Employment and social innovation programme (EaSI)

**In a nutshell**
EaSI is an umbrella programme that brings together three previous EU programmes managed separately: Progress, Eures and the Progress Microfinance Facility. Progress helps to finance good analytical data about social policies and their dissemination, in order to base EU policies on evidence. Eures focuses on employment and encourages professional mobility. The Microfinance Facility provides help to social enterprises, namely by providing vulnerable groups with a financial contribution to let them start their own company.

**EU's Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) heading and policy area**
Heading 1a (Competitiveness for growth and jobs)
Employment and social affairs

**2014-2020 financial envelope (in current prices and as % of total MFF)**
Commitments: €919.47 million (0.08 %)

**2015 budget (in current prices and as % of total EU budget)**
Commitments: €124.64 million (0.08 %)
Payments: €89.77 million (0.06 %)

**2016 budget (in current prices and as % of total EU budget)**
Commitments: €127.10 million (0.08 %)
Payments: €90.30 million (0.06 %)

**Methods of implementation**
Direct management (European Commission); indirect management (European Investment Fund)

**In this briefing:**
- The EU's role in the policy area: legal basis
- Objectives of the programme
- Funded actions
- Assessment
- Other EU programmes in the area
- Main references
The EU’s role in the policy area: legal basis

The shared responsibility of the European Union (EU) and the Member States in the field of employment and social affairs is enshrined in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU). According to the TFEU, the EU (European Commission) coordinates and monitors national policies, promotes the sharing of best practices as regards employment, poverty and social exclusion and pensions, proposes laws and monitors their implementation in areas like rights at work and coordination of social security schemes.

General objectives related to employment and social affairs are also included in both recent overarching EU strategies, the Lisbon strategy (2000-2010) and Europe 2020 (2010-2020). The EU programme for employment and social innovation (EaSI) is established to contribute to the implementation of Europe 2020. It was created by Regulation (EU) No 1296/2013 on an EU programme for employment and social innovation (EaSI) and amending Decision No 283/2010/EU establishing a European Progress Microfinance Facility for employment and social inclusion.

The regulation creating EaSI points out that the programme should pay special attention to the following thematic parts of Europe 2020 ('flagship initiatives'): the European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion, an Agenda for New Skills and Jobs, Youth on the Move, as well as the Youth Employment Package.

Objectives of the programme

EaSI creates an umbrella that incorporates and extends the coverage of three existing programmes, the Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity (Progress), European Employment Services (Eures) and the Progress Microfinance Facility, which represent three complementary axes. EaSI supports:

- Union policies and law, to promote evidence-based policy-making, social innovation and social progress, in partnership with the social partners, civil society organisations and public and private bodies (Progress);
- Voluntary geographical mobility for workers on a fair basis, and contributing to a high level of quality and sustainable employment information exchanges and dissemination and other forms of cooperation, such as cross-border partnerships (Eures);
- Access to, and the availability of, financing for vulnerable persons, support for the development of the social investment market, and facilitating access to finance for social enterprises (Microfinance and Social Entrepreneurship axis of EaSI – MF/SE).

According to the regulation, the overall budget of more than €919 million for 2014-2020 should be divided between the three axes of the programme as follows: 61 % to Progress, 18 % to Eures and 21 % to MF/SE.

EaSI aims to improve the policy-making process in the fields of employment, social protection and social inclusion and working conditions, as well as to make a direct impact in the areas of labour mobility and microfinance/social entrepreneurship.

Concerning participation, the regulation establishes that the Progress and MF/SE axes are open to EU countries, EFTA/EEA countries and EU candidate and potential candidate countries, in line with the framework agreements concluded with them. The Eures axis is
open to national, regional and local authorities, employment services, social partner organisations and other interested parties from EU Member States, EEA countries and Switzerland.

In practice, Iceland participates in all EaSI axes; Norway is participating in Progress and Eures (but not in the MF/SE axis); while Liechtenstein is not participating in any EaSI activity. Switzerland participates at its own expense in most Eures activities only. Third countries, not listed above, are not eligible to respond to calls for proposals launched under EaSI, but may be allowed to participate in conferences, meetings and seminars.

