



European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions

# Analysing and anticipating change to support socio-economic progress

FOUR-YEAR PROGRAMME 2001-2004



*The four-year programme 2001-2004 of the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions was approved by its Administrative Board on 21 September 2000.*

#### OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAMME

- To provide the strategic guidelines for the work of the Foundation from 2001 to 2004
- To set out the main objectives for the different areas of its work
- To establish a framework for the development of the annual programmes of work, which detail the activities to be implemented in relation to a specific annual budget
- To assist the Foundation to respond more effectively to the needs of the social actors at EU level

The official document is available for downloading from the Foundation's website at [www.eurofound.ie](http://www.eurofound.ie) or on request from the information centre at the following address:

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# 1 Introduction

*The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions was created 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.'* <sup>(1)</sup>

*The Foundation has developed in the past 25 years into a unique European centre in the societal field, providing research findings and information in response to the needs of policy makers and experts at EU level. Its tripartite structure, involving both EU and national public authorities, employer and worker organisations, facilitates the active participation of these key actors in the development and implementation of its activities and creates an appropriate vehicle for the dissemination and discussion of its work outputs.*

*The Foundation's stakeholders have recognised the changes in work and society that have taken place since the Foundation's creation. In that perspective they have reassessed the role and contribution of the Foundation. This has resulted in the four-year programme for 2001-2004, based on a series of guiding principles. The programme was approved by its Administrative Board on 21 September 2000. It sets out a strategic framework for the Foundation's contribution to the process of improving working and living conditions in the context of a radically transforming economy and society. This booklet contains an abridged version of the programme.*

*Raymond-Pierre Bodin,  
Director*

*Eric Verborgh  
Deputy Director*

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

## **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

- Developing and consolidating key areas of activity: research/development, debate/discussion and information/dissemination
- Strengthening core areas of expertise – working conditions, living conditions and industrial relations – in order to be able to monitor and analyse trends on a comparative basis, identify and research emerging issues and respond in a timely and relevant way to the information needs of decision makers
- Focusing on fewer and more substantial research programmes rather than a multiplicity of projects, combined with more internal analysis of Foundation data and findings to meet the specific needs of key policy audiences, with an emphasis on an integrated and holistic view of issues across living and working conditions
- Reinforcing the Foundation's role as a forum for debate and taking advantage of the added value provided by its tripartite structure
- Implementing a more coherent and consistent communications strategy, making effective use of electronic media, and building networks and close working relationships with relevant bodies, to improve responsiveness to the information needs of policy makers, especially at EU level
- Increasing accountability, transparency and cost effectiveness, delivered through objective evaluation of the Foundation's performance, which will be included from the outset of programmes and activities. More active communication with, and feedback from, key users should form part of the monitoring and evaluation process
- Taking into account important changes in the European Union, especially the future enlargement of the EU to new Member States

# 2 The context and major changes

In implementing the 2001-2004 programme, the Foundation will continue to monitor key developments and trends in the European Union such as:

- The ongoing evolution towards a knowledge-based society;
- The emergence of the new economy which is transforming business and markets and opening up new opportunities;
- The effects of globalisation, EMU and ongoing market reforms on Europe's economy;
- The rise of micro firms and SMEs;
- Unemployment rates and the low average rate of employment in the EU (62%);
- Low levels of labour market participation among women, older and disabled people;
- Skills and training deficits;
- The persistence of poverty and social exclusion;
- The ageing population and changing household/family structures;
- Increasing mobility and immigration, creating greater diversity;
- Sustainable development and environmental protection as key elements in social and economic development.

Since the adoption of the Foundation's last four-year programme, there have been several significant changes in social and other policies at EU level, including:

- The 1997 Treaty on European Union, with its Employment Title and Social Protocol;
- Implementation of the European Employment Strategy, including the four pillars of its guidelines (employability, adaptability, entrepreneurship and equal opportunities);
- Strengthened partnership with the social partners and the increasingly important role of social dialogue at EU level;
- Recent initiatives regarding social inclusion and non-discrimination (arising from the broadening of EU competence in the social arena);
- The mainstreaming of employment, equal opportunities and social inclusion in EU funding programmes and other policy areas;
- Improved coordination and policy development in the area of social protection;
- The Conclusions of the Helsinki Summit of December 1999 which reinforced the importance of integrating environmental and sustainable development strategies into different economic and social policies.

