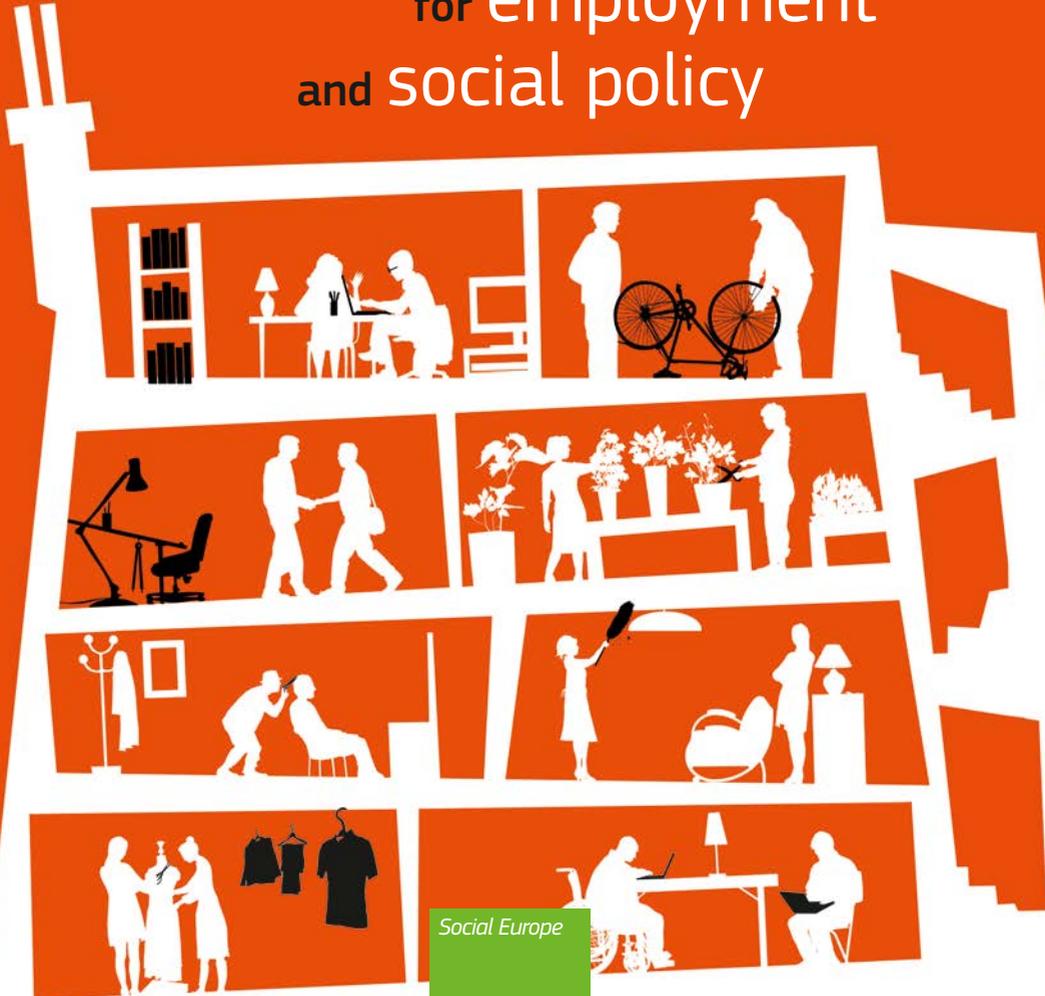




European  
Commission

# EaSI

New EU umbrella programme  
for employment  
and social policy



Social Europe



# EaSI

New EU umbrella programme  
for **employment**  
and **social policy**

**European Commission**

Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion  
Manuscript completed in November 2013

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# Foreword



The employment and social situation is the foremost concern of people and governments across the Union today. It is also a threat to the EU's medium and long-term cohesion, stability, competitiveness and prosperity. In this context of crisis and looming demographic, environmental and technical challenges affecting our labour markets and social protection systems, Europe needs an EU-level instrument, alongside the European Social Fund (ESF), to generate, test and spread innovative policy solutions to foster sustainable long-term growth and jobs, reduce divergence between the Member States, and make progress towards reducing social inequality.

The EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) seeks to fill the gap. It will underpin implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy in the field of employment, social affairs and inclusion, supplementing the ESF (which concentrates on projects at local and national level) by focusing on innovative projects with a Europe-wide dimension.

