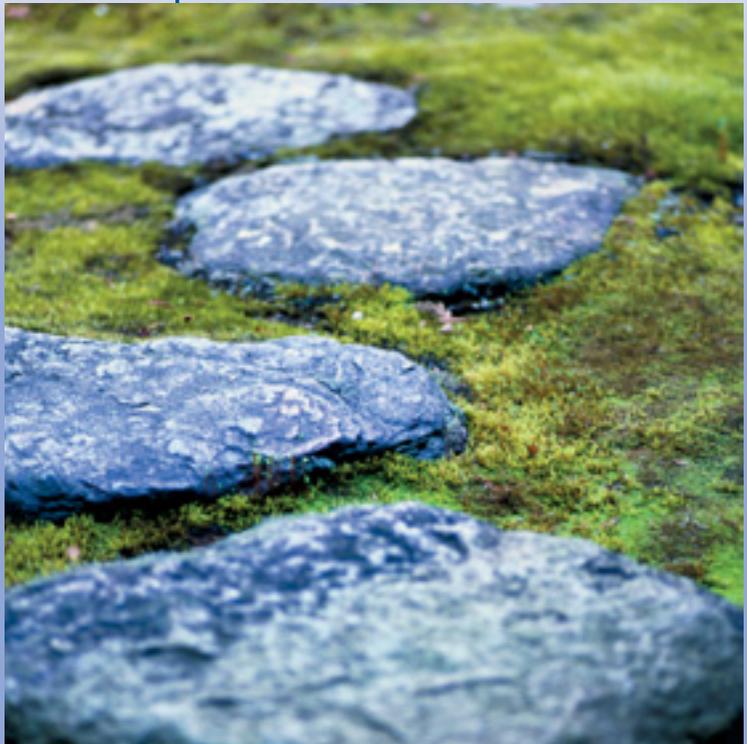




European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions

Changing Europe: Better work, better life

Four-year work programme 2005-2008





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Four-year work programme 2005-2008

**Adopted by the Administrative Board of the
European Foundation for the Improvement of
Living and Working Conditions
on 8 July 2004.**



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The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions is an autonomous body of the European Union, created to assist in the formulation of future policy on social and work-related matters. Further information can be found on the Foundation website at **www.eurofound.eu.int**.

European Foundation for the Improvement
of Living and Working Conditions
Wyattville Road
Loughlinstown
Dublin 18
Ireland

Tel: (+353 1) 204 31 00

Fax: (+353 1) 282 42 09 / 282 64 56

Email : information@eurofound.eu.int

Web: www.eurofound.eu.int

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Foreword

‘Looking ahead to the opportunities and challenges facing the new EU...’

This document sets out the strategic framework for the Foundation’s programme over the next four years (2005-2008). It highlights future challenges for social policy in Europe and pinpoints the knowledge gaps to be addressed by the Foundation and its research activities in the period following the most extensive enlargement of the European Union in May 2004. Enlargement, with its far-reaching economic, social and institutional implications, remains one of the key factors of change over the next four years. The fundamental aim of the four-year programme is to look ahead to the opportunities and challenges facing the new EU.

The Foundation aims to support policies to make Europe the most competitive, knowledge-based economy in the world, to increase employment rates and the quality of employment, to stimulate innovation and entrepreneurship, while promoting social cohesion and inclusion – in short, to realise the objectives of the Lisbon strategy.

In this context, the Foundation aims to provide knowledge from its monitoring activities and other research to better understand the challenges, support change in society and the economy, and offer its stakeholders the information necessary for managing change.

The programme identifies four key themes as priority areas for the Foundation’s work: employment; work–life balance; industrial relations and partnership; and social cohesion. It also underlines the importance of a comprehensive and integrated approach to these policy issues and highlights the need for effective communication with the Foundation’s key audiences across Europe.

The detailed work programme is approved on an annual basis by the Foundation’s Administrative Board.

Willy Buschak
Acting Director



Introduction

‘Supporting the work of the main social actors charged with responsibility for planning and establishing better living and working conditions in Europe...’

Mission and role of the Foundation

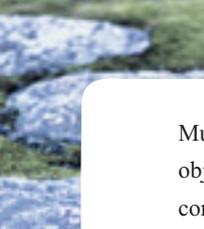
The Foundation was established in 1975 with a mandate to ‘contribute to the planning and establishment of better living and working conditions through action designed to increase and disseminate knowledge likely to assist this development’.¹ As a centre for research and monitoring, the Foundation aims to be a key reference and source of information on improving living and working conditions in Europe.