Recent EU Presidency summits and the Commission's European social policy agenda have reinforced these political developments. The agenda seeks to: *'ensure the positive and dynamic interaction of economic, employment and social policy and to forge a political agreement which mobilises all key actors to work jointly towards the new strategic goals.'* The goal is that Europe should become: *'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.'*

Social policy as a productive factor is a guiding principle of this new agenda. Social expenditure is considered to be an investment in human capital with consequent increases in productivity and economic growth.

The 2001-2004 programme of the Foundation is designed to contribute significantly to this new direction of EU social policy.

Other important EU-level developments which are likely to have implications for the four-year programme include:

- The Charter of Fundamental Rights;
- Outcomes of the Intergovernmental Conference;
- Enlargement.

#### EUROPEAN SOCIAL POLICY AGENDA 2000-2005

- Creating more and better jobs
- Anticipating and managing change
- Adapting to the new working environment
- Exploiting the potential of the knowledge society
- Promoting mobility
- Modernising and improving social protection
- Promoting social inclusion
- Strengthening gender equality
- Reinforcing fundamental rights
- Combating discrimination
- Preparing for enlargement
- Promoting international cooperation
- Strengthening the contribution of social dialogue



# 3 Programme themes

The 2001-2004 programme, like earlier ones, aims to provide both:

**CONTINUITY:** building on expertise developed over 25 years;

&

**INNOVATION:** exploring emerging issues and responding to societal change.

To achieve its objectives, the Foundation will undertake a dual approach, involving monitoring activities and strategic research, the latter based on both qualitative and quantitative methods. The research will be both **reactive** – responding to the information needs of target audiences – as well as **proactive** – carrying out investigations which are driven by changes on the ground.

The content of the 2001-2004 programme can be summarised by the following three headings:

## CORE AREAS OF EXPERTISE

Setting out the structure for the development and implementation of the programme around:

- Working conditions
- Industrial relations
- Living conditions

## OTHER DEVELOPMENTAL ACTIVITIES

Providing the possibility for the Foundation to explore and develop in an integrated way new or inadequately developed issues which emerge over the course of the programme.

## TRANSVERSAL THEMES

Defining the priorities for the content and direction of the programme to be developed on a transversal basis across the three core areas. This will enable the Foundation to respond more effectively to current issues of EU social policy:

- Promoting better employment
- Extending equal opportunities for men and women
- Managing diversity
- Supporting social inclusion
- Examining the use of time

The Foundation will propose specific studies under its annual programmes of work which will address policy issues as identified under the transversal themes. Strategic research in all areas will respond both to the transversal themes and to the results of monitoring activities.



# Core areas of expertise

## WORKING CONDITIONS

A good quality of working life, together with the promotion of employment and entrepreneurship, is central to the EU employment strategy and social policy agenda. The scope of the Foundation's work in this area covers the entire range of factors which shape the day-to-day working environment. All of these have to be addressed if improvements are to be generated. They include the:

- Physical work environment
- Psychosocial work environment
- Organisation of work
- Management of human resources
- Legal and contractual environment.

In the 2001-2004 programme, the Foundation will take account of the rapidly changing nature of work. The move towards a knowledge-based economy, the 24-hour society, its effect on contractual relationships and the increasing importance of the service economy, all have major implications for the quality of life both inside and outside work. Quality of employment, health and well-being, social inclusion, equal opportunities and economic performance are some of the areas thus affected.

### Monitoring change

The Foundation will further develop its own monitoring instruments in order to provide accurate data on how working conditions are changing and how policy may be affecting developments. These findings give a sound basis from which to launch more strategic in-depth research.

