



EASI – EU PROGRAMME FOR EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL INNOVATION: BRIEFING FOR MEMBERS

An Overview: What is EaSI? What are the goals?

For the new budget period of 2014-2020, The EU has approved a budget of 815 million to go towards the EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation. This program (EaSI) hopes to give member states the capabilities to carry out employment and social reforms at national and regional levels through sharing of effective practices, policy coordination and innovation analysis. Overall, the EU hopes to “modernize” EU policies dealing with social and employment issues.

Through this programme, the EU desires to help protect some of the most vulnerable groups (including youth and those discriminated against), assist with long-term unemployment, and fight against social exclusion and poverty. These goals fall directly in line with promoting a more sustainable, inclusive and innovative Europe (which are some of the overall goals for the MFF -Multi-Annual Financial Framework- for 2014-2020, the EU’s long term spending plan).

What is the structure of EaSI?

EaSI brings together three programs that are already in existence and expands them: the Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity (**PROGRESS**), the European Progress Microfinance Facility (**PROGRESS - Microfinance**), and the European Employment Services (**EURES**). The main goal of EaSI is to continue and improve these three programs through the addition of specific relevant goals.¹ The three sections are explained in detail below as they are all potentially relevant for Eurodiaconia members.

PROGRESS

The PROGRESS programme aims to help EU Member States “modernize” employment and social policies. This programme tackles three specific areas: unemployment (with a key emphasis on youth unemployment, but also addressing other areas in unemployment), working conditions, and social protection against poverty. PROGRESS aims to support information sharing of best practices by EU Member States and NGOs and provide financial support to NGOs who are active in the fields of non-discrimination, gender equality and social inclusion. Eurodiaconia is one of the NGOs that receive funding from PROGRESS. PROGRESS has also helped support initiatives such as the “Platform Against Poverty and Social Inclusion”²

Key Section for Members – Social Policy Experimentation.

- This section of PROGRESS wants to respond to social needs of Member States by examining new ways of handling social problems/issues. PROGRESS will be able to grant finances to those groups/individuals presenting new ideas that respond to social issues of Member States.

The aim of Social Policy Experimentation is to test a particular policy or project on a small population of people in order to see how effective it is. By carrying out many different projects across Europe, the

¹ EaSI Brochure. “New EU Umbrella Programme for employment and social policy”. Page 8.
<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=7682>

² Platform Against Poverty and Social Inclusion Eurodiaconia Briefing. November 2013.
<http://www.eurodiaconia.org/images/stories/briefings/pov%2050%2013%20epap%20briefing%20update.pdf>



Commission aims to determine what projects are effective enough to be implemented at a broader level and therefore to help tackle social issues that different countries are facing.³

Examples in the Social Policy Experimentation Section of PROGRESS

An example of this occurred in 2012 when PROGRESS granted finances to the HOPE in Stations project. Through financial backing from PRORGRESS, the HOPE in Stations Project was able to set up a training program for employees of seven different train stations across Europe on how to deal with the issue of homeless people. The Hope Project also set up a database for NGOs, government authorities and train station employees alike to use to gather information about homeless people in and around their specific train station. The project supported government authorities in their work with homeless people in railway stations.⁴

Another important example of the Social Policy Experimentation programme occurred with the project “Housing First Europe”. This was a two-year experiment which examined the effectiveness of the “housing first” approach in ten different European cities. The “housing first” approach is based on the idea that immediately placing people dealing with homelessness into long-term, permanent housing leads to more sustainable success in battling this problem than placing people in temporary or transitional housing programs. Many European countries require people to show “housing readiness” before supplying them with long-term, stable accommodation. In contrast, Housing First Europe does not require homeless people to show this evidence before being given long-term housing. After the experiment finished, it was found that the majority of the sites tested had “high housing retention rates” further proving the idea that giving long-term accommodation to homeless people helps keep these people off of the streets and positively changes their overall quality of life.⁵ A Eurodiaconia member was involved in this project.

Any private or public actor within the EU (or groups not in countries in the EU but part of the EEA or EFTA agreement) may apply for funding within PROGRESS by answering a relevant “call” found in the PROGRESS work programme. The new work programme has not been released yet. But further information about specific relevant calls will be listed by Eurodiaconia when it does come out and Eurodiaconia has heard that one call in 2014 will be about social services. During the previous working period, the Commission awarded grants for answers to proposals in dealing with many different topics in this area. One grant was awarded to an organization that answered a call to identify best practices in combating discrimination; another group successfully answered a call through presenting their findings about Member States’ strategies dealing with access to healthcare inequalities. A final example shows that one organization was successful in answering a call for a proposal by creating national awareness campaigns for “anti-discrimination”. More examples of past grants awarded and past calls for proposals can be found here: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/keyDocuments.jsp?type=0&policyArea=86&subCategory=632&country=0&year=0&advSearchKey=ProgressAwardedGrants&mode=advancedSubmit&langId=en>

Mutual learning, Awareness and Dissemination

- PROGRESS has a program of peer reviews hosted by a country which wishes to present a good practice on a selected topic, presenting their findings to EU Commission officials and other organizations from around the EU that want to improve their practices. These peer reviews are done to highlight areas of strength and weakness in social inclusion/social protection policies in order to improve the overall effectiveness of the policies throughout the EU.⁶
 - During the last MFF (2007-2013), Eurodiaconia directly took part in this section of PROGRESS by participating in a peer review with 10 EU Member States, and other PROGRESS-funded NGOs.

