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COMMUNITY PROGRAMME FOR EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL SOLIDARITY (PROGRESS)

SUBJECT: GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAMME FOR EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL SOLIDARITY PROGRESS (2007-2013)

OVERVIEW

This paper sets out the general guidelines for the implementation of the Community action programme for employment and social solidarity – *PROGRESS* for the period 2007-2013 as provided for in article 12. 1 a) of the Decision establishing *PROGRESS*¹ (hereafter the Decision).

They directly derive from the overall goal of the programme "*PROGRESS*" (hereafter *PROGRESS*) set out in the Decision, i.e. to financially support the implementation of the objectives of the European Union in the employment and social affairs area, as set out in the Social Agenda², and thereby contribute to the achievement of the Lisbon Strategy goals in these fields. The present general guidelines also build upon the experience with, and lessons from past Community programmes so as to better respond to the challenges, needs and expectations in the employment, social affairs and equal opportunities fields at EU level.

Given the magnitude of the challenges to be tackled, and the budget and scope of *PROGRESS*, successful implementation, measured in terms of effectiveness and impact, will depend on a shared understanding of the role and objectives of *PROGRESS*, a clearer focus on activities where the Community has the strongest added-value, and a strong partnership among all stakeholders. Implementation of *PROGRESS* will, therefore, be based on:

- *consolidation*: building on the experience of the past Community programmes;
- *focus*: on the key policy challenges at EU level;
- *alignment*: between resources and priorities;
- *complementarity*: with other EU instruments, such as the European Social Fund.

¹ See Decision n°1672/2006/EC of 24 October 2006 at annex 1.

² Commission Communication on the Social Agenda (COM(2005)203)

I. OBJECTIVES OF PROGRESS

1.1. CONTRIBUTING TO THE STRATEGIC GOALS OF CREATING MORE AND BETTER JOBS AND OFFERING EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL

The main responsibility for employment policy and social affairs lies with Member States. At the same time, according to Article 2 of the Treaty, the Community has to promote a high level of employment and social protection, equality between men and women, the raising of the standard of living and quality of life, economic and social cohesion, and solidarity among Member States. Furthermore, the Lisbon European Council agreed on the strategic goal of building a competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy capable of sustaining economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion.

The Social Agenda (2005-2010), which constitutes the Commission roadmap in the employment and social areas as part of the overall Lisbon Strategy, has a twofold objective: moving towards full employment and offering equal opportunities for all. The Social Agenda is implemented through a combination of instruments: legislation, co-operation between Member States within the framework of the open method of co-ordination (OMC), social dialogue and the European Social Fund.

Against this background, *PROGRESS*, which supports the implementation of the Social Agenda, pursues the following general objectives, as set out in article 2.1 of the Decision:

- (1) to improve the knowledge and understanding of the situation prevailing in the Member States (and in other participating countries) through analysis, evaluation and close monitoring of policies;
- (2) to support the development of statistical tools and methods and common indicators, where appropriate broken down by gender and age group, in the areas covered by the programme;
- (3) to support and monitor the implementation of Community law, where applicable, and policy objectives in the Member States, and assess their effectiveness and impact;
- (4) to promote networking, mutual learning, identification and dissemination of good practice and innovative approaches at EU level;
- (5) to enhance the awareness of the stakeholders and the general public about the EU policies and objectives pursued under each of the policy sections;
- (6) to boost the capacity of key EU networks to promote, support and further develop EU policies and objectives, where applicable.

More specifically, *PROGRESS* will support:

- (1) the implementation of the European Employment Strategy (section 1);

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

1.2. USING THE POSSIBILITIES OFFERED BY AN INTEGRATED PROGRAMME

Previous Community programmes in the employment, social affairs and equal opportunities areas have contributed to:

- developing a shared understanding of the Community objectives in the employment, social affairs and equal opportunities areas;
- creating an environment supporting the development and implementation of such policies at all levels, and increasing convergence of national policies based on common objectives;
- putting in place the conditions for improving compliance with EU law;
- fostering recognition of employment and social policies as an essential part of the renewed Lisbon Strategy.