Four main types of monitoring activities are proposed for the 2001-2004 programme:

- European surveys on working conditions: the initial focus will be on analysis of the results of the third survey (2000), while preparation for the next survey, to take place in 2004, will commence;
- Sector surveys at EU level, both qualitative and quantitative, using data from literature, case studies, views of key actors and EIRO;
- The establishment of a company panel to provide the corporate perspective on issues such as human resources policies, equal opportunities and work organisation;
- Questionnaire surveys covering issues such as time, stress and equal opportunities.

The Foundation will also combine this information with data from other sources. The priorities will be to fill the identified gap in relation to monitoring developments at the corporate/enterprise level and to continue the close collaboration in areas of mutual concern with the European Agency for Health and Safety at Work in Bilbao.

## OBJECTIVES FOR THE CORE AREAS OF EXPERTISE

- To monitor trends in living and working conditions and in industrial relations
- To identify progress made in improving living and working conditions
- To undertake research on ongoing problems and emerging issues
- To analyse collected information in the three areas and advise on EU policy development in an integrated, holistic way
- To prioritise the investigation of issues identified in the transversal themes
- To use research findings to support debate and discussion among the social partners and other key actors at EU level
- To communicate the Foundation's research appropriately for its various audiences
- To increase the visibility of the Foundation's work

## Strategic research

The following topics are currently being investigated and will continue to be researched:

- Work organisation, working conditions and health;
- Ageing and work;
- Time and work;
- Design of workplaces;
- Promotion of gender equality;
- Employment and working conditions, focusing on:
  - labour market flexibility and working conditions;
  - new contractual relationships;
  - the impact of the new economy and knowledge-based society.

Based on the analysis of the 2000 European survey on working conditions, further research will also be undertaken on the causes of problems identified in order to formulate possible solutions.

The Foundation will also examine the potential to develop the monitoring and strategic research so as to provide:

- An accessible, high-quality, source of information on working conditions;
- A vehicle for regular reporting;
- A forum for debate.

## INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

A considerable and very visible body of work has been undertaken by the Foundation in the area of industrial relations over many years. Issues examined include changes in the balance of roles between labour legislation and collective bargaining and the emergence of new structures such as the European Works Councils. Developments in the overall agenda of industrial relations, such as in equal opportunities, employment pacts, work organisation and working time, will continue to be important. Major factors which will influence the 2001-2004 programme include: EMU, the completion of the Single Market (ongoing liberalisation and privatisation), globalisation, the emergence of the knowledge society, the growing service sector, and the prevalence of more individualised practices in industrial relations.

## Monitoring change

Monitoring activity will focus on tracking the changes mentioned above, using existing Foundation instruments and data generated elsewhere. Industrial relations systems and the key agenda topics will continue to be monitored. The European industrial relations observatory (EIRO) will become even more important as a monitoring tool and information resource, serving the needs both of the Foundation's programme and external audiences. A key challenge in this area will be to create greater synergy between the different monitoring tools in the industrial relations area and between them and strategic research projects.

The following initiatives will be undertaken:

- EIRO will be integrated with the rest of the Foundation's programme;
- Its content will be further developed in line with user preferences, with significant increases in the number of comparative studies and articles;
- Its content will be expanded to include developments outside the EU;
- A thematic database within EIRO will be developed;
- Other monitoring instruments in the industrial relations area (the European Employment and Industrial Relations Glossaries and the European Works Councils database) will be reassessed to ensure synergy with monitoring tools in other areas;
- Increased monitoring of corporate-level policies and practices;
- Development of new networks to include employers, workers' representatives, human resources managers, companies and business schools;
- All monitoring tools will be reviewed in relation to the priorities of the transversal themes.

### Strategic research

Topics to be considered include:

- Modernisation of employment relations and the role of the social partners;
- Industrial change and working conditions;
- Gender equality;
- Developments in pay and working time;
- Information and consultation of workers;
- Impact of the knowledge-based economy;
- Financial participation;
- European Works Councils;
- Changes in work organisation (bargaining, legislative and company framework).

## LIVING CONDITIONS

With a potentially very wide remit, the Foundation, as a tripartite body, will concentrate its work in this area on issues in which the public authorities (both European and national) and social partners have an interest.