Many of the issues the Foundation has examined in recent years – such as ageing, working time, and the information society – are now high on the European social agenda. Over the last decade, the Foundation has provided its stakeholders and the general public with an extensive knowledge base of comparative data on industrial relations, working conditions and related aspects of living conditions. The European Industrial Relations Observatory, the European Working Conditions survey and the European Quality of Life survey (EQLS) are unique sources of knowledge. During its previous four-year programme (2001-2004), the research and monitoring activities of the Foundation were progressively extended to include the present 10 new Member States and three candidate countries (Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey).

In 2001 the Foundation further strengthened its monitoring capacity with the establishment of the European Monitoring Centre on Change (EMCC). This undertakes a range of networking, research, information and dissemination activities focused on understanding and anticipating industrial change in Europe.

Research that examines practical experience and identifies factors for successful change complements the monitoring tools and related analyses. The Foundation thus contributes not only to documenting and understanding change, but also to developing and communicating ideas for the medium- and longer-term improvement of living and working conditions.

¹ Council Regulation (EEC) No. 1365/75 of 26 May 1975.



Much of the impetus for its most recent work has been drawn from the challenges and objectives of the Lisbon strategy. This requires acting on all fronts – employment, competitiveness, good quality living and working conditions – at the same time.

The workplace or company level, where change is taking place, merits greater attention – as do the structural factors driving change in the workplace. Workplaces must be geared for constant change and innovation. The Foundation can play a key role in creating a shared understanding among all stakeholders of the changes needed at the workplace level and in promoting a willingness to embrace new ways of working.

Given its autonomy, broad mandate and tripartite structure, the Foundation is particularly well suited to promote an integrated and multi-dimensional approach to improvements in quality of work and life and to the anticipation and management of change. This enables it to respond well to the goal of a more coordinated approach to economic, employment and social policies at EU level.

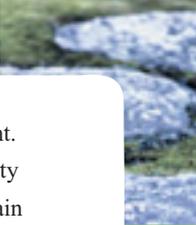
The Foundation's target audiences include the public authorities, social partners and those concerned with social policymaking at EU level. By linking research with policy concerns, the Foundation aims to provide information that is relevant to those who design and implement policy.

Its work is also of value to those managing change and implementing improvements on the ground in workplaces and in localities. Its tripartite governance structure facilitates the active participation of these key social actors in the development, the debate and the dissemination of the Foundation's work.

Changing context

Enlargement presents major opportunities for the social, economic and cultural development of Europe. Foundation research has shown that all Europeans have similar ideas about what contributes to their quality of life: good health, sufficient income and a supportive family. There will be a need to strengthen social policy in the period following enlargement, as existing challenges become more urgent and new challenges emerge. Many issues that were important in previous years still need to be addressed: unemployment, low pay and poverty, disability and ill-health, inadequacies in health, social and other public services or systems, industrial relations, access to information and communication technologies. Some disadvantaged groups are likely to need more specific attention.

The growing diversity of cultural values and experiences in the social arena, as well as differences between countries and regions in productivity and employment will all impact on the Foundation's activities. The Commission's Third Report on Economic and Social Cohesion highlights the importance of human capital and access to education and training but also the need to address other key factors for competitiveness such as physical and social capital, innovative capacity and environmental quality. The links between social and economic development and environmental protection need to be reinforced.



The Lisbon Strategy represents the EU's main approach to social and economic development. It presents three complementary and mutually supportive objectives: full employment, quality and productivity at work, and social cohesion and inclusion. Meeting the challenges to remain competitive in the global economy, to build and maintain productivity and employment, and also to provide a high quality of living and working conditions, particularly in a knowledge-driven economy, will require accurate, relevant, timely and practical information from the Foundation to support the key actors in this process.

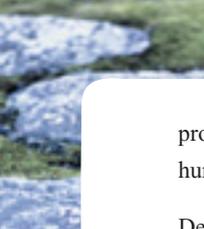
Achievement of the Lisbon objectives is an ambitious goal and the report of the European Employment Taskforce, chaired by Wim Kok, underlines the need to boost employment – both to promote economic growth and to tackle poverty and social exclusion. The report emphasises the need for an integrated approach to address the structural challenges of globalisation, economic integration and the rapid ageing of the population. Member States, social partners, enterprises and workers must increase their capacity to anticipate, trigger and absorb change, if more and better jobs are to be created and filled. To achieve higher employment rates, it will be critical to retain more people in work as well as attracting more people to the labour market, particularly women and older workers.