PROGRESS brings together previous Community programmes and budget lines under an integrated framework. It is centred on issues related to specific areas (employment, working conditions, and social protection and inclusion) and on issues related to specific target groups (gender equality and non-discrimination). *PROGRESS*, therefore, offers new possibilities to improve policy coherence and efficiency through cross-cutting work between the various policy sections and to promote gender mainstreaming³. At the implementation level, it will require close collaboration between the relevant services, both in the Commission and in the Member States (see section 3.1. below).

At the same time, *PROGRESS* takes account of the specificities of each policy section. It follows that each section has specific objectives which are set out in the Decision⁴. The objectives and activities linked to them depend on the Community instruments (legislative or non-legislative) available to the respective sections.

1.3. ESTABLISHING STRONG PARTNERSHIPS AND INCREASING PUBLIC TRUST

Delivering on the objectives agreed at European level is a joint responsibility between the Commission and the Member States. Furthermore, the growing complexity of governance and the expectations of stakeholders in terms of involvement in *PROGRESS* require a new approach. It follows that the success and impact of *PROGRESS* will depend on the establishment of

³ See article 2.2 of Decision.

⁴ See table at annex 2.

partnerships with the Member States and the stakeholders, including the social partners and the civil society. In this context, community / national and stakeholder engagement strategies will be developed to support ownership, knowledge transfer, long-term collaborative agendas and multi-level partnerships.

In addition, it is essential to take account of the concerns and aspirations of European citizens who attach growing importance to the employment, social affairs and equal opportunities areas at EU level. In this context, it is important to raise the awareness of citizens on the contribution the Union can make in this regard.

II. ENHANCING THE IMPACT OF PROGRESS

2.1. INCREASING EFFICIENCY AND PERFORMANCE

In order to increase efficiency and performance, the implementation of *PROGRESS* will focus on outcomes. The desired outcomes of *PROGRESS* will be clearly defined and linked to the activities planned under the programme⁵. Furthermore, a system will be put in place to measure and evaluate the efficiency and performance of *PROGRESS* and to make the necessary adjustments, where appropriate. Adequate reporting mechanisms will also be put in place.

On that basis, a strategic framework for the implementation of *PROGRESS* will be drawn up and agreed by the Committee at the latest at the end of 2007. In drawing up such a strategic framework, the Committee will ensure that the views of stakeholders (social partners and civil society organisations) are duly taken into account. Such a framework will:

- include a governance structure, describing the roles and responsibilities of all interested parties involving in implementing *PROGRESS*;
- provide a clear and results-based design of *PROGRESS*, linking resources to expected outcomes;
- define a gender mainstreaming approach for the implementation of *PROGRESS*;
- establish an adequate performance measuring and monitoring system;
- establish an adequate reporting system based on outcomes;
- define the evaluation strategy of *PROGRESS*.

2.2. FOCUSING ON ACTIONS WHERE EU ADDED-VALUE IS HIGHEST

In view of its budget and objectives, implementation of *PROGRESS* will focus on activities which have the highest added-value. The added-value of Community action will also be defined against the criteria of efficiency and effectiveness.

Community action should:

- contribute to achieving or implementing EU objectives;
- support pan-European or transnational activities which cannot be implemented by Member States;

⁵ See logical framework at annex 3

- complement Member States' activities with a view to enhancing the EU capacity to tackle policy challenges and to contribute to the achievement of EU objectives.

At the same time, implementation of *PROGRESS* will ensure complementarity with other EU instruments and programmes, such as the European Social Fund, the Gender Institute and other activities financed directly by the Community (for example in the field of social dialogue).