Two criteria are used, namely:

- Implications for the quality of living conditions of the changing nature of employment, work organisation and working conditions and of the modernisation of social protection and social services;
- The continuing need to understand and address disparities, especially those resulting from poverty and unemployment, and to identify new opportunities and risks in the move towards a knowledge-based economy and society.

In the 2001-2004 programme, the Foundation will focus on the influence that the changing world of work – and related policies – has on standards of living for different groups in society and on the options and opportunities open to them. Factors influencing living conditions, which will continue to be examined, include the transition between work and personal life, the impact of a differentiated labour market with increasing flexibility, access and attitudes to work, variances in employment status and working times, modernisation and reform of social protection systems and social public services.



## Monitoring change

The following monitoring activities are proposed for the 2001-2004 programme:

- Re-examining ongoing requirements for quantitative, as well as qualitative data;
- Exploring requirements for new surveys;
- Building specific data collection networks;
- Developing more complex indicators on living conditions, taking account of the scope of the area as defined by the Foundation, the priorities of the transversal themes and the information needs of the target audiences.

Particular focus will be placed on gathering quantitative information on access to the labour market and other paths for social integration (looking at people's preferences, expectations, opportunities and experiences). Data on citizen access to public services such as health, education and social protection will also be relevant. The Foundation will seek to develop further its collaboration with Eurostat and other Commission services on living conditions data, including changing patterns of time use. There is also significant potential for the development of new networks involving the social partners and government interests, alongside representatives from civil society and research experts.

## Strategic research

Strategic research initiatives put forward under the annual programmes of work will, again, seek to respond both to the transversal themes and to the results of monitoring.

The following topics will be considered (some of them are already underway):

- Integrated policy approaches to improve quality employment opportunities for vulnerable groups;
- New relationships between work and personal life over the life course;
- Access to the knowledge-based economy and society;
- Lifelong learning;
- Equal opportunities and non-discrimination in social public services and in social and civil life;
- Strategies to combat poverty and unemployment in disadvantaged regions.

## European Monitoring Centre on Change

Following a recommendation of the European Commission and a decision of the Nice Council of December 2000, the Foundation has undertaken to establish a European Monitoring Centre on Change. This initiative is supported by the social partners. The core mission of the centre will be to identify, assess and process relevant information on the driving forces of change in the European economy, consequent on globalisation, new technologies and changing consumer demand. It will provide the main actors with reliable and objective data on aspects of industrial change such as restructuring, organisation of work and labour, mergers and acquisitions, skills transformation and adaptation to technological change. The centre will draw on and support the three core areas of the Foundation's work, thus acting as a transversal tool. The activities will be managed directly by the Foundation's Directorate and governed by an autonomous Steering Committee, reflecting the composition of the Administrative Board.

# Transversal themes

Transversal themes are designed to bring greater consistency, coherence and an integrated approach across the three core areas of working conditions, industrial relations and living conditions. They are also a means of strengthening the Foundation's capacity to respond to the information needs of its audiences.

The themes that the Foundation has prioritised for the next four years are:

- Promoting better employment;
- Extending equal opportunities for men and women;
- Managing diversity;
- Supporting social inclusion;
- Examining the changing use of time.

The main priority will continue to be employment, which is an important component of the other four themes and the main linking factor. For these transversal themes, the Foundation will deliver specific contributions in the form of position papers.

## Promoting better employment

The European Employment Strategy (EES) and the four pillars of its guidelines (employability, adaptability, entrepreneurship and equal opportunities) have formed the basis for EU action on employment since 1997. Recent developments have emphasised that the objective is not merely more jobs, but also better quality employment.

There are three main areas in employment to which the Foundation's research will contribute significantly in the 2001-2004 programme.

- Quality of employment and of working conditions, including work organisation;
- Access to employment and self-employment and to opportunities and support for labour market participation, as a means to promote a more cohesive society;
- Conditions and/or best practices at the workplace which facilitate the creation of companies and increase their life expectancy.