EaSI's priority activities in 2014-20 will help the Member States to modernise their labour markets and social security systems and increase their rates of employment, in particular among young people. Other important tasks will involve supporting job creation, promoting a highly skilled workforce, encouraging adaptation to change and the anticipation of restructuring, enhancing geographical mobility and promoting social innovation.

By identifying, analysing and disseminating best practice, EaSI will support efforts to design and implement employment and social reforms at European, national, regional and local level. Concrete projects and activities will help to test reforms on the ground before the possible scaling-up of the most successful, including via the ESF. In this context, EaSI will devote around €100 million to launch such experiments in the most critical policy areas such as youth employment or inclusion of disadvantaged groups.

By incorporating EURES into EaSI, dedicated mobility schemes will be launched to facilitate job searches and promote job-matching at EU level. Lastly, EaSI will provide a new financial instrument for social enterprise support and ensure continuity with our successful microfinance instrument.

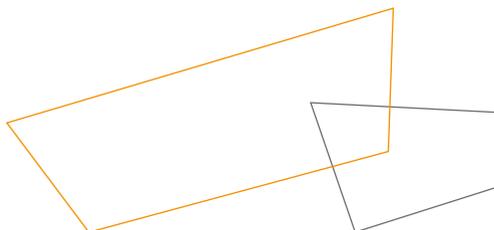
While EaSI's proposed budget is relatively small, it will offer a platform for policy innovation and experimentation and can be scaled up by the Member States, including with support from the ESF.

We have a long way to go to meet the common objectives we have set for 2020. This publication should help by highlighting some of the ways in which EaSI and its broad stakeholder base can help guide our policy and action in the right direction.



**László Andor**

*Commissioner for Employment,  
Social Affairs and Inclusion*



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# 1. The essence of EaSI

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The Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) programme is a European-level financing instrument managed directly by the European Commission to support employment, social policy and labour mobility across the EU. EaSI funding is used to test ideas for reform out on the ground, evaluate them and then upscale the best ones across Member States. The concept of social innovation, which has a special focus on youth, is at the heart of EaSI. The programme will provide €10-14 million a year for social innovation activities.

EaSI brings together three EU programmes managed separately between 2007 and 2013:

- **PROGRESS** (Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity), which supported the development and coordination of EU policy for employment, social inclusion, social protection, working conditions, anti-discrimination and gender equality;
- **EURES** (European Employment Services), a cooperation network between the European Commission and the Public Employment Services of the Member States that encourages mobility amongst workers;
- **PROGRESS Microfinance**, which aims to increase the availability of microcredit to individuals for setting up or developing a small business.

Starting in January 2014, these programmes will form the three axes of EaSI. By grouping these programmes together in one umbrella programme, the Commission hopes to build on their past successes and achieve common objectives for EU employment and social policies. Improved coordination between the programmes, greater policy coherence as well as increased efficiency in delivery and management are also expected benefits of this move.

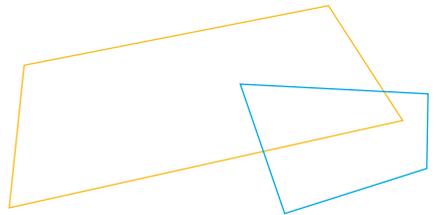
EaSI does not stand in isolation. Together with the European Social Fund (ESF) and the European Globalisation Fund (EGF), it forms a coherent set of EU programmes to promote employment, social protection and social inclusion, as well as working conditions for the period 2014-20.

The instrument feeds into the EU's ten-year growth strategy by supporting the implementation of the employment and social objectives of Europe 2020. It also supports the roll-out of the seven flagship initiatives launched in 2010, notably the European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion, An Agenda for New Skills and Jobs, and Youth on the Move.

EaSI's objectives complement a range of other recent European Commission initiatives tackling social and economic challenges, particularly the Employment, Social Investment and Youth Employment packages. The instrument's goals also dovetail with employment and social aspects of the European Semester.

## EaSI objectives

- Strengthen ownership of EU objectives and coordination of action at EU and national levels in the areas of employment, social affairs and inclusion.
- Support the development of adequate social protection systems and labour market policies by promoting good governance, mutual learning and social innovation.
- Modernise EU legislation and ensure effective application of EU legislation.
- Promote geographical mobility and boost employment opportunities by developing an open labour market.
- Increase the availability and accessibility of microfinance for vulnerable groups and micro-enterprises, and increase access to finance for social enterprises.





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## Coordinated action

Implementing policies to tackle socio-economic problems is mainly the responsibility of Member States and regions. However, there is growing agreement that coordinated action at EU level can improve policy on the ground.