³ EaSI Brochure. “New EU Umbrella Programme for employment and social policy”. Page 11-12. <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=7682>

⁴ “Hope in Stations”. http://www.garesolidaire.net/attachments/ANSA_HOPE_Presentation_EN.pdf

⁵ Final Report: Housing First Europe. Page 6-8. <http://www.socialstyrelsen.dk/housingfirsteurope>

⁶ <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1024&langId=en>



PROGRESS- Microfinance

This section of EaSI allows more money to be available for vulnerable groups (young people, minorities, women, low-skilled workers, etc.) needing financial support trying to set up their own businesses. Many of these people have great ideas for businesses but are sometimes are not able to follow through with these ideas because they are denied loans from banks or other private lenders. In this way, the EaSi programme attempts to overcome this problem by lending money to people who may not be approved of otherwise in order to start up or continue their business ventures. **It must be noted that through this programme, individuals CANNOT directly apply for funds. This programme will make it easier for lenders/ loan providers/ banks to give funds to these vulnerable groups.**⁷

How can I apply for funding for a business idea (for a person part of a vulnerable group) or social enterprise idea I have? You must apply directly with the loan provider that works with PROGRESS-MICROFINANCE in your member state.

Not all member states have loan providers that will work with PROGRESS- Microfinance. Currently, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain and the UK have loan providers that will work with PROGRESS-Microfinance. This means that in these countries, those organizations, individuals or groups wishing to start up a social business/enterprise can apply for a loan directly through one of the approved credit providers (public or private banks, other private loan providers) in their particular member state.

A list of credit/loan providers divided up by member state can be found here:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=983&langId=en> .

For example, Erste Bank in Austria is an approved loan provider for PROGRESS-Microfinance, and by clicking on their name on the Commission website, it takes you to their detailed explanation of how to apply for funding directly through them. More information about this specific, Austrian example can be found at the Erste Bank Page on Progress-Microfinance Applications here (in German):

<http://www.sparkasse.at/erstebank/Firmenkunden/Produkte/Finanzieren/Finanzierung-Foerderung/Foerderungen/Mikrokreditprogramm>

Social Enterprises

A KEY POINT FOR MEMBERS: The EaSI programme has created an entirely new section of PROGRESS-Microfinance that is devoted to supporting **social enterprises**. EaSI wants to aid social enterprises by allowing more money to be loaned to those people trying to create social enterprises, or a business for social purposes. A social enterprise is a business whose main purpose is social (for the good of others) rather than maximizing profit. Funds will be given to help a social enterprise/business start up, or funds may also be given to those social enterprises already in existence in order to increase their effectiveness or allow for expansion **This programme will make it easier for lenders/ loan providers to give funds to support social enterprises**. The European Commission is still working to see what pan-European organisation will work as the intermediary body so the programme has not yet been launched but expects it will be launched by the end of the year. The pan-European body will then work with national financial intermediaries to set the conditions for the finance.

With this program, any group within the EU or EEA that has relevant social enterprise projects or micro financing needs for particular vulnerable people groups can apply for funding. Overall, there will be a total of 92 million Euros available for the 2014-2020 period to support social entrepreneurs. Each enterprise, with a turnover of maximum €30million will be limited to a loan of 500,000 Euros.

General Notes

This programme protects lending organizations like banks by issuing guarantees that reduce the risk of potential money loss for the loan provider. The programme may also provide funds directly to a lending organization in order to lend money to a certain individual or group that is applying for financial assistance.

⁷ "PROGRESS Microfinance". <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=836&langId=en>



The conditions of the loans (amount of money, interest rates, duration of loan, fees of the loan, etc) to the individual/organization vary depending on the conditions of the loan provider in the specific member state it operates in.

EURES

EURES, which stands for European Employment Services, is a network of over 1200 advisors that help match job-seeking people with employers looking for people to hire. These advisors are in contact each day both with employers and people looking for jobs all throughout Europe. Because there is free movement of both people and goods throughout all EU member states, EURES seeks to increase the number of EU citizens living abroad in another member state⁸. Right now, only 2% of EU citizens live/work outside their home member state. The “job mobility portal” showcases jobs available throughout all of the EU that may be of interest to other EU citizens having trouble finding work in their home state.

