



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion DG

Europe 2020: Social Policies

Active Ageing, Pensions, Healthcare, Social Services

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Budget line: 04 04 01 02

VP/2013/013

Support for the design of reform strategies for more cost-effective social protection systems

Questions should be sent by e-mail to:

empl-vp-2013-013-1@ec.europa.eu

To ensure a more rapid response it is helpful if applicants send their queries in English, French or German.

The English version of the call is the original.

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1. BACKGROUND

1.1. The PROGRESS programme

PROGRESS¹ is the EU employment and social solidarity programme, set up for the period 2007-2013 to provide financial support for the attainment of the European Union's objectives in employment, social affairs and equal opportunities and of the Europe 2020 Strategy. This new strategy, which has a strong social dimension, aims at turning the EU into a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy delivering high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion. The European Union needs coherent and complementary contributions from different policy strands, methods and instruments, including the PROGRESS programme, to support the Member States in delivering on the Europe 2020's goals.

The PROGRESS mission is to strengthen the EU's contribution in support of Member States' commitments and efforts to create more and better jobs and to build a more cohesive society. To this effect, PROGRESS is 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.

More specifically, PROGRESS supports:

- The implementation of the European Employment Strategy (section 1);
- The implementation of the open method of coordination in the field of social protection and inclusion (section 2);
- The improvement of the working environment and conditions including health and safety at work and reconciling work and family life (section 3);
- The effective implementation of the principle of non-discrimination and promotion of its mainstreaming in all EU policies (section 4);
- The effective implementation of the principle of gender equality and promotion of its mainstreaming in all EU policies (section 5).

¹ Decision No 1672/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 October 2006 establishing a Community Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity — Progress, JO L 315 of 15.11.2006

New EU Programme for Social Change and Innovation (PSCI)

As PROGRESS is ending in 2013, the Commission has adopted its proposal² for a new programme on the 6th of October 2011, the Programme for Social Change and Innovation (PSCI).³ This new programme should come into effect on 1st January 2014.

The Commission's proposal on PSCI integrates and extends the coverage of three existing programmes: Progress (Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity), EURES (European Employment Services) and the European Progress Microfinance Facility. The general objectives of the programme are defined as below:

- (a) Strengthen ownership of the Union objectives in the employment, social and working conditions fields among key Union and national policy-makers, as well as other interested parties in order to bring about concrete and coordinated actions at both Union and Member State level.
- (b) Support the development of adequate, accessible and efficient social protection systems and labour markets and facilitate policy reform, by promoting good governance, mutual learning and social innovation.
- (c) Modernise Union law in line with the Smart Regulation principles and ensure that Union law on matters relating to working conditions is effectively applied.
- (d) Promote workers' geographical mobility and boost employment opportunities by developing Union labour markets that are open and accessible to all.
- (e) Promote employment and social inclusion by increasing the availability and accessibility of microfinance for vulnerable groups and micro-enterprises, and by increasing access to finance for social enterprises.

The PROGRESS axe of PSCI is foreseen to continue the current activities of PROGRESS (i.e. policy coordination, sharing of best practices, capacity-building and testing innovative policies). It would also increase its contribution to social policy experimentation and to the identification of good practices, the aim being to up-scale the most successful measures with the support of the new European Social Fund.

All activities commencing after the 1st of January 2014 under this contract will have to take into consideration the changes related to the new Programme and will have to satisfy with the implementing conditions of PSCI including in term of monitoring and evaluation. The Commission might change the objectives, activities, specifications and deliverables of the contract accordingly, during the extension for 2014 and onwards.

² COM(2011) 609 final

³ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2011:0609:FIN:EN:PDF>

The present call for proposals is issued in the context of the implementation of the 2013 annual work plan which can be consulted at <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=987>

1.2. The policy context

The European social model is characterised by large-scale, and in most cases publicly organised and financed social protection systems. EU Member States spend almost 30% of their GDP (2010) on social protection, typically representing more than half of total government expenditure. These high levels of social protection spending are an integral part of the functioning of high-performance social market economies.

However, the challenges posed by the economic crisis and the demographic changes have led to growing pressure on public budgets, and the impact of social protection on the stability of public finance has developed into a common concern at EU level. Forming the single biggest budget item, social protection spending is often a main target in recent consolidation efforts. While such cuts can reduce expenditures in the short term, they could result in a deterioration of public finances in the longer term if they result in reduced investment in human capital or preventive measures. Consolidation efforts should therefore primarily target inefficiencies of social protection systems, while preserving their effectiveness in terms of contributing to cohesive growth.