**Funded actions**

Every axis of EaSI specifies actions that can be funded by the programme. They must comply with general priorities and specific objectives. The indicative breakdown of the overall allocation between thematic sections is given in the regulation (see percentages in Figure 1).

Annual EaSI work programmes list concrete measures to be supported financially. They contain an overview of funding priorities and calls for proposal with an indicative schedule.

Grants are attributed through individual calls for proposals which are published by the Commission on a dedicated website. In order to provide the supported projects with more visibility, the Commission prepares a summary publication with examples of good practices in the areas of employment, social affairs and inclusion. These are part of the monitoring of EaSI. Since 2014, one report per year is available.

**Progress**

Progress was initially established by the Decision No 1672/2006/EC as the Community Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity for the 2007-2013 period. It had to provide financial support for the implementation of EU objectives in the field of employment and social affairs. Three out of the five original main fields of activity have been included in the successor EaSI/Progress for 2014-2020: employment, in particular

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**Figure 1 – Forecast of operational expenditure by axis and thematic sections for the seven years**

(Initial allocations approved for 2014-2020 as at January 2014)

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<tr>
<td><strong>PROGRESS</strong></td>
<td>61%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>540,619,903</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employ. Min.</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>14,061,460</td>
<td>14,496,026</td>
<td>14,884,363</td>
<td>15,356,947</td>
<td>15,800,908</td>
<td>16,304,577</td>
<td>17,219,701</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working cond. Min.</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>7,030,730</td>
<td>7,248,013</td>
<td>7,442,181</td>
<td>7,678,473</td>
<td>7,900,454</td>
<td>8,152,289</td>
<td>8,609,851</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross-cutting max.</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>14,061,460</td>
<td>14,496,026</td>
<td>14,884,363</td>
<td>15,356,947</td>
<td>15,800,908</td>
<td>16,304,577</td>
<td>17,219,701</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>EURES</strong></td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>20,746,416</td>
<td>21,307,579</td>
<td>21,960,535</td>
<td>22,657,790</td>
<td>23,312,814</td>
<td>24,055,934</td>
<td>25,406,116</td>
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<td>transparency min.</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>6,039,853</td>
<td>6,844,025</td>
<td>7,027,371</td>
<td>7,230,409</td>
<td>7,400,101</td>
<td>7,657,859</td>
<td>8,129,957</td>
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<tr>
<td>development min.</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>6,223,925</td>
<td>6,416,274</td>
<td>6,980,161</td>
<td>7,679,337</td>
<td>6,993,644</td>
<td>7,216,780</td>
<td>7,021,015</td>
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<td>Cross-cutting max.</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>4,140,283</td>
<td>4,277,516</td>
<td>4,392,107</td>
<td>4,531,559</td>
<td>4,662,563</td>
<td>4,811,187</td>
<td>5,081,223</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>MF/SE</strong></td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>24,204,152</td>
<td>24,952,176</td>
<td>25,620,624</td>
<td>26,434,089</td>
<td>27,198,284</td>
<td>27,905,256</td>
<td>28,604,469</td>
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<tr>
<td>microfinance min.</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>10,891,958</td>
<td>11,228,479</td>
<td>11,529,281</td>
<td>11,895,340</td>
<td>12,229,228</td>
<td>12,629,365</td>
<td>13,338,211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>social entreprenur min.</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>10,891,958</td>
<td>11,228,479</td>
<td>11,529,281</td>
<td>11,895,340</td>
<td>12,229,228</td>
<td>12,629,365</td>
<td>13,338,211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross-cutting max.</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>2,420,415</td>
<td>2,495,218</td>
<td>2,562,062</td>
<td>2,643,409</td>
<td>2,719,828</td>
<td>2,806,526</td>
<td>2,964,047</td>
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Employment and social innovation programme (EaSI)

the fight against youth unemployment; social protection and inclusion, and the reduction and prevention of poverty; and working conditions.

Progress aims at a wide range of possible beneficiaries ranging from national, regional and local authorities, employment services and non-governmental organisations to higher education institutions, national statistical offices and the media. It is open to public and private bodies, actors and institutions, with the aim to:

- Develop and disseminate high-quality comparative analytical knowledge;
- Facilitate effective and inclusive information-sharing, mutual learning and dialogue;
- Provide financial support to test social and labour market policy innovations;
- Provide organisations with financial support to increase their capacity to develop, promote and support the implementation of EU instruments and policies.