The review of the European Social Policy Agenda in mid-2003 confirmed the need to promote quality as the driving force of a thriving economy geared to producing more and better jobs and greater social cohesion. The implementation of the second half of the Agenda will focus on achieving more and better jobs, balancing flexibility and security, fighting poverty, exclusion and discrimination, modernising work organisation and social protection, and promoting gender equality across existing and new Member States.

Other developments such as the increased use of the Open Method of Coordination, benchmarking and the development of indicators and target-based strategies in social policy all have important implications for the management of change and thus the future work of the Foundation. In the context of globalisation, benchmarking against developments outside the EU, for example in the US, Japan, China and India, should be examined.

The European Monitoring Centre on Change specifically collects and exchanges information to bring about better understanding, anticipation and management of change in companies, sectors and regions. Companies and the workplace – as a setting for change – are central to the Foundation's broader concerns with living and working conditions. In the next few years, it will dedicate more of its activities to a better understanding of the drivers of change and to a better anticipation and management of change. The Foundation is particularly well placed to look at the structures, technologies, practices and cultures that either help or hinder organisational learning and innovation.

Essential considerations include the growing importance of microfirms and small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), new working time arrangements, mobility of jobs and



production, decentralisation of services and governance, innovations in work organisation, human capital development, research and technology.

Demographic and social changes (particularly ageing of the workforce and general population but also recent and rapid changes in household structure, fertility rates, mobility/migration) pose a continued challenge to the modernisation and reform of social protection – especially social security and pensions – as does the persistence of poverty and social exclusion. They also have important consequences for employment and labour market strategies, for governance and systems of industrial relations.

The Foundation's four-year programme aims to address the challenges and goals outlined above. It is designed primarily to support the work of the main social actors charged with the responsibility for planning and establishing better living and working conditions in Europe.

General objectives

‘Reinforcing core activities, strengthening the monitoring role and developing a forward-looking perspective across all areas...’

The Foundation’s four-year programme is informed by recent and likely future developments in Europe’s economy and society, as well as new trends and changes outside the EU. It also reflects a reassessment of the role of the Foundation and its capacity to continue to fulfil its mandate effectively and efficiently. This process has given rise to a series of general orientations for the development of the work programme over the next four years:

- **Develop and reinforce the core activities of research, debate and information dissemination**

The overall objective is to increase their effectiveness, efficiency, relevance and coherence.

- **Strengthen its main monitoring activities and research**

The aim is to ensure high quality and policy-relevant information in the areas of working conditions, living conditions, industrial relations and the European Monitoring Centre on Change (EMCC).

- **Focus on a limited number of key policy themes**

This will involve building on its core strengths, its monitoring activities and earlier work, taking into account available resources and the needs of its target audiences.

- **Develop its work in the light of practical experience**

This will involve analysing initiatives in workplaces and companies in particular, but also in communities and regions.

- **Emphasise a forward-looking perspective in its activities**

This is aimed at enhancing the skills and capacities of the main social actors to anticipate, manage and foster change; the Foundation must therefore adopt a flexible approach and be responsive as new priorities emerge.

- **Extend gender mainstreaming**

This requires the integration of a gender perspective in planning, programming, implementation and evaluation activities in a comprehensive and policy-relevant way across the work of the Foundation.

- **Include a sectoral perspective (private and public sectors) in its work**

The choice of specific sectors will be determined by the results of its analyses of change as well as EU policy objectives.



Priorities for 2005-2008

‘Monitoring change, exploring what works, and communicating ideas and experience...’

The eighth four-year programme of the Foundation builds on existing strengths, areas of expertise and proven services. It is future-oriented and will maintain a capacity to explore new and emerging issues as Europe moves towards 2010. Increasing demands and higher expectations from its stakeholders and users requires the Foundation to remain flexible and responsive, seeking greater efficiency while reinforcing the quality and value of its activities.

The work programme will be organised around three main tasks:

1. Monitoring and understanding change.
2. Research and exploring what works.
3. Communicating and sharing ideas and experience.

These three tasks will be carried out in relation to the four key themes of the work programme: employment, work-life balance, industrial relations and partnership, and social cohesion.