In response to these challenges, the European Commission has launched the *Social Investment Package (SIP)*⁴ to support Member States in the modernisation of their social protection systems. The SIP calls for reforms that focus on improvements in the effectiveness and efficiency of social protection spending and financing, rather than on simple cuts in benefits and services. Though social policies are primarily the competence of Member States, the EU supports the necessary reform processes, in particular through continued performance monitoring and the sharing of best practices in the context of the Open Method of Coordination on social protection and social inclusion (social OMC) and the European Semester, as well as through the provision of financial support to Member States and relevant stakeholders in the social field.

2. OBJECTIVES AND EXPECTED OUTPUTS

2.1. Objectives

Social protection systems in the EU differ significantly in the level, composition and type of spending, their sources of financing, and the outcomes they achieve. For instance, Member States do not place the same emphasis on different functions of social protection, different types of benefits (cash

⁴ <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1044&langId=en>

transfers and in-kind benefits, means-tested versus universal schemes), and use different methods for financing social protection.⁵

The wide range of existing social protection spending and financing arrangements is associated with heterogeneous social and economic outcomes across Member States. This diversity also represents an important source for knowledge sharing and mutual learning. The purpose of this call for proposals is to help Member States review various aspects of their social protection systems to identify potentials for improved cost-effectiveness, including by strengthening the systems' social investment orientation.⁶ The grants should contribute to reforms aimed at the delivery of adequate and universal social protection at the lowest possible budgetary cost and with the greatest possible positive impact on employment and growth, thereby making the schemes more sustainable under adverse budgetary and demographic conditions.

Overall, projects are expected to generate knowledge and evidence that help steer national reform programmes. While all social protection functions⁷ can be addressed under this call, policy areas and reform needs that have been identified in the European Semester process and highlighted in the country specific recommendations are considered particularly relevant.

2.2. Expected Outputs and Potential Project Formats

Grants awarded under this call will allow Member States to access experience and expertise from other countries and international organisations. The grants could be used in particular for

- the analysis of the cost-effectiveness of (parts of) the social protection system. Such a "check-up" should take interdependencies within the country's tax-benefit system as well as wider socio-economic impacts (on employment, competitiveness, incentives to save and to take entrepreneurial risks) into account;
- the assessment of (competing) strategies to reform social protection spending or financing, with a focus on the reforms' impacts on coverage, adequacy, public spending, and behavioural incentives;
- the exchange of good practices and lessons learnt from past reform experiences

In any case, the projects should build on, and contribute to, the expertise and capacity available in the beneficiary country. Project formats with different time horizons and resource requirements can be funded, including

- country reviews by international organisations;

⁵ Financing methods differ in their distributional implications, their visibility, their sensitivity to evasion, their adaptability to demographic change and economic swings, and in their impact on economic behaviour. Whether financing primarily comes from general or earmarked taxes and whether the latter primarily are levied on employers or on the insured can affect the efficiency and will have different ramifications for the demand and supply of labour.

⁶ Social investment, as defined by the SIP, involves strengthening people's current and future capacities, notably in terms of human capital formation and employment prospects.

⁷ Following the ESSPROS classification, social protection functions include 1) Sickness/Health care; 2) Disability; 3) Old age; 4) Survivors; 5) Family/children; 6) Unemployment; 7) Housing; 8) Social exclusion not elsewhere classified.

- secondments of policy advisers from another country;
- study visits from and to countries with relevant experience,
- workshops and seminars.

3. INDICATIVE TIMETABLE

<i>Stages</i>	<i>Date and time or indicative period</i>
a) Publication of the call	July 2013
b) Deadline for submitting applications	7 October 2013
c) Evaluation period	November 2013
d) Information to applicants	November 2013
e) Signature of grant agreement or notification of grant decision	before 16 December 2013
f) Starting date of the action	December 2013 / January 2014

4. BUDGET AVAILABLE

The total budget earmarked for the co-financing of projects is estimated at EUR 2,000,000.