## Extending equal opportunities for men and women

The Foundation aims to contribute work on the following topics over the next four years:

- Gender and employment, with a specific focus on work organisation, working time and flexibility, access to employment opportunities and integration in the labour market;
- Equal opportunities in relation to participation and representation, at the workplace and in the wider community;
- Equality in social and civil life, with regard to access to goods and services, to health, to social protection and to leisure and family life.

The Foundation may also examine the process of gender mainstreaming itself.

## OBJECTIVES FOR THE TRANSVERSAL THEMES

- To enable the Foundation to match its work outputs more closely with the needs of its audiences
- To facilitate more effective, responsive and timely communication
- To clarify the deliverables for this programme
- To provide a focus for work across the three core areas and improve coherence between them
- To offer a more effective and transparent basis for project selection and prioritisation of activities in the annual programme

## Managing diversity

Building on opportunities to create a more cohesive society in Europe and highlight the benefits of diversity, the Foundation will identify policies and concrete experiences aimed at:

- Managing diversity from a perspective of competitiveness and productivity and the improvement of working conditions for all workers;
- Increasing social integration and improving access to quality employment by promoting non-discrimination.

## Supporting social inclusion

The Foundation will build on earlier work undertaken in this area by contributing to the following issues:

- Relationships between employment and social inclusion (in the context of increasing labour market flexibility and differentiation);
- Roles of public authorities, social partners, NGOs and the legal system in promoting social inclusion;
- Involvement of excluded groups in decision-making processes, which affect living and working conditions;
- Modernisation of social protection and its role in eliminating and insuring against exclusion.

## Examining the changing use of time

The use and management of time is a critical factor, influencing developments in employment, social inclusion and equal opportunities. The Foundation's contribution to further work on this transversal theme between 2001-2004 will cover:

- Developments in working time and the implications for working conditions;
- Linkages between different uses of time, particularly between working and personal time, and their implications for quality of life;
- New negotiation processes and new actors involved in the reorganisation of time use in society.

## Other developmental activities

The programme outlined above means a heavy commitment for the Foundation over the next four years. However, space must also be found to undertake exploratory and more experimental work on new issues on a transversal basis, in order to respond to policy development and information needs in the post-2004 period. It is important that the Foundation continues to anticipate new developments and create awareness of these, as this has been one of its strengths in the past. Such developmental work will encompass research, networks-building and the fostering of exchanges of information and expertise with experts in the areas concerned.

Two themes are currently under consideration for the 2001-2004 programme:

- The impact of the transition towards a knowledge-based economy and society on living and working conditions;
- Migration and mobility.

In addition, the Foundation will investigate the implications of EU enlargement for existing Member States and applicant countries. In the 2001-2004 programme, the Foundation's contribution to this process of change will include:

- Extension of the Foundation's research and monitoring activities to applicant countries;
- Participation in Foundation seminars and conferences by relevant experts and representatives of these countries;
- Negotiation of bilateral agreements covering such participation.

Proposals to extend the Foundation's networks in the framework of enlargement will be influenced by financial, practical and institutional considerations.

### OBJECTIVES FOR OTHER DEVELOPMENTAL ACTIVITIES

- To investigate a small number of new and emerging issues in an integrated and holistic way, drawing on the three core areas of Foundation expertise
- To explore new methodologies and other ways to fulfil the mandate of the Foundation
- To draw, at an early stage, the attention of policy makers to new risks and opportunities, enhancing a preventative approach to the improvement of living and working conditions



# 4 Communication and information

The Foundation will prioritise the creation of a more coherent, visible and consistent communications strategy over the next four years in order to deliver:

- Clearer messages from its work
- Quicker response times
- Enhanced tailoring of products and services to meet the needs of target audiences
- More balanced dissemination across all Member States
- Increased use of relays and networks with outside bodies

## OBJECTIVES FOR COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION

- To design and implement the Foundation's work in consultation with key stakeholders
- To establish the Foundation as a centre of expertise and to reinforce its role as a forum for debate
- To communicate regularly with target audiences based on a planned approach
- To develop appropriate communications vehicles which can deliver timely and useable information
- To organise Foundation information for easy retrieval and re-use
- To create a web-based system for capturing the Foundation's knowledge and making it widely accessible
- To meet the demand for a multi-lingual communications mix

The objectives for the communication and information plan will be met through a series of strategic action plans. Specific strategies will be established to strengthen the linkages and networks used by the Foundation to develop and disseminate information. Where appropriate, alliances and contacts will be established with the information intermediaries within the organisations of target audiences in all Member States and at EU level.