III. IMPLEMENTING PROGRESS

3.1. PROMOTING PARTNERSHIP

3.1.1. COORDINATION AT COMMISSION LEVEL

Implementation of *PROGRESS* will involve a high number of policy units and horizontal units in the Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities in the Commission (DG EMPL). The integrated nature of *PROGRESS* requires co-ordination at the level of the Commission. This task has been entrusted to the General Coordination Unit in DG EMPL. Coordination at Commission level will entail:

- acting as secretariat to the Programme Committee;
- drawing up the annual plans of work, in close co-operation with the units concerned;
- monitoring of, and reporting on the implementation of the annual plans of work;
- where appropriate, suggesting areas for improving the effectiveness and impact of the Programme.

The general coordination unit will also ensure links with other EU instruments and initiatives and have responsibility for the support activities⁶ provided for in the *PROGRESS* Decision. Individual policy units will be responsible for the definition of priorities and the implementation of their respective parts or sections of the annual plans of work.

The Commission may also propose, where appropriate, cross-cutting work⁷. Finally, common financial rules applicable to the whole programme will be established.

3.1.2. COORDINATION AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

Furthermore, Member States will be invited to set up appropriate coordination and consultation mechanisms at national level, taking account of national specificities.

3.1.3. LINK BETWEEN THE PROGRESS COMMITTEE AND OTHER POLICY COMMITTEES

According to article 14 of the Decision, the Commission will establish the necessary links with the Social Protection Committee and the Employment Committee, and inform other relevant committees of the actions undertaken under *PROGRESS*. The Commission will keep the *PROGRESS* Committee regularly informed about such activities.

⁶ See article 17.3 of the Decision.

⁷ See also section 1.2 above.

3.1.4. PARTNERSHIP WITH NGOS AND SOCIAL PARTNERS

The Commission will ensure proper information of NGOs and social partners at the European level about the implementation of *PROGRESS*. This could include regular exchange of views with NGOs and/or social partners by policy section and, where appropriate, across several policy sections. The Commission will keep the *PROGRESS* Committee regularly informed about such activities.

3.1.5. SOCIAL AGENDA FORUM

According to article 19.4 of the Decision, the Commission will regularly organise a Social Agenda Forum. Such a Forum will serve to present results achieved under *PROGRESS* and discuss future priorities of work. The Forum will involve all relevant stakeholders, including the social partners and representatives from civil society.

3.2. PUTTING IN PLACE A MULTI-ANNUAL PROGRAMMING

The impact of employment, social affairs and equal opportunities initiatives is only visible in the middle to long term. *PROGRESS* will therefore achieve its objectives better through developing a multi-annual programming, linked with annual plans of work and budgets. Such an approach will also increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the programme by ensuring a greater focus on delivering outcomes. It follows that a large part of the activities planned for the first implementation year of the programme will cover a three-year period (2007-2010), corresponding to the final year of the Social Agenda. On the basis of the results of the mid-term evaluation provided for in article 19.2 of the Decision, a new programming cycle, covering the remaining years of the programme, will be launched. This multi-annual programming does not preclude the adoption of annual activities, where appropriate.

3.3. TOTAL FINANCIAL ENVELOPE

The financial envelope for *PROGRESS* for the 2007-2013 period amounts to 743,25 million €
The indicative annual financial breakdown is as follows:

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	Total
Annual envelope	82,90	95,72	103,56	110,07	113,63	116,96	120,41	743,25

Furthermore, the Decision establishes for each policy section of the programme the following lower limits that shall be respected by the end of the programming period of the programme in 2013 at the latest.

Section	%
Employment	23 %
Social protection and inclusion	30 %

Working conditions	10 %
Diversity and fight against discrimination	23 %
Equality between men and women	12 %
Support to the implementation of PROGRESS	2 %
TOTAL	100 %

According to article 12.1 d) of the Decision, the Committee will approve the annual budget.