EU financial aid granted will not exceed 80% of the total eligible costs of the action. The applicant has to guarantee the co-financing in cash of the remaining 20%; contribution in kind is not accepted as co-financing. The equivalent amount of not less than 20% of the total eligible cost must be covered from sources other than from European Union funds.

The Commission expects to fund around 10 proposals. The amounts applied for should not exceed €500,000. Above-average grants could be justified by a larger (>2) number of countries participating in a project. The Commission reserves the right not to distribute all the funds available.

5. ADMISSIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

- Applications must be sent no later than the deadline for submitting applications referred to in section 3.
- Applications must be submitted in writing (see section 13), using the application form and the electronic submission system available at <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/swim>.
- Applicants are advised to submit their project proposal in English, French or German in order to facilitate treatment of the proposals and commence the evaluation process as soon as

possible. It should be noted however that applications in all other official languages will be accepted. In case if the proposal is in any other EU language, applicants must submit an executive summary of their proposal in English.

Failure to comply with those requirements will lead to the rejection of the application.

6. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

6.1. Eligible applicants

Applicants must be a properly constituted and registered legal person, having their registered office in one of the PROGRESS participating countries⁸ at the time of the submission of the application under the call.

Lead or sole applicants in charge of coordinating the action must be the competent national public authority or a public agency expressly mandated in writing by the competent national authority to assume responsibility for the implementation of the action.

Co-applicants, if any, can be any type of non-profit organisation, and international organisations.

Affiliated entities are not eligible under the present call for proposals.

6.2. Eligible applications

The proposal submitted for funding must meet the following eligibility criteria:

- the proposed activity must fit in with the activities under the PROGRESS Programme;
- must seek funding only for activities in PROGRESS participating countries.
- the duration of the project should not exceed 24 months.
- be complete (see checklist in section 13 of this call) and comply with the rules for submission published in the call for proposals.
- the proposal must respect the maximum limit for EU co-financing (80%).

7. EXCLUSION CRITERIA

Applicants must sign a declaration on their honour certifying that they are not in one of the situations referred to in articles 106(1) and 107 to 109 of the Financial Regulation, filling in the relevant form

⁸ Participation in Progress is open to the 28 EU countries, candidate countries, and EFTA/EEA countries (Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein).

attached to the application form accompanying the call for proposals and available at <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/swim/displayWelcome.do>.

7.1. Exclusion from participation

In accordance with article 106 (1) of the Financial Regulation applicants and co-applicants will be excluded from participating in the call for proposals procedure if they are in any of the following situations:

- (a) they are bankrupt or being wound up, are having their affairs administered by the courts, have entered into an arrangement with creditors, have suspended business activities, are the subject of proceedings concerning those matters, or are in any analogous situation arising from a similar procedure provided for in national legislation or regulations;
- (b) they or persons having powers of representation, decision making or control over them have been convicted of an offence concerning their professional conduct by a judgment of a competent authority of a Member State which has the force of *res judicata*;
- (c) they have been guilty of grave professional misconduct proven by any means which the contracting authority can justify including by decisions of the EIB and international organisations;
- (d) they are not in compliance with their obligations relating to the payment of social security contributions or the payment of taxes in accordance with the legal provisions of the country in which they are established or with those of the country of the RAO or those of the country where the grant agreement is to be performed;
- (e) they or persons having powers of representation, decision making or control over them have been the subject of a judgment which has the force of *res judicata* for fraud, corruption, involvement in a criminal organisation, money laundering or any other illegal activity, where such an illegal activity is detrimental to the Union's financial interests;
- (f) they are currently subject to an administrative penalty referred to in Article 109(1) of the Financial Regulation.

7.2. Exclusion from award

In accordance with article 107 of the Financial Regulation, applicants and any co-applicants will not be granted financial assistance if, in the course of the grant award procedure, they :

- (a) are subject to a conflict of interest;
- (b) are guilty of misrepresentation in supplying the information required by the Commission as a condition of participation in the grant award procedure or fail to supply this information;
- (c) find themselves in one of the situations of exclusion, referred to in section 7.1.

Administrative and financial penalties may be imposed on applicants and co-applicants who are guilty of misrepresentation.

8. SELECTION CRITERIA

Only organisations with the necessary financial and operational capacity may be awarded a grant. Only proposals which comply with the requirements of the eligibility and exclusion criteria will be eligible for further evaluation.