Progress may co-finance analytical activities such as gathering of data and statistics, surveys, studies, qualitative and quantitative evaluations, etc. It can also contribute financially to mutual-learning, awareness and dissemination activities and provide support for other activities which relate to and contribute to the objectives of the Progress axis at EU level as well as at the level of national administrations. As a general rule, co-financing cannot exceed 80 % of the total eligible expenditure.

Activating and guiding the engagement of seniors through social media (Ages 2.0)

This experimental project aimed to determine how new technologies, particularly the internet and social networks, can help to foster communication and social inclusion of the elderly, and to evaluate the effects of information and communication technologies on their health and well-being. The elderly were followed by specialised social workers, and their progress in social relations, computer literacy and health was monitored.

The project, funded in 2012-2015 by the EaSI/Progress, took place in home-care centres in the United Kingdom and Italy. It tested on elderly people in both countries a methodology developed by a research group at the University of Exeter. Ages 2.0 falls into the field of social protection and social inclusion, and its results may contribute to policy making at national, regional or local levels.

Eures

Eures is the acronym for European Employment Services, which has existed since 1993. It was created by the Commission Decision on the implementing of Council Regulation (EEC) No 1612/68. Last modified by Regulation (EU) 2016/589, it is a cooperation network between the Commission and public employment services of the EEA member states, Switzerland and other partner organisations.

Eures is the second axis of EaSI, and supports the following thematic sections: transparency of job vacancies, applications and any related information for applicants and employers; and development of services for the recruitment and cross-border partnerships.

Specific objectives focus on the transparency of information about job vacancies and applications and relative standard interoperability forms as well as on the extension of Eures services to various phases of placement, ranging from pre-recruitment preparation to post-placement assistance. Eures may support actions to promote voluntary mobility of individuals in the EU and to remove mobility obstacles.
Financing can reach up to 95% of the total eligible expenditure. Eligible organisations must respond to a call for tender or to a call for proposals.

**Your first Eures Job (YfEJ)**

**YfEJ** is a mobility scheme that, since 2011, has helped young people to find a job, traineeship or apprenticeship in another Member State. The scheme also supports employers looking to find workforce in another EU country for their bottleneck vacancies (when it is difficult to find a candidate with a suitable job profile in the employer’s country). All candidates must be 18 to 30 years old, nationals of any of the EU-28 countries, Norway or Iceland, and resident in any of these countries.

The main objectives of YfEJ are to foster the exercise of workers’ freedom of movement, to address labour market mismatches and imbalances and to reduce intra-EU labour mobility obstacles (e.g. knowledge of languages, recognition of qualifications or the costs of moving abroad). Following a positive mid-term evaluation of the preparatory action (2014), the scheme is being continued under EaSI (Eures Axis) as a Targeted Mobility Scheme, with an annual budget of between €6 million and €9 million.

Under YfEJ project VS/2012/0067, the German Federal Employment Agency (Bundesagentur für Arbeit) provided support – information, recruitment, matching, placement and funding – for both young jobseekers and businesses interested in recruiting skilled young people from outside Germany. During the 18-month programme, 361 young people were supported through the payment of travel expenses, travel and relocation expenses as well as through preparatory language training. In addition, 32 SMEs benefited from financial support for a total of 46 integration programmes.

**Microfinance Facility/Social Entrepreneurship (MF/SE)**

The European Progress Microfinance Facility for employment and social inclusion was established in March 2010 by Decision No 283/2010/EU, with two main objectives: to increase access to microfinance for persons who wanted to start their own micro-enterprise but were in a difficult position for getting access to financial products available on the market; and to support micro-enterprises, especially in the social economy. The facility was also actively promoting equal opportunities for women and men.


In an updated setting, MF/SE aims at supporting microfinance\(^3\) for vulnerable groups and micro-enterprises, and social entrepreneurship. It follows three specific objectives:

- Increase access to, and the availability of, microfinance for vulnerable groups who want to set up or develop their business or micro-enterprise;
- Build up the institutional capacity of microcredit\(^4\) providers;
- Support the development of social enterprises, in particular by facilitating access to finance.