This is where EaSI has a role to play. Its three programmes – which will continue under the same names – are highly complementary. They all pursue the same goal of promoting employment, social inclusion and labour mobility. So for instance the implementation of the microfinance axis is also sustained by the PROGRESS axis, notably through the support provided to the technical assistance for microfinance providers.

## Complementarity with other EU programmes

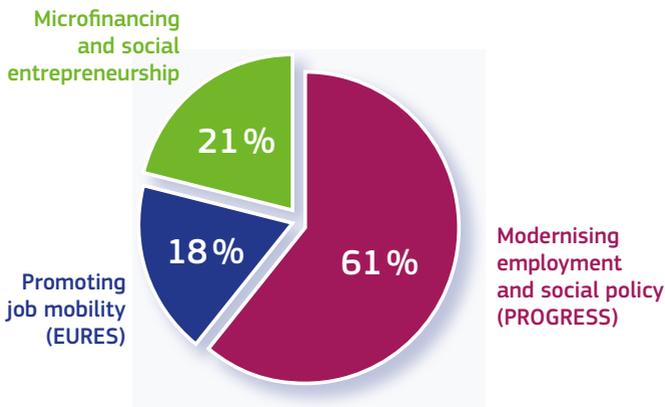
EaSI is designed to support the development of policies and legislation at EU level. Its actions should be complemented at national, regional and local levels. As an example, all EURES national activities will be financed by the ESF. Cross-border partnership activities involving more than one Member State will be funded through EaSI in order to enhance mobility of workers across the EU.

EaSI will also work closely with other EU financial instruments in such areas as social dialogue, justice and fundamental rights, education, vocational training and youth policy, research and innovation, entrepreneurship, health, enlargement and external relations, and general economic policy.

PROGRESS is to be trimmed from five to three strands. Its activities promoting equality between women and men as well as fighting discrimination will be funded by the Fundamental Rights, Equality and Citizenship programme for the period 2014-2020. Yet EaSI will promote gender equality and fight discrimination across all its objectives, in line with EU commitments and Europe 2020 objectives.

## EaSI in numbers

- Total budget: €919 469 000, in current prices.
- Indicative allocation of funds: PROGRESS (61 %, from 15 % (including) to 20 % for social policy experimentation), MF/SE 21 %, and EURES 18 %.



**€ 919 million over seven years**



## 2. PROGRESS: Modernising employment and social policies

PROGRESS is the EU's main instrument directly managed by the European Commission to promote **policy reforms in employment and social policies**. The programme aims to contribute to rolling out Europe 2020, including its headline targets, Integrated Guidelines and flagship initiatives. It will continue to support EU policies in three areas: promoting a high level of quality and sustainable employment; guaranteeing adequate and decent social protection and combating social exclusion and poverty; and improving working conditions. Funds are allocated as follows:

- employment, especially to fight youth unemployment: min. 20 %;
- social protection, social inclusion and the reduction and prevention of poverty: min. 50 %;
- working conditions: min. 10 %.

For the sake of flexibility, a combination of policy issues may be addressed by calling on up to 20% of the budget allocation.

### Specific objectives

For the 2014-20 period, regarding employment, social protection and working conditions, PROGRESS will continue to develop and disseminate EU comparable analytical knowledge; support information-sharing, mutual learning and dialogue; and financially assist the Member States and the other participating countries in developing their policies and in implementing EU law. The new programme will also provide financial support to non-governmental organisations, notably to promote social inclusion and poverty reduction.

### Social policy experimentation

PROGRESS will increase its support to test social and labour market policy innovations and experimentation, looking at methodology (a more rigorously scientific approach) and finance (a commitment to spend between €10 and 14 million a year). The support to social policy experimentation will aim to scale up social innovations that

offer innovative responses to social needs at Member States level. It will support the gathering of evidence on the feasibility of labour and social innovations that offer innovative policy responses to social needs, prior to being repeated on a larger scale, if the results prove convincing.

Successful ideas may be pursued with financial support from the ESF and other sources. As an example, in 2012, the programme undertook 17 pilots of this experimentation in 11 EU Member States. One of these, the HOPE in Stations project, resulted in authorities adopting a softer approach to homeless people in railway stations in seven European cities. PROGRESS will also use its dedicated budget for social policy experimentation to further develop the potential for employment and social innovation.