8.1. Financial capacity

The applicant (i.e. lead applicant and any co-applicants) must have access to solid and adequate funding to maintain its activities for the period of the action and to help finance it as necessary. The verification of financial capacity does not apply to public bodies or international organisations (Article 131 of the Financial Regulation). The financial capacity will be assessed on the basis of the relevant accompanying documents indicated in section 13 hereafter.

8.2. Operational capacity

The applicant (lead and any co-applicants) must have the operational resources (technical, management) and the professional skills and qualifications needed to successfully implement the project. The applicant and any co-applicant must have a strong track record of competence and experience in the field and in particular in the type of action proposed.

The operational capacity must be attested by the provision of the following items:

- A declaration of honour concerning the operational capacity to carry out the project and, in the case of co-applicants which are not public bodies or international organisations, that they have the appropriate financial capacity.
- curriculum vitae (educational and professional qualifications) or description of the profile of the project manager and people primarily responsible for managing and implementing the operation.
- a list of previous projects and activities performed by the lead applicant and co-applicant within the last 3 years in the relevant policy fields.

9. AWARD CRITERIA

The grants will be awarded following an assessment of the proposals on the basis of the following criteria.⁹ Only proposals in excess of 70 points and at least 50% of the maximum number of points for each criterion can be selected for funding.

- Relevance to the general objectives of the call for proposals: Does the project address the issues raised in this call for proposals? *(10 points)*
- Potential impact on policies in the applicant country: Is the project likely to contribute to the development of better policies and lasting progress in line with the EU's social policy objectives and the broader goals of the Europe2020 strategy? *(20 points)*
- Overall quality of the proposal: Is the project well designed and clear in its conceptual and practical approach, is the methodology appropriate and does it mobilise the right kind of expertise as well as input from relevant stakeholders, are the respective roles and responsibilities among the co-applicants and team members clearly defined, is the work plan appropriate and realistic with regard to the project goals? *(25 points)*
- Relevance of the proposal for the EU policy debate: Will the project be relevant to policy makers and stakeholders in other countries participating in PROGRESS and yield potentially transferrable results? *(20 points)*
- Sound cost-efficiency ratio and financial quality of the proposal: Will the project be cost-effective and achieve results at a reasonable cost to the EU budget? *(25 points)*

10. LEGAL COMMITMENTS

In the event of a grant awarded by the Commission, a grant agreement, drawn up in euro and detailing the conditions and level of funding, will be sent to the beneficiary, as well as the procedure in view to formalise the obligations of the parties.¹⁰

The action should start after the signature of grant agreements, expected within three months of the date of submission. In view of the time required to evaluate applications, actions should not start before the deadline given in section 3.e above.

Applicants should note that if their project is selected, they will not necessarily receive the grant agreement prior to the action starting date indicated and should, therefore, take this into account in programming the timing of their project. Any expenditure incurred before the signature of the grant agreement is at the applicant's risk.

⁹ Art. 132 FR, 203 RAP

¹⁰ Art. 121 FR, 174 RAP.

11. FINANCIAL PROVISIONS

For more detailed information on the financial and administrative aspects of the call please see Annex I which is available on the call website:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=630&langId=en>

Only eligible costs can be taken into account for determining the amount of grant. The categories of costs considered as eligible and non-eligible are indicated in section 4.2 of the financial guidelines for applicants.

Before awarding a grant, the Commission will verify the budget with respect to problems such as arithmetical errors, inaccuracies, unrealistic costs or other ineligible costs. The check may give rise to a request for clarification and may lead the Commission to ask for modifications or reductions of some budget items before delivering the grant. The amount of the grant and the percentage of EU co-financing can never be increased as a result of these corrections.

For implementation contracts, the beneficiary must award the contract to the bid offering best value for money or the lowest price (as appropriate), avoiding conflicts of interests and retain the documentation for the event of an audit. Please refer to the financial guidelines (Annex I) for more information on subcontracting and implementing contracts.

The overall coordination and management, as well as the financial management of the project cannot be sub-contracted. Procedures to award contracts may have been initiated, but contracts may not be concluded by the beneficiaries before the start of the implementation of the projects.