Monitoring and understanding change

The Foundation’s monitoring tools include both periodic questionnaire surveys (working conditions, living conditions, companies) and regular reporting on new developments from correspondents and institutes in Member States through the European Industrial Relations Observatory (EIRO), the European Working Conditions Observatory (EWCO) and the European Restructuring Monitor (ERM) –

the latter being part of the European Monitoring Centre on Change (EMCC).

The surveys enable the Foundation to collect and analyse comparable data on the situation across the EU on a regular basis. Detailed exploration of these data allows the Foundation to identify new and emerging trends, as well as to deepen understanding of policy issues. The survey results, as well as offering a unique source of information, provide a strong basis for defining opportunities for improvement and for developing forward-looking perspectives. The regular organisation of surveys and the presentation and systematic analysis of reports from Member States have consistently proved to be a much sought-after resource.

Over the next four years, the Foundation will:

- Continue to provide regular and high quality data on trends and developments in the enlarged Europe, and in non-EU countries as appropriate.
- Seek to reinforce the quality and relevance of its monitoring tools, exploring synergies, both internally and with outside sources.
- Re-examine and improve newer initiatives such as the EWCO.
- Pay increasing attention to ensuring good comparative analysis and strengthen the internal capacity to exploit the data.
- Further develop the Foundation's monitoring instruments as primary tools for the anticipation and management of change.
- Strengthen the role of EMCC as a primary instrument in promoting Europe's capacity to anticipate and manage change.
- Expand monitoring of trends and developments across the border areas between new and old Member States.

The four-year programme will build on previous experience, implementing one full cycle of existing surveys:

- working conditions survey in 2005;
- quality of life survey in 2007;
- a new company survey in 2008.

These monitoring activities will follow the general objectives and relate to the key thematic areas in order to ensure coherence between the three main tasks for 2005-2008.

Research and exploring what works

According to its mandate, the Foundation has the task of developing ideas on the improvement of living and working conditions in the light of practical experience.² This means exploring both what works and what does not. The monitoring activities involve extensive analyses but the Foundation will aim to complement them with more information and research on the management of change and development of innovation. It will undertake studies to examine the human and social dimensions of growth and competitiveness, analysing both the implementation and outcome of change initiatives. This could involve case studies and action research in workplace and local settings, in specific sectors of activity or regions in selected Member States.

² Article 2.2 of the establishing Regulation



Over the next four years, the Foundation will:

- Carry out in-depth research studies on specific policy and practice initiatives and the factors influencing their development, aiming to identify key lessons for effective implementation and successful practice.
- Clearly specify the criteria for the selection of these research projects in its annual work programmes, taking account of the results of its monitoring and other research, the current EU policy objectives in the fields concerned and the key themes highlighted for the 2005-2008 period.
- Establish, as appropriate, databases of practical experience, which could support a more longitudinal and dynamic analysis of the sustainability of improvement measures.

The Foundation will apply an integrated and multi-dimensional approach to quality of life issues, paying attention to the links between working and living conditions and related policies, and to the roles of the different actors concerned. The Foundation will not focus solely on problems or on specific groups or sectors in difficulty but will take a more positive approach, identifying opportunities in social and economic change to prevent problems arising. The studies in this area will

reflect the general objectives and key themes for 2005-2008.

Communicating and sharing ideas and experience

The Foundation is mandated to foster the exchange of information and experience.³ This requires it to be proactive in transferring and communicating the results of its work to its stakeholders, target groups and various information intermediaries. It should also provide opportunities for the actors involved in EU social policy to debate and exchange ideas and experience on selected social issues.

Over the next four years, the Foundation will:

- Support the sharing of practical experience and results from research in an enlarged Europe (tailored seminars, company and business school networks, development of learning materials from Foundation work).
- Develop the capacity of key actors to deal with new challenges through raising awareness of emerging or future policy issues, providing concepts and models to assist strategic thinking, and supporting the use of relevant methods or tools to address these challenges.
- Strengthen its debate function by providing opportunities for the different actors, such as public authorities, social partners,

³ Article 3.1 of the establishing Regulation.

practitioners, researchers, to discuss the findings of the Foundation's work (project-level workshops, theme/issue based seminars, major conferences, including the biennial Foundation Forum).

