Employment and social cohesion: programme Progress for employment and social solidarity, 2007-2013

2004/0158(COD) - 24/10/2006 - Final act

PURPOSE: the establishment of “Progress”.

LEGISLATIVE ACT: Decision 1672/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a Community Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity – Progress.

BACKGROUND: the Community has decided to adopt a financial programme to focus specifically on employment. It is based on the Lisbon Agenda, agreed upon in 2000, and which sets out an ambitious target of making the EU the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion. One of the key targets set by the Lisbon Agenda is to seek conditions for full employment; to encourage improvements in the quality and productivity at work; to promote social cohesion and to foster an inclusive labour market. In March 2006 the Heads of State reiterated their commitment to the Lisbon Agenda.

In 2000 the Lisbon Council concluded that the number of people living below the poverty line and in social exclusion was unacceptable. They therefore agreed to make progress in the eradication of poverty through the setting of adequate objectives. At the same time it was agreed that policies for combating social exclusion would be based on the open method of co-ordination. The other issues addressed by the Lisbon Agenda include demographic changes and the impact this will have on pensions and the impact of migration on the EU workforce.

The adoption of this act must also be viewed within the context of the “European Employment Strategy”, which seeks to co-ordinate Member States’ employment policies through commonly agreed employment guidelines and recommendations.

With the adoption of the new Financial Framework Programme 2007-2013, a series of new programmes has been adopted in several areas including employment and social affairs. Iin line with the Commission's express intention of consolidating and rationalising Community funding instruments, this Decision should establish a single and streamlined programme providing for the continuation and development of the activities launched on the basis of :

- Council Decision 2000/750/EC establishing a Community action programme to combat discrimination (2001 to 2006);
- Council Decision 2001/51/EC establishing a Programme relating to the Community framework strategy on gender equality (2001-2005);
- European Parliament and Council Decision 50/2002/EC establishing a programme of Community action to encourage cooperation between Member States to combat social exclusion,
- 1145/2002/EC on Community incentive measures in the field of employment;
- 848/2004/EC establishing a Community action programme to promote organisations active at European level in the field of equality between men and women, as well as those activities undertaken at Community level in relation to working conditions.

CONTENT: this Decision establishes: the Community Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity to be known, and referred to, as "Progress". Its purpose is to support, through financial means, the implementation of the EU's employment and social affairs objectives and to thereby contribute to the achievement of the Lisbon objectives. To realise this ambition, Progress has a budget of **EUR 657 590 000** , based on 2004 prices. The programme will run from 1 January 2007 – 31 December 2013. The programme's more general objectives are :

- to improve Member States' understanding and knowledge of the employment situation prevailing in the other Member States;
- to support the development of statistical tools and methods and common indicators;
- to support and monitor the implementation of Community law;
- to promote networking, mutual learning, identification and dissemination of good practice at a European level;
- to enhance the awareness of Community policies and objectives with the general public and stakeholders;
- to boost the capacity of key European level networks.

Progress will be structured around five key sections. They are as follows:

1. Employment: This section will support the implementation of the European Employment Strategy (EES). It will do so by, *inter alia,* financing studies; by monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the European Employment Guidelines and Recommendations; by organising exchanges on good practice and innovative approaches; by raising awareness; and by promoting the debate on employment. It will receive 23% of the total allocated budget.

2. Social protection and inclusion: This section will support the implementation of the open method of co-ordination (OMC) in the field of social protection and inclusion. It will do so by improving the understanding of social exclusion; poverty, social protection and inclusion policies; by monitoring and evaluation implementation of the OMC; organising exchanges on good practice; by raising awareness of social protection and inclusion; and by developing the capacity of key European level networks to support Community policies. It will receive 30% of the total allocated budget.

3. Working conditions: This section will support improvements in the working environment and working conditions, including health and safety at work and reconciling work and family life. It will do so through studies and research into working conditions; supporting implementation of Community labour law; initiating preventative actions; by promoting a culture of prevention vis-à-vis health and safety at work; and by raising awareness of the issued involved. It will receive 10% of the total allocated budget.

4. Anti-discrimination and diversity: This section will support the effective implementation of the principle of non-discrimination and it will help support its mainstreaming in all EU policies. It will do so by improving understanding of the principle through studies; by supporting implementation of Community anti-discrimination legislation; by raising awareness of discrimination; and by developing the capacity of key European level networks working in the field of anti-discrimination. It will receive 23% of the total budget.

5. Gender equality: This section will support the effective implementation of the principle of gender equality and gender mainstreaming in all EU policies. It will do so by improving understanding of gender issues; by supporting implementation of Community gender equality legislation through effective monitoring, by holding seminars and networking functions; by raising awareness and by developing the capacity of key European level networks working in the field of gender equality. It will receive 12% of the total budget.

The types of actions funded are:

Analytical activities: such as collating data; the development and dissemination of common methodologies, indicators and benchmarks, carrying out studies and the dissemination of results and the publication of guides, reports etc.

Mutual learning, awareness and dissemination activities: such as identification of, and exchanges on, good practices and innovative approaches; the organisation of conferences and seminars; the organisation of media campaigns and events; the compilation and publication of materials needed to disseminate information on Progress.

Support for the main actors: such as the running costs of key European level networks whose activities are linked to the implementation of Progress; organising working groups for national experts; funding specialised seminars; networking among specialised bodies at a European level; funding European level observatories; and funding the exchange of personnel between national administration.

The programme will be open to all public and/or private bodies, actors and institutions including, the Member States; public employment services and their agencies; local and regional authorities; specialised bodies provided for under Community law; the social partners; NGO's; higher education institutions and research institutes; experts in evaluation; national statistical offices and the media. In addition, Progress will be open to EFTA/EEA and the accession and candidate countries associated with the EU as well as the western Balkan countries including in the stabilisation and association process.

Activities will be financed either through a service contract or through partial support following a call for proposals.

ENTRY INTO FORCE: 5 December 2006.