12. PUBLICITY

12.1. By the beneficiaries

In accordance with the General conditions, all beneficiaries are under the obligation to acknowledge that the present activity has received funding from the Union in all documents and media produced, in particular final delivered outputs, related reports, brochures, press releases, videos, software, etc, including at conferences or seminars. In the context of the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity – PROGRESS, the following formulation shall be used:

This (publication, conference, training session etc) is supported by the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity - PROGRESS (2007-2013).

This programme is implemented by the European Commission. It was established to financially support the implementation of the objectives of the European Union in the employment, social affairs and equal opportunities area, and thereby contribute to the achievement of the Europe 2020 Strategy goals in these fields.

The seven-year Programme targets all stakeholders who can help shape the development of appropriate and effective employment and social legislation and policies, across the EU-27, EFTA-EEA and EU candidate and pre-candidate countries.

For more information see: <http://ec.europa.eu/progress>

For publications it is also necessary to include the following reference: "The information contained in this publication does not necessarily reflect the position or opinion of the European Commission".

With regard to publication and any communication plan linked to the present activity, the Beneficiary will insert the European Union logo and mention the European Commission as the Contracting Authority in every publication or related material developed under the present grant agreement.

12.2. By the Commission

All information relating to grants awarded in the course of a financial year shall be published on an internet site of the European Union institutions no later than the 30 June of the year following the financial year in which the grants were awarded.

The Commission will publish the following information:

- name of the beneficiary
- address of the beneficiary subject of the grant,
- amount awarded.

Upon a reasoned and duly substantiated request by the beneficiary, the publication shall be waived if such disclosure risks threatening the rights and freedoms of individuals concerned as protected by the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union or harm the commercial interests of the beneficiaries.

13. PROCEDURE FOR THE SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

The call, the application form, the financial guidelines for applicants and further information related to the call for proposals are provided on the following website:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=630&langId=en>

Applications must be accompanied by the required annexes indicated in the check-list below and must be submitted:

1) in electronic format via the SWIM online application

The web-based application called SWIM allows applicants/beneficiaries to introduce, edit, validate, print and submit grant applications, request for payments and request for modifications on the budget estimate. SWIM can be accessed at the following web address <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/swim/displayWelcome.do>.

The electronic application in the online application SWIM must be "valid". Invalid electronic applications are automatically excluded from further evaluation. In order to validate the application, click on the "send" button. This step is irreversible and must be carried out before the deadline.

AND

2) in hard copy (in one original) to the following addresses:

a) **by registered mail** or express courier service (the submission date will be taken as the date of dispatch, as evidenced by the postmark or the express courier receipt date):

European Commission
DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion
Unit D3 (J-27 01/242): Call for proposals VP/2013/013
B-1049 Brussels, Belgium

OR

b) **by hand delivery** against a signed receipt from the Commission's central mail service (this hand delivery can be direct or through any authorised representative of the applicant, including private messenger service etc.) by 16.00 h, 7/10/2013:

European Commission
Unit D3 - Call for proposals VP/2013/013
Central courier service
Avenue du Bourget, 1
B-1140 Evere, Belgium

When sending the hard copy, applicants are requested to number the accompanying documents to be submitted with the application. Documents will be printed double-sided, if possible. Only two-hole folders will be used. The dossier should not be bound or glued.

The reference of the call for proposals must be indicated on the envelope.

Application not submitted online as well as by registered mail or hand delivery by the deadlines indicated above will not be considered by the Evaluation Committee.

Please make sure that the full set of the application form and all accompanying documents are sent by post by the deadline. **The absence of any of these documents may invalidate the application**

