



Complementarity and Consistency with other EU Financial Instruments

European Social Fund support to social partners in the 2007-2013 period

1. Introduction

Three Community financial instruments managed by DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities can be used to support social partners activities - the **European Social Fund** (ESF), three autonomous budget headings exclusively dedicated to the **support of the European social dialogue**, and the **Community Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity - PROGRESS**

The objective of complementarity and consistency is highlighted in Art. 9(2) of the General Regulation and in Art. 15(2) of the PROGRESS Decision¹.

*Article 9 (2) of the General Regulation
(Council Regulation (EC) 1083/2006)*

The Commission and the Member States shall ensure that assistance from the Funds is consistent with the activities, policies and priorities of the Community and complementary to other financial instruments of the Community. This consistency and complementarity shall be indicated in particular in Community strategic guidelines on cohesion, in the national strategic reference framework and in the operational programme.

Article 15 (2) of Decision No 1672/2006/EC establishing PROGRESS

The Commission and the Member States shall ensure consistency and complementarity and the absence of duplication between activities under the Programme and other relevant Union and Community actions, in particular under the Structural Funds, especially the European Social Fund.

This note aims at proposing an approach to deal with the potential (or perceived) risk of funding duplication. However, rather than focus on risk of funding duplication or overlapping, it is proposed to emphasise the opportunity for a synergetic approach. A structured mechanism, based on transparency, is proposed in order to achieve the objectives of complementarity and consistency. This mechanism would, at the same time, aim at avoiding any duplication of funding of the same action.

¹. Decision n°1672/2006 24 October - OJ 15 November.06

2. ESF Support to social partners

For 2007-2013, the ESF is expected to spend over €10 billion a year across all Member States with the objective of improving people's skills and job prospects.

The ESF Regulation reinforces both the importance and the responsibility of social partners in the accomplishment of the Lisbon Strategy objectives in the European Union (EU): **achieving growth and jobs**. Art. 3.1(e) includes explicitly partnerships at the level of beneficiaries in the scope of ESF intervention:

*Article 3.1 (e)
promoting partnerships, pacts and initiatives through networking of relevant stakeholders, such as the social partners and non-governmental organisation, at the trans-national, national, regional and local levels in order to mobilise for reforms in the field of employment and labour market inclusiveness*

Moreover, the new ESF priority "strengthening institutional capacity and the efficiency of public administrations and services" (Art. 3.2(b)) provides support for the creation of partnerships with a view to reforms, better regulation and good governance.

Despite the unquestionable positive developments, there is still scope for further improvement of the capacity of social partners to take part in social dialogue and in social, labour market and economic governance, notably in Convergence Regions.

In Convergence regions where the need to further improve the capacity of social partners to take part in the economic and social governance is acute, Art. 5.3§2 foresees that an appropriate amount of resources, shall be allocated to support to social partners organisations as well as to actions jointly undertaken by organisations representing both sides of industry.

*Article 5.3§2
Under the Convergence objective, an appropriate amount of ESF resources shall be allocated to capacity-building, which shall include training, networking measures, strengthening the social dialogue and activities jointly undertaken by the social partners, in particular as regards adaptability of workers and enterprises referred to in Article 3(1)(a)*

Over the 2007-2013 programming period Member States and regions have allocated about €1.2 billion of ESF support to social partners, accounting for a significant share of the ESF funds committed in their Operational Programmes. ESF funds will be used to support capacity building activities and actions jointly undertaken by social partners. In addition to funds specifically allocated to social partners, the ESF Operational Programmes provide also for support to a wide range of measures for which social partners are eligible as promoters or partners.

3. Commission specific financial support to European social dialogue

There are three budget headings dedicated specifically to the support of social dialogue at European level:

- 04.03.03.01 Industrial Relations and Social Dialogue;
- 04.03.03.02 Information and Training Measures for Workers Organisations;
- 04.03.03.03 Information, consultation and participation of representatives of undertakings.

