

[3] PROGRESS: The EU programme for employment and social solidarity 2007-2013

The Community Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity (PROGRESS) has been established to support financially the implementation of the objectives of the European Union in the fields of employment and social affairs, as set out in the Commission Communication on the Social Agenda, and thereby contribute to the achievement of the Lisbon Strategy goals in these areas.

■ Why PROGRESS?

The EU set up PROGRESS to accompany Member States' efforts to promote more and better jobs and equal opportunities for all.

The public is increasingly looking to the EU to strengthen a 'social Europe' so that it can deliver growth and more jobs as well as fight poverty and social exclusion.

To that end, The EU has carefully designed a new programme to support this policy development and its delivery in five areas:

- Employment
- Social inclusion and protection
- Working conditions
- Non-discrimination
- Gender equality

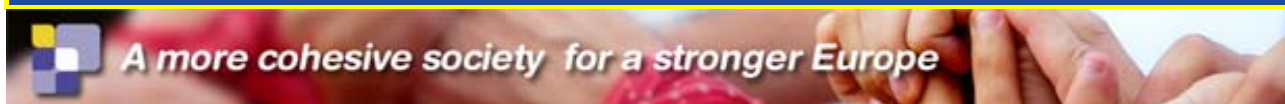
■ What are the objectives of PROGRESS?

PROGRESS is designed to ensure that EU social policy remains on course to face key policy challenges and concentrate on actions that need a combined European effort. It will work to support Member States to ensure they deliver on their EU commitments and implement and apply EU laws uniformly. With this objective, it will work in partnership with governments, but also local authorities, employers, trade unions and the voluntary sector.

■ What is the role of PROGRESS in the fields of Social Protection and Social Inclusion?

PROGRESS will support the Social Protection and Social Inclusion priorities of the Open Method of Coordination, the political process through which Member States coordinate their policies (for more information, please refer to Fact Sheet 2, *The Open Method of Coordination*).

About PROGRESS' mandate for 2007 includes:



- Provide information, analysis, research and statistical input for OMC policy coordination, including a survey on long-term and family care, a study on the prevention of child poverty, and improved monitoring of the implementation of EU social inclusion and protection laws;
- Research into funded pensions in the new Member States;
- Research on the workings of occupational pension schemes and private health insurances;
- Support the work of the EU Mutual Information System on Social Protection (MISSOC) which looks at the social and economic impact of social protection systems and reforms;
- Support EU expert networks to monitor the level of poverty and social exclusion in the Member States and fund seminars to enable peer review;
- Raise awareness and promote mutual learning on social inclusion and protection, including an annual meeting of People Experiencing Poverty as well as an annual Round Table of all the relevant stakeholders;
- Support strong civil society involvement, crucial for developing social policies, and the capacity of key EU networks in this field;
- Launch feasibility studies to look at new activities such as networking among specialised institutional bodies and the exchange of personnel between national/regional administrations;
- Fund transnational exchange projects on policy priorities to support social inclusion and protection.

■ What is the budget of PROGRESS?

PROGRESS has a global budget of €743 million for seven years. Thirty per cent of this will be specifically dedicated to Social Protection and Social Inclusion activities.

PROGRESS is open to the 27 EU Member States, EFTA/EEA countries, the accession and candidate countries associated to the EU, as well as to Western Balkan countries included in the stabilisation and associated process. It targets states, local and regional authorities, public employment services and national statistics offices. Specialised bodies, universities and research institutes, as well as social partners and non-governmental organisations, can also participate.

The Commission will primarily carry out the activities through calls for tenders or calls for proposals.

■ The EU Social Protection Social Inclusion Process

Through the EU Social Protection and Social Inclusion Process, the European Union coordinates and encourages Member State actions to combat poverty and social exclusion, and to reform their social protection systems on the basis of policy exchange and mutual learning. As such, it underpins the achievement of the Union's strategic goal of sustained economic growth, more and better jobs, and greater social cohesion by 2010.