revamp to boost tourism

Blackpool used European Regional Development Funding (ERDF) over the past decade to fund **major infrastructure projects**, the Tower Headland development including the creation of an events space outside the Tower and ensuring the town's trams stay on track.

As part of this package, **£14 million** of ERDF went towards the acquisition and internal rejuvenation of the famous tourism landmarks such as **Blackpool's Tower**, Winter Gardens and the Golden Mile Centre in 2010.

The ERDF also **contributed £2.667m towards the resort's Tower Festival Headland Enhancements and 703,000 towards sea defences (Parade 5)**.

The investment partially came from the [Northwest European Regional Development Fund, managed by the Northwest Regional Development Agency \(NWDA\)](#) responsible for managing the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) programme.

3.1.5.3. Case study: 'Golden Road' History Park on the German/Czech border

This history park project boosted tourism in the region when it opened in 2011. The total investment was €4.185.301 while **the EU contributed €2.948.575**. It now welcomes more than 20 000 visitors annually. The park spreads awareness about life under king Charles IV and the shared Bavarian-Bohemian history.

Coordinators: Bavarian State Ministry for Economic Affairs and Media, Energy and Technology (Bayerisches Staatsministerium für Wirtschaft und Medien, Energie und Technologie)

Beneficiaries: Via Carolina e.V.

3.1.5.4. Case study: Dudley Canal & Tunnel Trust in UK, West Midlands

[Dudley Canal Tunnel and Limestone Mines](#) has embarked on a master plan of improvement activities that will attract thousands of extra visitors every year, adding to the already impressive tourism regeneration plans at nearby attractions Dudley Zoological Gardens and the Black Country Living Museum.

Work includes a new visitor Portal where you can learn more about the history and importance of the canal tunnels and mines. A new canal bridge will also be built to connect the Portal and towpaths with the Black Country Living Museum. **£997,104 of ERDF money has assisted the redevelopment of the site**, which included making safe an underground void left by historic mine workings and removing asbestos contaminated soil. In total **11 new jobs have been created**.

Beneficiary: Dudley Canal Trust (Trips) Ltd.

3.1.5.5. Case study: Co-financing the creation of a new ride in Le Pal, France

French amusement park Le Pal embarked on a €10 million investment to create a new ride in the park. The park applied for funding from the local and regional governments, as well as from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), which is linked to the regional government.

The local government opted to fund improvements to the access road to Le Pal, while the Regional Government participated with €400,000 and the ERDF with €1.6 million, bringing the total funding up to €2 million. This was part of the total €10 million investment financing, which brought numerous benefits for the local community: new jobs were created and local companies were employed to work on the installation of the ride. Moreover the increase in visitor numbers resulted in more work for local businesses, in addition to Le Pal contributing more to public funds through higher tax liabilities.

3.2. European Social Fund (ESF)

- One of the five European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF)
- Disseminated in form of **grants**
- Projects must be co-financed; maximum EU contribution of 50% to 85% (95% in exceptional cases) of the total project costs depending on the relative wealth of the region (“More developed regions”, “Transitions regions” or “Less developed regions”)

3.2.1. Activities eligible for funding under ESF

- Supports staff training in case of restructuring or a **lack of qualified workers**
- Helps people in difficulty or from disadvantaged groups to get trainings, better skills and jobs

Aims vary according to Member States and its socio-economic situation, for example:

- **Germany** is deploying ESF funding to address the challenge of **skills shortages** and an ageing population
- ESF investment in **Slovakia** aims to **boost employment** among its young people and improve education and training opportunities.

3.2.2. Where and how to apply?

At your local EU Member State authority, typically national ministries or regional authorities.

A complete list of contact details of European and national point persons is available [here](#). This includes the name and contact details of the person running the European Social Fund in that country.

For Germany, for instance, [here is the list](#) which includes the ESF person responsible for Germany at the European Commission; lists all the ESF contact persons in each of the German Federal Ministries (the ones that are eligible). Finally, it lists all the contact person on State level.

3.2.3. Who can apply from the amusement & attractions sector?

All legal persons active in the labour market or in the fields of education & training (e.g. SMEs, chamber of commerce, trade union, foundation, NGO, ...).