A priority will be to ensure that working and communication links are strengthened with other European agencies working in related fields such as those in Bilbao (health and safety at work), Copenhagen (environment and sustainable development), Thessaloniki (vocational training in the EU) and Turin (vocational training for partner countries). A review of existing information channels will be undertaken, with the aim of providing a more pro-active and effective information service. Research reports, newsletters, websites, media relations, annual reports and other products will all be audited for professionalism, quality and relevance to the target audiences.

## **Audience**

Audience identification is essential to ensure effective communication. The priority target audiences are clearly mentioned in the Foundation's founding Council Regulation and comprise the EU institutions and bodies represented on the Administrative Board (the social partners and governments of the Member States). The full range of users of the Foundation's information extends beyond this group to include:

- Individuals within the institutions of the EU, Member State governments, employers' and trades union organisations who are involved in EU policy development in the areas of working conditions, living conditions and industrial relations;
- Decision-makers on the funding and future of the Foundation (the Budget Committee of the European Parliament, the European Commission and the Council of Ministers);
- European social NGOs and international organisations in the social policy field;
- Entrepreneurs, managers, trade unionists and professionals;
- The academic community;
- The media;
- The general public.

## **A forum for debate**

Given the tripartite structure of the Foundation and its role in the collection and analysis of policy-relevant data, it is a natural forum for the discussion of social policy issues by the main social actors. The Foundation will maintain its role as a platform for dialogue and discussion among policy makers and the world of research by continuing to host a wide range of meetings, also in conjunction with the European Commission, EU Presidencies and other bodies. It plans to launch a new initiative, in the shape of an annual conference, in order to create a wider European forum for discussion on working and living conditions and industrial relations. This event is designed to facilitate more integrated debate on issues relevant to the social policy agenda and will bring together the social actors with relevant experts for a dialogue fuelled by Foundation research results. It is intended to hold the first such annual conference in 2002: its theme will be defined in the annual programme of work.

# 5 Evaluation

To support the programme's implementation, the Foundation will introduce improved systems for the monitoring and evaluation of its processes and outcomes in addition to enhanced measures for quality control and resource allocation. These will assist in the management of the Foundation's activities as well as provide a baseline for the evaluation of its effectiveness.

## OBJECTIVES FOR EVALUATION

- To support organisational decision-making through the provision of data on the operation of the programme, with a view to remedying problems and strengthening effectiveness
- To ensure accountability to key stakeholders
- To improve resource allocation
- To assess the extent to which the Foundation is achieving its mandate and objectives

The Foundation will institute evaluation as an integral part of its working methods. Evaluation by externally contracted experts, to cover the activities of the Foundation for the period 1997-2000, will be undertaken to assess the extent to which the Foundation's work has met global and operational objectives and contributed to action designed to improve living and working conditions. Internal evaluation processes will also be developed to assess the implementation of this four-year programme and its outcomes. In particular, intermediate (end 2002) and ex-post (end 2004) evaluations will be carried out. These evaluations – both external and internal – will form part of the annual work programmes of the Foundation during 2001-2004.

Improving the Foundation's system for monitoring its own processes and outcomes will be the focus of specific attention. Quality standards, underpinned by key performance indicators, will be developed with a view to ensuring consistently high standards in all areas of work.

## Resources

The Foundation will continue to develop its mechanisms for ensuring the most efficient allocation of funds and staff resources. The programme's strategic guidelines and objectives provide a framework for setting priorities for the annual budget and programme of work.

Resources need to be strengthened in the areas of research, information and communication in order to implement this four-year programme. The Foundation intends to increase operational staff following internal reallocation of posts. A revised organisation of work and procedures will foster creativity and initiative, as well as facilitate delegation of responsibility. A new human resources policy, including targeted training and development, will support these new structures.

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