3.4 ADOPTION OF THE ANNUAL PLAN OF WORK

The annual plan of work will be submitted for approval to the Committee in due time. Such annual plan of work will contain proposals for actions which should:

- demonstrate their link with the Social Agenda;
- be aligned with the objectives of *PROGRESS*;
- be consistent with the objectives and priorities of the relevant policy area(s) concerned;
- be listed as eligible activities under *PROGRESS* programme;
- demonstrate their EU added-value.

The annual plan of work will include a descriptive part presenting the general objectives of the programme and the specific objectives by policy section for a given year. It will be accompanied by a list of all the planned activities by policy section.

3.5 PROMOTING GENDER MAINSTREAMING AND EQUAL ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION

According to article 2.2 of the Decision, in addition to dedicated gender activities, gender mainstreaming shall be promoted in all sections and activities of *PROGRESS*. Accordingly, the Committee will develop a gender mainstreaming strategy, including evaluation and review mechanisms. Such a strategy will be integrated into the strategic framework for the implementation of *PROGRESS* referred to in section 2.1 of the present guidelines. The strategy will explore to what extent the right data is available to determine gender equality priorities and monitor progress towards gender equality goals. In most cases this should involve disaggregating existing data, but in some cases new data may be needed.

The programme will also promote equal access and participation of people with disabilities. This will include making information and communication tools available in easy to read formats and covering the costs associated with the participation of people with disabilities, such as the use of personal assistants or sign language interpreters.

3.6 IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTIVITIES OF THE ANNUAL PLAN OF WORK

3.6.1 PROCEDURES FOR THE SELECTION OF THE ACTIVITIES

On the basis of the annual plan of work adopted by the Committee, the Commission will launch the open calls for proposals and calls for tenders. All calls will be published on the Internet site of the Directorate General Employment, social affairs and Equal Opportunities. In addition, calls for

tenders will be published in the S Series of the Official Journal of the European Community. Members of the Committee will be duly informed of such publications.

Where necessary and subject to the financial rules applicable to the budget of the Community, restricted calls for proposals and calls for tenders will be used. Restricted calls for tenders shall not be used for contract services over 137.000 € Where appropriate, calls for tenders for framework contracts will be launched and partnership agreements with beneficiaries will be concluded, for example in the context of support to the operating costs of European-level networks of non-governmental organisations.

Where appropriate and subject to the financial rules applicable to the budget of the Community, direct subsidies may be awarded without of calls for proposals, for example to provide support to Presidency events or in cases of de facto or de jure monopoly.

3.6.2. AGREEMENT OF THE PROGRAMME COMMITTEE ON THE LIST OF BENEFICIARIES

Approval on the draft list of beneficiaries of Community subsidies further to calls for proposals will be submitted for approval to the Programme Committee. The procedure for such approval is to be defined in the Committee's rules of procedure. As regards calls for tenders and according to Community financial rules, the proposed service provider(s) will be approved by the internal procurement committee set up in the Directorate General "Employment, Social Affairs, and Equal Opportunities. The Committee will be duly informed of the results of such deliberations.

3.6.3. COMMUNITY FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Costs related to contract services will be entirely covered by the Community. Maximum Community support in the form of subsidies will be limited to 80% of the total eligible costs. As an exception, Community support to the operating costs of European level networks of NGOs may be above this limit, taking into account that such Community funding will annually gradually decrease.

3.7. REPORTING

Annual activity reports⁸ will present the state of play of *PROGRESS* annual activities together with the list of end beneficiaries and service providers funded under *PROGRESS*. They will also provide a clear and accurate account of the extent to which those activities contribute to the realisation of *PROGRESS* outcomes.

Necessary monitoring and evaluation mechanisms will be established as part of the strategic framework. To allow for collecting, gathering and analysing all the data, annual activity reports will be presented in March of *year n+1*.

List of Annexes

- (1) Decision establishing a Community programme for employment and social solidarity-
PROGRESS

⁸ See Article 19.1

- (2) Table presenting the specific objectives of *PROGRESS* five policy sections
- (3) *PROGRESS* logical framework