The social dialogue budget headings are clearly complementary to the ESF funding possibilities. They focus on the European dimension. The measures financed under these budget headings are carried out by social partners and are often linked to the joint work programmes in their European social dialogue. They enable exchange of information

and experience, negotiations, the development of joint tools, dissemination, research etc. with a genuine trans-national dimension. Due to the annuality of the budget, the activities are carried out on a project basis. Operational costs of social dialogue structures are not eligible.

Synergies should be sought by all stakeholders. For example the dissemination of the results of projects/actions supported by the social dialogue budget headings could be supported in the framework of the ESF. In particular, measures for the implementation of European Social Dialogue outcomes at national and regional level could be supported by the ESF². However, as long as they involve partners in several countries simultaneously with the involvement of a European social partner organisation dissemination and implementation projects could be co-financed from the budget heading "Industrial Relations and Social Dialogue". The calls for proposals [under the budget headings 04.03.03.01 and 04.03.03.02] state explicitly that "national capacity-building activities which could be funded from the European Social Fund (Regulation (EC) No 1081/2006 on the European Social Fund, Article 5(3)§2) are not eligible."

4. Community Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity - PROGRESS³

PROGRESS ultimate objective is to ensure that "Member States implement laws, policies and practices in a manner that contributes to the desired outcomes of the Social Agenda".

PROGRESS mission is to strengthen the EU contribution in support of Member States' commitments and efforts to create more and better jobs and to build a more cohesive society. To that effect, PROGRESS will be instrumental in providing analysis and policy advice on PROGRESS policy areas; monitoring and reporting on the implementation of EU legislation and policies in PROGRESS policy areas; promoting policy transfer, learning and support among Member States on EU objectives and priorities; and relaying the views of the stakeholders and society at large.

The areas for intervention are employment; social protection and inclusion; working conditions; antidiscrimination and diversity; and gender equality.

PROGRESS is open to all public and/or private bodies, actors and institutions, like: Member States; public employment services and their agencies; local and regional authorities, NGOs and social partners.

Examples of concrete activities might include:

- Europe-wide studies such as research on health and safety at work, collecting statistics on the number of workplace accidents and diseases, EU survey on Income and Living condition, or European Labour Force Surveys;
- European observatories such as the European Employment Observatory (EEO);
- Training of legal and policy practitioners;
- Networks of national experts such as legal experts to exchange and discuss issues raised by EU employment law and its application, by EU anti-discrimination or gender equality laws;
- EU networks of NGOs fighting social exclusion and discrimination on grounds of racial origin, age and disability or promoting gender equality;
- Public awareness campaigns on EU social and employment policies and laws.

PROGRESS will focus its interventions on actions that demonstrate their link with the Social Agenda; are aligned with the mission and outcomes of PROGRESS; are consistent with the objectives and priorities of the relevant policy area(s) concerned and are listed as eligible activities under PROGRESS programme. Such a deliberate focus should mitigate the risk of potential duplication with the ESF and thus ensure consistency and complementarity of EU intervention in employment and social fields.

2. By way of example, European Social Dialogue outcomes are the framework of actions on gender equality or the framework agreement on work-related stress at the cross-industry level, or the code of conduct and ethics for the private security sector at the sectoral level.

3. More information on PROGRESS: http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/progress/index_en.html

5. Conclusion

The above analysis points to the need for setting up a mechanism ensuring that no duplication of funding of the same action occurs and that synergies are developed between the different financial instruments.

It is proposed to regularly inform ESF managing authorities of the activities, including funding, developed under social dialogue budget headings and PROGRESS. ESF managing authorities will in turn be responsible for ensuring consistency between EU funding and ESF financing within their geographical area of responsibility.

Proposed mechanism

For EU social dialogue budget headings and PROGRESS the Commission will forward to the relevant ESF managing authorities in each Member State by 31st March of year n+1 a list of beneficiaries (lead promoters) in year n (including project title, project timing and amount of EU support).

The above text is available at:

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/esf/fields/partnership_en.htm



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