The Foundation is also mandated to cooperate as closely as possible with specialised institutes, foundations and bodies in the Member States or at international level.⁴ This applies in particular to the European Agency for Health and Safety at Work in Bilbao, where the Foundation will build on the existing cooperation agreement. The Foundation will explore the possibility of concluding similar agreements with other agencies, such as the European Environment Agency in Copenhagen.

Network building has always been an important tool for the Foundation. It will re-examine its networks and communities of practice (formal and informal) to improve cooperation in data collection, knowledge transfer and exchange of experience. The aim is to develop a more formal strategy for this activity for the next four years, which will specify the types of networks, their members and purpose as well as their obligations and expected outcomes.

The main objectives for communication activities will be:

- To communicate the work of the Foundation to its target audiences in a

timely and relevant manner through oral presentations, meetings and events, printed and electronic products.

- To provide products and outputs tailored to the needs of the various stages of policy and practice development from the concept and design stage to the practical consequences of implementation and assessment.
- To provide tools and methods to facilitate ongoing and interactive access to Foundation information through improved use of technology and the repackaging of Foundation information as appropriate.
- To provide guidance in finding relevant information (catalogues, indexes, links).
- To make more effective use of web-based tools to support the dissemination and use of the results of the Foundation's work, in particular the data from its monitoring activities.

An annual communication plan will form part of the annual programme of work. This will respond to user demands and ensure that target groups are kept informed of developments and thematic issues. A strategic plan for the application of information and communication technology will support the Foundation's capacity to communicate with and inform its target audiences.

⁴ Article 3.2 *idem*.



Key themes

‘Focusing on four key themes in order to achieve coherence across the different areas of expertise...’

The Foundation has identified four key themes for the 2005-2008 period which it will explore in more depth:

- Employment.
- Work–life balance.
- Industrial relations and partnership.
- Social cohesion.

These themes have been selected on the basis of the mandate and particular strengths of the Foundation. They reflect main elements of the Lisbon strategy and EU social policy, as well as essential challenges – now and in the future – for the enlarged Europe. The Foundation will focus its activities on these priority themes – in its monitoring activities, in exploring what works and in communication and sharing of experience – so as to achieve coherence across its different areas of expertise.

Some indications of the issues within each theme that might be addressed in research, debate and dissemination are provided as an illustration of the possible scope of the work. The actual selection will be further defined in the annual work programmes, based on the results of previous research and taking account of policy priorities at EU level, in particular in relation to enlargement and achievement of the objectives of the Lisbon Strategy.

Employment

The Foundation has already built up a substantial body of knowledge and expertise on the links between flexibility, productivity and access to the labour market. Nevertheless, the relationship between flexibility and employment will be an important topic for further research. Working conditions is an integral part of the Foundation’s core business and improving employment in terms of quantity and quality of jobs is a high priority of EU policy. Equal opportunities and better access to employment is central to both the Lisbon and European employment strategies.

The results of the 2004 company survey and the 2005 working conditions survey and their subsequent analyses, together with the EMCC’s European Restructuring Monitor, will provide valuable data to support work on this theme. They will also inform more in-depth studies on practical experiences with implementation of workplace development activities. Studies will identify future changes in the labour market at sectoral and national levels, and measures to improve links between the demand for and supply of workers. The research will pay particular attention to recruitment and retention of vulnerable groups in employment.



Issues that could be examined include: new forms and patterns of work; modernisation of work organisation; developing capacity for workplace innovation; role of external factors in building capacity for innovation and modernisation; developing entrepreneurship and networking between companies; occupational/professional mobility; movement of jobs between regions and countries; human capital, lifelong learning, career development, vocational guidance/counselling and management of risks; quality of work and workplace developments in relation to competitiveness, productivity and job creation; entrepreneurship; access to and retention/reintegration in work, particularly for disadvantaged groups; managing different generations at the workplace.

Work–life balance

The Foundation has a particular niche in investigating the inter-relationships between living and working conditions, including the need to reconcile the demands of working life with family, lifelong learning, non-work commitments and time for recreation. Resolving the many issues faced by workers, both men and women, and their families is important not only in terms of their quality of life, but also in achieving the higher

employment rates and competitive economic growth of the Lisbon objectives.

Information and analysis of the results of the Foundation's European Quality of Life survey, the 2004 company survey and the 2005 working conditions survey will provide an opportunity to take a fresh look at this long-standing issue and point to further research on measures to improve the situation.