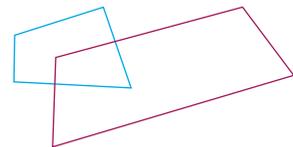
## Types of activities that can be supported through PROGRESS

### 1. Analytical

***a. Policy evidence gathered by PROGRESS is often used by the European Commission and helps to trigger/strengthen national debate*** at all stages of the policy cycle.

The programme's success stories included/include policy evidence gathered for:

- Employment: European Employment Observatory quarterly reports.
- Social protection and social inclusion: MISSOC database, comparative tables covering 31 countries and 12 main areas of social protection.
- Working conditions: European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, pan-European opinion poll on occupational safety and health, with results across 36 European countries in 2012.
- Gender equality: Database on men and women in key decision-making: data on the numbers of men and women in key decision-making positions in politics, public administration, the judiciary and various other key areas of the economy, covering 34 countries.
- Non-discrimination: Updated thematic report on the prohibition of discrimination under European human rights law.



**b. PROGRESS helps the Commission to ensure correct and effective application of EU law in the Member States through regular monitoring.** It has actively supported the development and amendment of legal initiatives, notably for working conditions and the possible revision of the legislative framework on the posting of workers.

## 2. Mutual learning, awareness and dissemination

**a. PROGRESS supports peer reviews on social protection and social inclusion policies in different EU Member States to facilitate the processes of mutual learning, policy transfer and a shared understanding and ownership of EU policy objectives in these areas.** A 2012 peer review in Paris, France highlighted how supporting the social economy is highly relevant to achieving at least three key objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy (employment and growth, innovation, and the fight against poverty) and yields social innovation. Together with the host country France and 10 peer countries, PROGRESS-funded NGOs — Eurodiaconia and FEANTSA — took part in the event as important stakeholders and shared their expertise with other participants.

**b. Exchanging good practice and experience is one of the core principles of the Europe 2020 strategy.** The project ‘New skills for green jobs: A case for a more gender inclusive labour market?’ aimed to promote an adequate skills base to support the transition towards a green economy. It identified and transferred across participating countries the tools necessary for early identification of skills needs for the greening of the economy. It also spotlighted ways of improving the efficiency and relevance of existing training practices, with a focus on the active participation of women.

**c. Benchmarking of Public Employment Services (PES).** Thanks to the successful ‘Benchmarking of PES activities’ project and spin-off mutual learning events, there have been EU-wide improvements in the effectiveness and efficiency of PES services. Changes in the PES service delivery models result directly from or are inspired by attendance at PES mutual learning events. These include activities linked to individual action planning, profiling and the work of low-skilled unemployed, particularly young people.

## 3. Support for main actors

**Key EU NGOs bring the perspective of their respective target groups and cross-cutting issues into different policy areas.** PROGRESS has supported over 30 key EU networks and NGOs active in the fields of non-discrimination, gender equality and social

inclusion/social protection. Together they serve as a useful source of information for EU and national decision-makers and other stakeholders, helping for example to foster a cross-cutting approach to European employment and social policies. By financially supporting major EU networks, PROGRESS has contributed to the communication and promotion of key ideas and strategies, such as the European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations, implementation of the Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion, and implementation of national Roma integration strategies.

PROGRESS will continue promoting similar activities between 2014 and 2020. It will also ensure even greater EU-added value and policy relevance to the present and future priorities at EU level.

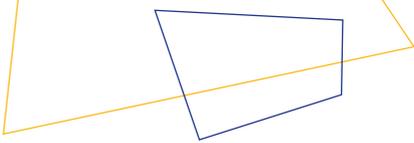
## Who can participate?

Funding from PROGRESS is open to:

- EU Member States;
- EEA countries, in accordance with the EEA Agreement, and EFTA Member States;
- EU candidate countries and potential candidate countries, in line with the general principles and the general terms and conditions in the framework agreements concluded with them on their participation in EU programmes.

## The types of organisation that can apply for funding are:

- national, regional and local authorities;
- employment services;
- specialist bodies provided for under EU law;
- the social partners;
- non-governmental organisations;
- higher education institutions and research institutes;
- experts in evaluation and in impact assessment;
- national statistical offices;
- the media.