3.3. European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI)

The European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) is an initiative launched jointly by the European Commission and the EIB Group (European Investment Bank and European Investment Fund) to help overcome the current investment gap in the EU by mobilising private financing for strategic investments. The fund may support:

3.3.1. Activities eligible for funding under EFSI

- Strategic infrastructure including digital, transport and energy
- Education, research, development and innovation
- Expansion of renewable energy and resource efficiency
- Support for smaller businesses and midcap companies

Type of tourism-related actions eligible for funding:

Any type of useful transaction or investment for the development of legitimate (SMEs) activities. Everywhere in the EU, including cross-border projects (no geographic quotas). Such activities may for instance focus on:

- Travel infrastructures (regional airports, ports, ...)
- Energy efficiency of hotels and tourism resorts
- Revitalisation of brown fields for recreational purposes
- Tourism SME financing agreements⁷
- Setting up “Investment platforms” (IPs) dedicated to tourism

3.3.2. Where and how to apply?

For loans or bank guarantees, apply to the [financial intermediaries](#) (commercial banks, ...) supported by EFSI (see [access to finance](#)).

3.3.3. Who can apply from the amusement & attractions sector?

All legal persons (any public body, company and in particular SMEs, research organisations, universities, non-governmental organisations, tourism clusters ...) via financial intermediaries.

3.3.4. EFSI case study

3.3.4.1 Case study: Framework loan to improve the energy efficiency of hotels and tourist resorts?

In November 2015, EIB decided to grant a € 500 mil. credit line to the “Caisse des Dépôts” and its agent the “Société pour le logement intermédiaire” (SLI) to finance their affordable rental housing construction programme.

The SLI Group can use this credit line over 5 years to fund loans of up to 25 years. The objective is to build 13.000 affordable rental housing units in areas where there is a shortage by 2019. The SLI will finance small scale projects (less than € 50 mil) for new homes that will fall into the “Nearly Zero Energy Building” category. The energy savings will help householders to repay their loans.

Third-party financing companies for energy efficiency renovation of private housing in the Île-de-France also got EFSI financing (€ 100 mil to “SEM Energies Posit’If”). This will fund the insulation of the buildings and windows as well as renovation of the heat generation and distribution system in the buildings, ventilation systems, and electric appliances which are part of the joint tenancy area (lights, pumps, etc.). The use of renewable energies (e.g. biomass or solar thermal collectors) may also be included in the works.

The aggregation of a lot of small projects at a regional or national level could also be an option for ageing hotels and tourism resorts that are not energy efficient.

EU contribution: € 500 mil (approved Feb 2016) - Level of EU funding: 33 %

4. Types of funding and their management

There are several types of funding opportunities: Grants, loans, guarantees, subsidies and prizes; and three EU funding management modes: direct, indirect and shared (the latter most relevant for amusement and attractions):

Direct management

The European Commission manages the projects through its departments: awarding grants, transferring funds, monitoring activities, selecting contractors, etc.

The directly managed grants often serve to achieve specific policy objectives like research or education. Some might be relevant for businesses in the amusement parks and attractions sector. Example of noteworthy open calls²:

- [Open call for expressions of interest for the establishment of a pool of experts to be potentially members of the Panel for the Union action "European Capital of Culture"](#)
- [Preparatory action "Open micro-business models for innovation in European family-owned heritage houses"](#)

Note: The European Commission publishes the names of the beneficiaries awarded under directly managed funds.

Indirect management - programmes carried out by non-EU countries, international organisations, development agencies and other bodies

Shared management – the European Commission delegates the management of certain programmes to EU countries under **shared management agreements**. The European Commission and each country prepare a management agreement, setting out how the funds will be used during a funding period (typically covered by a multiannual financial framework, currently 2014 to 2020).

In practice, some 80 % of EU funding is managed under shared management.

EU countries then assign the management of EU funding mainly to managing authorities such as ministries and other public bodies. These institutions are responsible for organising and publishing calls for proposals or tender procedures.

² Retrieved 14th August 2017

About IAAPA

The International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (IAAPA) is the largest international trade association for permanently situated amusement facilities worldwide. Our mission is to serve the membership by promoting safe operations, global development, professional growth, and commercial success of the amusement parks and attractions industry.

IAAPA has been supporting the European industry since 2001 and established a Europe, Middle East and Africa - EMEA office in 2008. Ever since, we are the voice of the European amusement park and attractions industry with over 1.400 European members. Membership ranges from large amusement park groups and ride manufacturers to small operators, family entertainment centers and suppliers. This diversity of membership is reflected in the board that oversees the association's activities.

IAAPA EMEA's flagship event is the Euro Attractions Show (EAS), the biggest and most significant trade show and conference in the European attractions industry calendar.

For further information

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