Issues for specific attention could include: new initiatives being developed in companies and collective bargaining, particularly from a life-course perspective; links between work–life balance and competitiveness and job creation; the role of relevant policies and services (employment, pensions, social security, care, education, environment/transport/housing); the role of public authorities and actors outside the company in supporting workers and employers to implement a life-course perspective in work organisation; links to ageing and demographic change; developments in family policy; issues for specific categories of workers (e.g. parents, carers of elderly and dependent persons, older and migrant workers) and for SMEs and micro firms.



Industrial relations and partnership

As a tripartite organisation with long-standing working relationships with the social partners and public authorities at EU and national level, the Foundation is in a strong position to facilitate debate among the social partners and public authorities. In particular the Foundation has extensive experience in monitoring and analysing the roles of the industrial relations actors, industrial relations processes and outcomes.

EIRO will continue to be an important part of the Foundation's core business and will contribute to all the key themes. However, the issue of partnership is a topic in its own right, particularly given EU enlargement and the importance of these processes as a means of improving quality of life and managing and anticipating change.

Workplace partnership is a potentially important driver of, and resource for, organisational innovation, for increasing productivity and the capacity for change.

Under this theme, the Foundation could aim to cover issues such as: the roles of the social partners and the development of social dialogue (especially in the new Member States and in the context of the widening social agenda); new structures, forms and processes of governance;

industrial relations in SMEs; the interconnections between different structures and levels of industrial relations and social dialogue – links to job creation, changing labour markets, development of innovation and competitiveness; and the role of partnerships in the anticipation and management of change, including links with public authorities and civil society actors.

Social cohesion

The European Council of Lisbon in March 2000 recognised that the extent of poverty and social exclusion in the EU was unacceptable. Building a more inclusive Union has thus become an essential element in achieving its 10-year strategic goal of sustained economic growth, more and better jobs and greater social cohesion.

In its recent analysis of the Eurobarometer survey on quality of life in the acceding and candidate countries, the Foundation showed that there will be an even greater need to tackle unemployment, poverty and social exclusion in an enlarged Europe. The capacity of the Foundation to monitor and analyse developments in this area has been further enhanced with the completion of its own first European Quality of Life survey in 28 European countries carried out in 2003. This will assist in identifying issues for more in-depth study and lay the basis for

more longitudinal monitoring of developments over time.

Issues that could be taken up under this theme include: ageing, inter-generational solidarity and the challenges of pensions, health and care; social, economic and cultural integration of migrants (employment, social protection, housing); quality of the environment and of public

services, particularly in the new Member States and candidate countries, and for persons on low incomes or in rural areas; the influence of social protection systems and social innovations on job creation, industrial innovation and entrepreneurship; the role of the private and non-market sectors in promoting social inclusion; social inclusion for the elderly and other groups outside the labour market.



Evaluation

‘Drawing on the results of evaluation for the design of activities and the setting of priorities...’

The Commission’s new Financial Regulation under Chapter 7, Article 25.4 obliges the Foundation to regularly carry out *ex ante* and *ex post* evaluations of programmes and activities. In line with this requirement and building on the results of the first external evaluation undertaken in 2000-2001, the Foundation will continue to strengthen its evaluation procedures.

The main aims shall be to use the results of evaluation to contribute to the design of activities and the setting of priorities, to assist in the efficient allocation of resources, to improve the quality of the actions undertaken, and to report on achievements.

In particular, the Foundation will:

- Monitor the implementation and achievement of the strategic objectives of the 2005-2008 programme and of its annual work programmes in a continuous and systematic way, including the generation of quantitative data.
- Improve the operational tools and processes to support the monitoring and evaluation of the Foundation’s activities, including the contact management system, tracking of the use and impact of Foundation outputs and services, project management tools and frameworks, web monitoring, user surveys, conference assessment, etc.
- Provide regular feedback on the implementation of the Foundation’s activities to its stakeholders, for example in its annual report.

- Strengthen its processes of quality control and evaluation at project level, providing feedback for continuous improvement during the course of the programme.
- Maintain its system of stakeholder involvement in the evaluation of products and services through its Advisory Committees (including the possible involvement of external experts in line with the provisions of the revised Regulation concerning the governance of the Foundation).

The Foundation will also, during the 2005-2008 period, undertake two major external evaluations in the following areas:

- The European Monitoring Centre on Change (in 2005);
- The activities of the Foundation as a whole (in 2007), to cover the period from 2001-2006. This exercise will support the planning of activities and the establishment of priorities for the next four-year

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