## 3. EURES: Promoting job mobility

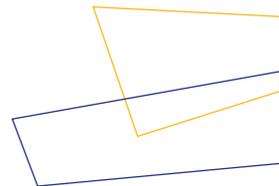
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The EURES axis will strengthen EURES, a European job mobility network that provides information, guidance and recruitment/placement services to employers, jobseekers and any citizen wishing to take advantage of freedom of movement for workers. EURES consists of a network of around 900 EURES Advisers delivering services on the ground and the EURES Portal. In November 2013, the EURES Portal hosted around 1 900 000 job vacancies, over 1 200 000 CVs and around 32 000 registered employers. It receives some four million visits a month. Around 150 000 jobseekers per year get a job or job offer via EURES.

### Specific objectives

EURES will ensure that job vacancies and applications are transparent for potential applicants and employers at EU level. The programme will modernise the EURES Portal and its self-service tools, including for online European Job Days taking place all over the EU. Jobseekers across Europe will have access to the same vacancies and support services, while jobseekers and employers will be able to benefit from matching tools on the EURES Portal.

The programme will also develop services for the recruitment and placing of workers in employment through the clearance of job vacancies and applications at European level. It will for example create and develop targeted mobility schemes to provide support and financial aid to jobseekers in finding work in other countries in the EU. These will fill bottleneck and niche vacancies and will help specific groups of workers to become mobile and countries to become destinations for mobile workers. The schemes will build on the development of Your First EURES Job, currently being run as a pilot project in the form of a preparatory action to help young people (18-30) find a job in another Member State, while encouraging SMEs, the largest group of employers in the EU, to offer young people work.





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## EURES Training

EaSI will increase the number of staff to be trained (up to 1 000 persons) and develop virtual training offers, which will be offered to everyone delivering EURES services. EURES specialised training modules will focus on areas such as assistance to jobseekers, matching and placement, services to employers, and greater use of ICT tools. This should lead to a significant qualitative increase in the EURES service for jobseekers and employers, the EURES main target groups.

## The EURES Job Mobility Portal

On an average day, 1.5 million job vacancies are accessible to jobseekers on the EURES Portal. From 2014, delivery of EURES services will be opened up to new partners, likely increasing the number of displayed job vacancies to as many as two million within two years. This will allow for more transparency on the European labour market and more access to job opportunities for jobseekers.

The Portal receives around 38 million unique visitors a year. With EaSI facilitating the qualitative increase of EURES services on the Portal and on the ground, this number could reach 45 million within two years. Employers offering jobs will benefit from better outreach to European jobseekers, which will lead to better matching on the European labour market. EURES has to date achieved some 150 000 intra-EU job placements per year. Its ongoing strategic reform should significantly increase that figure.

## Your First EURES Job

In 2012-2013, the Commission tested a new job mobility scheme, Your First EURES Job, to boost young people's access to jobs across Europe. Proven successful, with job placements of around 5 000 young people all over Europe, this scheme will be continued from 2014 onwards as a 'targeted job mobility scheme'. It will also cover traineeship and apprenticeship placements as well as access to jobs in sectors experiencing recruitment difficulties such as ICT. The target groups are young people aged 18-30 and employers (all businesses, SMEs in particular).

## Types of activities that can be supported through EURES

EURES promotes mobility of workers and individuals across the EU and the new EURES will focus on the following activities:

- the development of the multilingual digital platform and its self-service tools for the clearance of job vacancies and applications;
- the development of targeted mobility schemes (e.g. continuation of Your First EURES Job), following calls for proposals, to fill job vacancies where labour market shortcomings have been identified, and/or to help workers with a propensity to be mobile, where a clear economic need has been identified;
- the development and the activities of EURES cross-border partnerships, in particular the provision of information, counselling, placement and recruitment services for cross-border workers;
- mutual learning among EURES actors and training of EURES Advisers, including EURES cross-border partnership advisers;
- information and communication activities to raise awareness of the benefits of geographical and occupational mobility in general and of the activities and services provided by EURES.

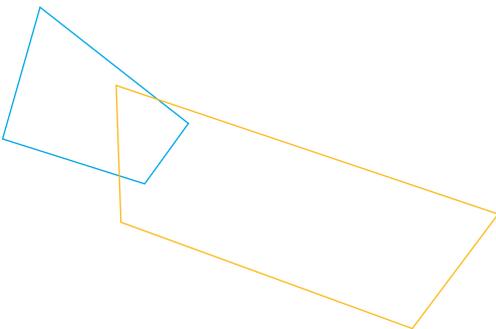
## Organisations that can apply for funding:

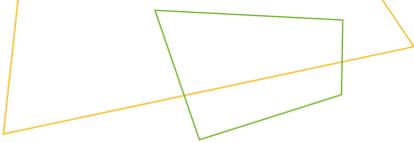
- national, regional and local authorities;
- employment services;
- social partner organisations and other interested parties.