<i>Order</i>	<i>Document</i>	<i>To be download ed from SWIM</i>	<i>Check</i>
1	Original cover letter of application quoting the reference number of the call (VP/2013/013), duly signed and dated by the legal representative of the applicant organisation.	NO	
2	Print-out of the submitted online application form including the estimated budget , duly completed, dated and signed by the legal representative of the applicant organisation.	YES	
3	Print-out of Declaration on honour of the lead applicant and each co applicant This must be written on the official letterhead paper of the applicant/co-applicant organisations and have the original signature of the legal representative, certifying that the applicant/co-applicant organisation is not in one of the situations listed in Articles 106(1) and 107 to 109 of the Financial Regulation and that it has the operational capacity to complete the activity for which funding is requested and, in the case of co-applicants which are not public bodies or international organisations, that it has the appropriate financial capacity.	YES	
4	Letters of commitment. A signed letter of commitment from each applicant and co-applicant should be provided, explaining the nature of the their involvement and/or specifying the cash amounts of any funding provided, following the template provided to the on-line application. The letters of commitment should be submitted in English, French or German.	YES	
5	Print-out of Financial identification form duly completed and signed by the account holder and bearing the stamp and signature of the bank. It is also possible to attach a copy of a recent bank statement to the financial identification form, in which event the stamp of the bank and the signature of the bank's representative are not required. The signature of the account holder is obligatory in all cases (available at http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts_grants/info_contracts/financial_id/financial_id_en.cfm).	YES	
6	Legal entity forms for the lead applicant and each co-applicant, duly completed with the original signature of the legal representative of the entity (available at: http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts_grants/info_contracts/legal_entities/legal_entities_en.cfm) The lead applicant and each co-applicant must also provide: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a copy of the certificate of official registration or other official document attesting to the establishment of the entity (for public bodies, a copy of the law, decree or decision establishing the entity in question) - not necessary for international organizations who have signed a framework agreement with the European 	YES	

<i>Order</i>	<i>Document</i>	<i>To be download ed from SWIM</i>	<i>Check</i>
	<p>Commission;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a copy of the articles of association/statutes or equivalent, proving the eligibility of the organization – not necessary for public authorities or international organizations who have signed a framework agreement with the European Commission ; a copy of a document confirming the applicant's tax or VAT number, if applicable. 		
7	Print out of the document Contracts for implementing the action for any subcontracting of costs > 5,000 € (if applicable).	YES	
8	<p>Description of the action, specifying the information laid out in section 2 of the call, including in particular a description of</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The objectives of the action The implementation of the action (main work components and milestones, actors involved) Expected results and lasting impacts Monitoring and evaluation measures Potential links with other EU-funded projects <p>Applicants are encouraged to follow this structure.</p>	NO	
9	Signed letter of mandate from the competent ministry, provided in English, French or German. It must be written on the official letterhead paper of the organisation and have the original signature of the legal representative	NO	
10	Detailed CVs (educational and professional qualifications) and job specifications of the persons responsible for the overall management of the action in the applicant's organisation and in the organisations of other involved actors, if any (project manager/coordinator and main contributors from the applicant's organisation and from the other involved actors). Please refer to CV models on http://www.europass.cedefop.europa.eu .	NO	
11	List of the main projects carried out in the last three years relating to the objective of the call by the applicant's organisation and by the organisations of other involved actors, if any.	NO	
12	The most recent balance sheets of the lead applicant and all co-applicant organisations (not necessary for public bodies and international organisations). The balance sheets, by definition, must include assets and liabilities. The applicant should specify which currency is being used in the balance sheet. The Commission reserves the right to request balance sheets from previous years, if necessary	NO	

Complementary documents sent by post, by fax or by electronic mail after the deadlines mentioned above will not be considered for evaluation unless requested by the European Commission.

The applicant's attention is also drawn to the fact that incomplete or unsigned forms, hand-written forms and those sent by fax or e-mail will not be taken into consideration.

The Financial Guidelines for Applicants annexed to the present call for proposals provide more detailed information for the applicants, especially as regards guidelines for presenting the proposal's provisional budget along with the rules governing which categories of expenditure are eligible and which are not.

The information contained herein together with the Financial Guidelines for Applicants provides all the information you require to submit an application. Please read it carefully before doing so, paying particular attention to the priorities of the present call.

14. EVALUATION PROCESS

Applications will be assessed by an independent Evaluation Committee. The work of the Evaluation Committee consists in assessing each of the applications against the exclusion, eligibility, selection and award criteria.

Applications which are not submitted by the deadline will automatically be rejected. After the deadline for submission of proposals, the Commission may contact the applicant to request clarification. Failure to reply to the clarification request will invalidate the application.

Only proposals which satisfy the exclusion and eligibility criteria will be evaluated further against selection and award criteria.

The Commission will inform each applicant of the final decision taken.

Successful applicants will receive two original copies of the grant agreement detailing the conditions and level of funding for acceptance and signature. Both copies must be sent back to the Commission which will return one to the applicant once it has been signed by both parties.

15. CONTACT

The Commission will publish and update all questions and answers of general interest on <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/swim/displayWelcome.do>

Contacts between the contracting authority and potential applicants can only take place in certain circumstances and under the following conditions:

Before the final date for submission of proposals, at the request of the applicant, the Commission may provide additional information solely for the purpose of clarifying the nature of the call.

