

Open public consultation for the mid-term evaluation of the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI)

Background of the EU programme for Employment and Social Innovation

EaSI¹ supports the Member States in their efforts to implement employment and social reforms at European, national, regional and local level by means of policy coordination and sharing of best practices. EaSI also helps the European Commission to increase the policy coherence and the impact of its instruments, and thus to contribute to meeting the Europe 2020 targets.

EaSI incorporates and extends the coverage of three previous programmes, namely the Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity (Progress), European Employment Services (EURES) and the European Progress Microfinance Facility.

As of January 2014, these programmes form the three axes of EaSI supporting:

- The PROGRESS axis focuses on providing support to policy-making and implementation process through production of policy evidence, organisation of information sharing and mutual learning activities, creating better conditions for social policy innovation projects and providing capacity building support to EU and national organisations (61% of the total budget).
- The EURES axis aims to improve the geographical mobility in the EU through making information on placements more transparent and accessible as well as funding the actual services for jobseekers and employers (18% of the total budget).
- The microfinance and social entrepreneurship axis aims to improve access to finance for vulnerable people, micro- and social enterprises through funding for financial intermediaries and capacity building of relevant actors (21% of the total budget).

The total budget for 2014-2020 is EUR 919,469,000 in 2013 prices.

The EaSI programme is built around five objectives²:

- 1) strengthen ownership among policy-makers at all levels, and produce concrete, coordinated and innovative actions at both Union and Member State level, in respect of the Union objectives in the fields referred to in Article 1 of EU Regulation 1296/2013, in close collaboration with the social partners, as well as civil society organisations and public and private bodies;
- 2) support the development of adequate, accessible and efficient social protection systems and labour markets and facilitate policy reform, in the fields referred to in Article 1 of EU Regulation 1296/2013, notably by promoting decent work and working conditions, a prevention culture for health and safety at work, a healthier balance between professional and private life and good governance for social objectives, including convergence, as well as mutual learning and social innovation;
- 3) ensure that Union law on matters relating to the fields referred to in Article 1 of EU Regulation 1296/2013 is effectively applied, and, where necessary, contribute to modernising Union law, in line with decent work principles and taking into account the Smart Regulation principles;
- 4) promote workers' voluntary geographical mobility on a fair basis and boost employment opportunities by developing high-quality and inclusive Union labour markets that are open and accessible to all, while respecting workers' rights throughout the Union, including freedom of movement;

¹ Relevant information related to EaSI programme is available on the European Commission website: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1081>.

² Article 4 of the REGULATION (EU) No 1296/2013 of 11 December 2013: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2013:347:0238:0252:EN:PDF>.

- 5) promote employment and social inclusion by increasing the availability and accessibility of microfinance for vulnerable people who wish to start up a micro-enterprise as well as for existing micro-enterprises, and by increasing access to finance for social enterprises.

The EaSI general objectives are supported by following cross-cutting activities:

- 1) pay particular attention to vulnerable groups, such as young people;
- 2) promote equality between women and men, including through gender mainstreaming and, where appropriate, gender budgeting;
- 3) combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation;
- 4) promote a high-level of quality and sustainable employment, guarantee adequate and decent social protection, combat long-term unemployment and fight against poverty and social exclusion.

The purpose of this public consultation is to ensure that the general public, beneficiaries of EaSI and organisations involved in the planning and deliver of EaSI have a say on its future design and the assessment of how useful EaSI has been with regard to the following criteria:

- **Relevance:** assessing the extent to which the EaSI programme is relevant in respect to needs, problems and issues identified in target groups.
- **Effectiveness:** examining the extent to which EaSI has progressed towards its general objectives and its horizontal provisions (Articles 4 of the EaSI Regulation), as well as those specifically defined for PROGRESS (Article 15 of the EaSI Regulation), EURES (Article 20), and Microfinance and Social Entrepreneurship (Article 26 of the EaSI Regulation).
- **Efficiency:** determining whether the intended outputs and outcomes of EaSI have been achieved efficiently, and to what extent flexibility, adjustment and follow-up conditions are being set.
- **Coherence:** assessing to what extent the programme's activities have been coherent with other interventions with similar objectives.
- **EU added-value:** the additional value resulting from the EaSI programme compared to what could be achieved by Member States at national, regional and local levels.

The results of this public consultation will be used to support the mid-term evaluation of the EaSI programme.