The MF/SE axis is open to public and private bodies providing microfinance for persons and micro-enterprises or to bodies providing financing for social enterprises. In practice,
the European Investment Fund (EIF) signs contracts with financial intermediaries in individual Member States in order to provide them with additional guarantees, and encourage them to offer more loans to the target audience. Social enterprises looking to obtain access to finance must contact a financial intermediary in their country.

Microcredit providers are invited to endorse (banks) or sign up to (non-bank microcredit providers) the European Code of Good Conduct for Microcredit Provision as a common standards document. In order to overcome any technical difficulties, they can benefit from EaSI Technical Assistance, which is implemented as a part of the fi-compass platform.

**Assessment**

In some respects, it is too early to assess EaSI. Many projects financed under this programme were initiated via calls for proposals launched under the previous programming period and finalised only several years later, as is the case with the projects presented above to illustrate different uses of EaSI financing.

Concerning financial instruments, the time span needed for evaluation is even longer. That is the reason why reports available today relate to the Progress Microfinance Facility rather than to the MF/SE of EaSI. A special report of the European Court of Auditors covers the use of financial instruments in the 2007-2013 programming period.

The European Commission’s ex-post evaluation of Progress 2007-2013 contains a set of recommendations for the following programming period in this area. Among them, more systematic thematic dissemination of results, better knowledge management of the results of the programme, a stronger focus on identifying transferable lessons, and better organised sharing and learning activities are worth mentioning.

The EaSI programme is subject to regular monitoring on a bi-annual basis. An initial performance monitoring report was issued in 2015, the next is expected in 2017. In the first year of EaSI, only around €52 million was actually committed out of €119.5 million planned for that year. The remaining means will be committed in the coming years of the programming period. The report expected that 97% of the expenditure planned in 2014 would actually be used.

Together with an external contractor, the Commission defined a logical framework for the EaSI programme and established the system to measure EaSI performance, including qualitative and quantitative key performance indicators. The performance report follows the structure of the key performance indicators. Some of these indicators recall the recommendations of the Progress 2007-2013 evaluation report.

The first EaSI performance monitoring report contains the results of two surveys. One survey focused on overall opinions of EaSI stakeholders (including EU and national policy and decision-makers, civil society, independent experts and other relevant groups) regarding the operation of the programme and usefulness of its outputs. The questions of the second survey were sent to participants in EaSI-supported events. The survey aimed to assess the value of these events and the usability of their results.

Overall, 50% of planned funds under Progress in 2014 were actually committed. The employment policy area committed the highest amount of planned funding (71%) which resulted in a bigger share than planned in the EaSI Regulation, compared to the other two general objectives.
Under the Eures axis, the biggest share of commitments (55%) is linked to the Eures job mobility portal. Germany, the United Kingdom and Finland have offered the highest number of vacancies through it, while the highest number of jobseekers were registered in Italy, Spain and Croatia. In total, more than 146 000 CVs were uploaded by 5 March 2015, as were more than 1 million job offers.

As activities under the MF/SE axis of EaSI did not start in 2014, the report reviews the contribution of the European Progress Microfinance Facility in 2014 in terms of pre-defined key performance indicators.

**Other EU programmes in the area**

In the area of employment, social affairs and social inclusion, the European Commission also provides funding through other programmes.

The European Social Fund (ESF), with financing of €10 billion a year, focuses on improving adaptability of workers, access to employment and vocational training. It encourages employment of people from disadvantaged groups. The ESF provides funding through concrete projects at local, regional and national level.

The European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF) helps people who have lost their jobs after the closure of a large company which is seen as a consequence of globalisation. The EGF’s annual budget is about €150 million.

The Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) supports EU countries’ actions to provide material assistance to the most deprived. These actions must be accompanied by social inclusion measures. For 2014-2020, over €3.8 billion is available.

**Main references**


**Endnotes**

1 Title I on categories and areas of Union competence, Title IX on employment and Title X on social policy.

2 Micro-enterprise means an enterprise, including a self-employed person, that employs fewer than 10 people and whose annual turnover or annual balance sheet total does not exceed €2 million.

3 Microfinance includes guarantees, microcredit, equity and quasi-equity extended to persons and micro-enterprises that experience difficulties accessing credit.

4 Microcredit means a loan of up to €25 000.

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