## How is EURES funded?

The overall EURES budget is expected to be around €20 million a year.

EURES will see a minimum of 32% of its funds allocated to the transparency of job vacancies, a minimum of 30% to the development of services for the recruitment and placing of workers, a minimum of 18% to cross-border partnerships (to set up support services specifically geared to the needs of cross-border commuters) and any remainder shall be allocated to cross-cutting projects.





## 4. Microfinance and Social Entrepreneurship

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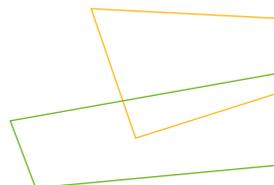
Running from 2014–20, Microfinance and Social Entrepreneurship MF/SE is the third axis of the EaSI programme. Its funding will be evenly spread between microfinance and social entrepreneurship, with a minimum of 45 % going to each. Cross-cutting projects will account up to 10 %.

MF/SE will continue to facilitate access to microfinance for individuals and micro-enterprises, while adding capacity-building for micro-credit providers and support for social entrepreneurship. Financing social entrepreneurship is a first for the European Commission. Under SE, depending on the country or region, funds will be used to help social enterprises take root and develop, or will be available for upscaling good ideas and best practices.

In terms of self-employment and job creation, since its launch in 2010 PROGRESS Microfinance has supported almost 9 000 entrepreneurs with microloans totalling more than €80 million. These entrepreneurs included members of disadvantaged groups, especially women, young people, minorities and low-skilled workers. By supporting a high percentage of people who were previously unemployed, PROGRESS Microfinance has to date significantly contributed to job creation. Until 2016, PROGRESS Microfinance will run alongside the new MF/SE programme.

### Specific objectives

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





## What is new in MF/SE?

While continuing the microfinance support as under the current programme, Microfinance and Social Entrepreneurship will include several new elements:

- Funding for **capacity-building in microfinance institutions**. For instance, a microfinance institution may need an IT system to deal with growing demand or have to hire additional loan officers to meet the needs of the target groups better. This could be supported financially under the new programme;
- Investments for **developing and expanding social enterprises**, i.e. businesses whose main purpose is social, rather than the maximising of profit distribution to private owners or shareholders. The total amount that a social enterprise can receive is €500 000, while respecting state aid rules. Programme support will be limited to enterprises not listed on the stock market, with a turnover or annual balance sheet not exceeding €30 million.

## Who can participate?

- EU's Member States;
- EEA countries, in accordance with the EEA Agreement, and EFTA Member States;
- EU candidate countries and potential candidate countries, in line with the framework agreements concluded with them on their participation in EU programmes.

Organisations that can apply for funding are public and private bodies established at national, regional or local level and providing microfinance for persons and micro-enterprises and/or financing for social enterprises in the above-mentioned countries.

## Funding opportunities

Microfinance will enable microcredit providers in the EU Member States and other participating countries in the programme to increase access to, and the availability of, microfinance to vulnerable persons who wish to start or develop their own micro-enterprise. It will not directly provide microloans to individuals.

Social Enterprise will help social enterprises access finance via public and private bodies which provide loans and other financial instruments to social enterprises. It will not directly provide loans to social enterprises.

### *Funding for social enterprises*

A total of €92 million will be available for the 2014-2020 period to support social entrepreneurs. The ceiling is €500 000 per enterprise, on condition the enterprise has less than €30 million annual turnover.

# Find out more and follow us



**EaSI programme:** the EU programme bringing together PROGRESS, EURES and Microfinance.

Find out more at: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/easi>

**PROGRESS:** the EU programme promoting policy reforms in employment and social affairs. Find out more at <http://ec.europa.eu/progress>



**EURES** helps citizens and businesses with information on jobs and learning opportunities throughout Europe.

Find out more at <http://eures.europa.eu>



**Microfinance and Social Entrepreneurship:** financing social entrepreneurs and helping more vulnerable people do business.

Find out more: <http://ec.europa.eu/epmf>

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## EaSI

### New EU umbrella programme for employment and social policy

EaSI, the new pan-European programme for employment and social policy, will help the EU deliver more coherent policy, encourage job mobility and provide targeted microfinance to the more vulnerable. Merging PROGRESS, EURES and PROGRESS Microfinance into one umbrella programme, EaSI will help deliver new jobs and sustainable growth more efficiently by putting the emphasis on social innovation. Find out how.



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