Any requests for additional information must be made by e-mail only to empl-vp-2013-013-1@ec.europa.eu, indicating the reference VP/2013/013.

To ensure a more rapid reply, it would be helpful if the requests for additional information are sent in English.

Our contact points are:

- E-mail: empl-vp-2013-013-1@ec.europa.eu
- Post: see above
- E-mail: empl-swim-support@ec.europa.eu (for technical problems)

In the interest of equal treatment of applicants, the Commission cannot give a prior opinion on the eligibility of an applicant or an action or on the outcome of the call before the official publication of results.

The Commission may, on its own initiative, inform interested parties of any error, inaccuracy, omission or other clerical error in the text of the call for proposals.

ANNEX I: PROGRESS – ADDITIONAL CONDITIONS FOR CALLS FOR PROPOSALS 2013

1. How the activities should be carried out

The PROGRESS Programme aims to promote gender mainstreaming in all its five policy sections and supported activities. Consequently, the Beneficiary shall take the necessary steps to ensure that:

- Gender equality issues are taken into account when relevant for the drafting of the proposal by paying attention to the situation and needs of women and men;
- Implementation of proposed activities includes a gender perspective by considering systematically the women and men dimension;
- Performance monitoring includes the collection and gathering of data disaggregated by sex when needed;
- Its proposed team and/or staff respects the gender balance at all levels.

Equally, needs of disabled people shall be duly acknowledged and met while implementing the proposed activities. This will ensure in particular that where the Beneficiary organises training sessions and conferences, issues publications or develops dedicated websites, people with disabilities will have equal access to the facilities or the services provided.

Finally, the Contracting Authority encourages the Beneficiary to promote equal employment opportunities for all its staff and team. This entails that the Beneficiary is encouraged to foster an appropriate mix of people, whatever their ethnic origin, religion, age, and ability.

The Beneficiary will be required to detail in its final activity report the steps and achievements made towards meeting these contractual requirements.

2. Reporting Requirements

PROGRESS is implemented through a results-based management - RBM.

The Strategic Framework, developed in collaboration with Member States and civil society organisations, sets out the intervention logic for Progress-related expenditure and defines PROGRESS' mandate and its long-term and immediate outcomes. It is supplemented by performance measures which serve to determine the extent to which PROGRESS has delivered the expected results. See in Annex the overview of PROGRESS performance measurement framework. For more information on the strategic framework, please visit PROGRESS website <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=659&langId=en>.

The Commission regularly monitors the effect of PROGRESS-supported initiatives and considers how they contribute to PROGRESS outcomes as defined in the Strategic Framework. In this context, the Beneficiary will be asked to dedicatedly work in close cooperation with the Commission and/or persons authorised by it to define the expected contribution and the set of performance measures

which this contribution will be assessed against. As a direct contribution to the PROGRESS Annual Performance Monitoring Report, the Beneficiary will be asked to submit a short quantitative questionnaire on the outputs produced over the course of a given calendar year. At the end of the action, the Beneficiary will also be asked to report on its own performance to the Commission and/or persons authorised by it against a template which will be annexed to the grant agreement.

3. Information on partners on PROGRESS funded projects

In order to increase the visibility of transnational partnerships established under PROGRESS and to facilitate networking between organisations involved in actions covered by PROGRESS grants, the Commission intends to publish the name and address of partners in PROGRESS-funded projects together with the name and address of the beneficiary, the reference of the call for proposals and the title and description of the project. To that purpose, the Beneficiary will be asked to seek the partners' agreement to authorise the Commission to publish this data. This written agreement should be included in the letters of commitment sent to the Commission with the application form.

4. Communication and dissemination plan

Adequate communication and dissemination of results is essential in ensuring the EU added value of the action and its sustainability after the funding has ended. Information-giving and awareness raising are key activities to ensure that other interested parties benefit from the project and can create new opportunities to extend it or develop new partnerships. The proposals must therefore include a detailed plan for communication and dissemination of the projects' results. In particular, such a plan must include information on dissemination activities and targeted audiences.

At final report stage, the Beneficiary will be required to provide details about how and to whom the results, best practices and findings have been disseminated and how interested parties have been involved in the project.