The Job Portal

One way that EURES advisors help both employers and those seeking to find jobs is through the “job mobility portal”. This is an online portal that helps match up profiles of those trying to find jobs and those employers with job openings. Through this portal, those hunting for jobs can create a profile, upload relevant CV information and receive email alerts when jobs matching their profile become available. Employers have the ability to post information about open jobs and search for relevant profiles matching the open job description. This job portal is available in ALL EU languages and is free of charge to both job-seekers and employers.

With EaSI, EURES aims to enhance the job mobility portal making it more “user friendly” for both employer and those trying to find jobs. The job mobility portal will be changed aesthetically as well as by allowing employers and job seekers to post more relevant information when searching for match-ups. By uploading more complete applications, both employers and job-seekers will be able to find matches easier and quicker. This enhancement of the job mobility portal will make jobs more transparent to those without employment, fulfilling one of the main goals of EaSI.⁹

Job mobility and Cross-Border Partnerships

Also with EaSI, EURES aims to try to make it easier for the 600,000 EU citizens who live in one EU member state and commute to work in another. With cross-border commuting, citizens have to deal with two different legal systems, two different tax system and other practical issues that come with working abroad. EaSI will enhance EURES by increasing the amount of EURES advisors to assist citizens dealing with practical issues within their multi-national life. Right now there are over 20 specific cross-border partnerships EURES has pointed out that have specific EURES advisors dedicated to each of these cross border lifestyles. Examples of these partnerships exist between: BE-NL, BE-FR-UK, BE-NL-DE, CZ-PL-DE, etc.¹⁰

Practical Information- Past Examples of calls for proposals/tenders

Any organization with a social purpose can apply for funding by answering a specific “call” that will come from the EURES Work Programme. Currently, this Work Programme has not been released. In past calls, the Commission has sought out organizations that can present research on anticipated job needs in the coming years or anticipated profiles of those who may be searching for jobs. Other past calls show the Commission wanting more information on how to encourage young people to move out from their home EU state into another one. The Commission has also sought out organizations who can train their staff about EURES, so the staff can inform their clients about EURES, the job mobility portal and the other services available through EURES. **Members working with youth, and the unemployed could find these types of calls relevant because of the assistance it could create for those who are underrepresented and without jobs.** Once it is released, Eurodiaconia will look at the specific calls under EURES and point out relevant calls for members.

⁸ EURES. <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1083&langId=en>

⁹ EaSI Brochure.. Page 15-18.

¹⁰ EURES in Cross-Border Regions. <https://ec.europa.eu/eures/main.jsp?acro=eures&lang=en&catId=56&parentCategory=56>



How can I participate in the EaSI Work Programme?

Listed above, you can see the relevant sections and subsections of the EaSI program. For each of these programs, it is necessary that organizations wanting to participate are either located within the EU or EEA and that their work directly deals with the program goals. Once more information is known about the specific calls available under each of these sub-programs; members can look at these to find the particular relevant topic to respond to in order to apply for funding. **When looking at specific calls, it is important to note that each call may have different requirements and criterion for eligibility.** More information on that will be available when the work programme is released.

What do I need to know? In Short....

- EaSI is a program that can give funding to members working on Employment and Social inclusion
- Members can apply for funding by answering any relevant calls under two subsections of EaSI: **EURES, and PROGRESS** but the specific calls are currently not known.
- More information about the specific calls that could be of interest to members will be released by Eurodiaconia when the calls for proposals are out
- For the European Microfinance Facility (**PROGRESS-Microfinance**), an individual or group **CANNOT** receive funding directly through this programme but will have to apply directly through a bank that works with the PROGRESS-Microfinance Programme.
 - Within the general Microfinance-PROGRESS programme, only a person within a vulnerable group can apply for funding. A list of these banks and the countries they operate in can be found here: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=983&langId=en>
 - Within, the Social Enterprise section of PROGRESS-Microfinance, a group can apply for funding directly to the financial institution in the corresponding Member State, which have not yet been established.
- **PROGRESS** contains a specific section of its budget for promoting social innovation and social policy experimentation.
- **EURES** is network of advisors that help match job-seeking people with employers looking for people to hire. Funding under this programme has been related to research on skills/employment needs, cross-border mobility and training on EURES

What can members do now?

Members can look at the links listed in Further Information, in order to learn more about the three programs operating under EaSI. To be well-prepared for your proposal when calls do come out, make sure you know the main areas of EaSI, their aims and focus areas. Before the specific calls are released, brainstorm project ideas within one or two of these sections of EaSI. This will make it easier to create a relevant and pertinent proposal when the time comes.

Further information and links

- EaSI Brochure. “New EU Umbrella Programme for employment and social policy”.
<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=7682> =
- EURES- general information : <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1083&langId=en> and <https://ec.europa.eu/eures/page/homepage?lang=en>
- PROGRESS- general information: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1082&langId=en>
- PROGRESS Microfinance- general information:
<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1084&langId=en>