



Programme of work 2006

Introduction

1. Monitoring and understanding change

2. Research and exploring what works

3. Communicating and sharing ideas and experience

Work organisation

Approved by the Governing Board at its meeting on 21 October 2005.

This document gives an overview of the activities planned by the Foundation for 2006, within the framework of its four-year programme 2005-2008, *Changing Europe, better work, better life*.

Introduction

This document presents the programme of work of the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions for the year 2006. The programme is developed with the priorities of the Foundation stakeholders in mind, which can be summarised as follows:

- employment creation in a competitive global environment, characterised by restructuring, innovation and mobility, with specific attention to SMEs;
- the anticipation and management of change and the role of social partners (and partnerships) at national, regional and company level;
- the necessity and potential of meeting both economic and social needs over the life course – addressing the work-life balance and social inclusion;
- the reform of social protection and labour market policies and their implications for access to more and better jobs.

There are many different dimensions to take into consideration in the process of policy development on these issues. The Foundation is in a strong position to work on the social dimension, i.e. the improvement of living and working conditions from a medium- and long-term perspective. It is committed to assisting the European social policy process by disseminating research findings, thereby providing opportunities for debate. In its strategic framework for 2005–2008, *Changing Europe: Better work, better life*, the Foundation has identified four key themes to explore in more depth:

- employment;
- work-life balance;
- industrial relations and partnership;
- social cohesion.

The Foundation has set out the following objectives for its four-year work programme for 2005–2008:

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

Strengthen the main monitoring activities and research.

Focus on a limited number of key policy themes.

Develop work in light of practical experience within the workplace, companies, in communities and regions.

Emphasise a forward-looking perspective in the activities.

Extend gender mainstreaming.

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

In 2005, the first year of implementation of the four-year programme, the Foundation laid much of the groundwork for its activities in 2006 and beyond.

- All of the Foundation's core activities cover an enlarged European Union and now also include the two candidate countries (Bulgaria and Romania) with financial support through the Commission's PHARE programme. Further funding to include Croatia and Turkey in the coverage of the Foundation's work has been requested from the Commission. Activities such as the Foundation seminar series, the project on supporting social dialogue in the new Member States and the company network seminars of the European Monitoring Centre on Change (EMCC) all reinforce the role of the Foundation in facilitating debate and the exchange of experiences.
- The process of data collection on the quality of work and employment, industrial relations and restructuring has been streamlined by tendering for one service provider per country for information-reporting services for the European Industrial Relations Observatory (EIRO), the European Working Conditions Observatory (EWCO) and the European Restructuring Monitor (ERM).
- Research activities focus on a limited number of relevant policy themes:
 - Demographic changes, particularly ageing, drive both the analysis of the monitoring instruments as well as projects such as employment initiatives for an ageing workforce.
 - The data from the company survey on working time are used to analyse work-life balance issues such as part-time work, childcare leave, phased and early retirement, extended operating hours and unusual working hours.
 - The Foundation has contributed to the design of the questionnaire of the Eurobarometer survey on geographical and labour market mobility and is subsequently taking responsibility for the analysis of the dataset.
 - Employment creation is taken up by all core areas of research, from mapping the regulatory initiatives and/or collective agreements dealing with business creation in restructuring plans to analysing labour supply in care services and looking at the impact of training on people's employability.
- Work has begun on collecting and analysing practical experiences at the workplace level, with defining concepts and orientations on topics such as 'Employment guidance services for people with disability or ill-health', 'Attractive workplace for all: a contribution to the Lisbon Strategy at company level', 'Labour market mobility for migrants' and 'Codes of conduct and framework agreements (governance)'.
- EMCC continues its series of forward-looking features, focusing on trends and drivers of change in selected sectors of the economy.

The Foundation's programme of work for 2006 will further progress these activities, noting the priorities of its stakeholders and respecting the financial forecast. In line with the Foundation's four-year work programme for 2005–2008, *Changing Europe: Better work, better life*, this overview is structured around the following three main tasks:

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

What follows is a summary of the proposed activities for 2006 in each of these three tasks.

Monitoring and understanding change

1

Surveys

These surveys are very valuable monitoring instruments, as they provide data for analysis from the 25 Member States on a wide range of issues related to all four key themes. As they represent resource-intensive undertakings, the Foundation's three surveys are distributed over the entire 2005–2008 timeframe as follows: 2005 – working conditions, 2007 – quality of life and 2008 – company level. Preparatory work for the surveys will start in each case in the preceding year and the main analysis will be carried out in the two years following the fieldwork. Thus, while there will be no data collection for any of the surveys in 2006, the following activities will be carried out:

- Thematic analysis of the 2005 European Working Conditions Survey. Topics will be selected based on a first general analysis due in the first half of 2006, covering countries, gender, age and sector. Comparisons with results from the previous surveys will make it possible to analyse the results for trends.
- Development of the structure and the questionnaire for the second European Quality of Life Survey.
- Further analysis of the company survey on working time. This will explore aspects related specifically to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

Observatories

The separate networks for the collection of national data for the three observatories (EIRO, EWCO and ERM) will be replaced by one network with data collection in all Member States, accession and candidate countries. It is expected that the synergy gained through working with one network will further strengthen the Foundation's capacity for comparative research.

- The main focus will be on specific themes, such as workers' mobility, the ageing workforce, quality of employment and other priority themes with input from all countries, with specific attention given to the sectoral level, but also analysis of trends in a specific geographical area, i.e. new Member States or cross-border regions. Apart from topics agreed in the project plan at the beginning of the year, the integrated network of correspondents will also be expected to contribute to a limited number of ad hoc and on-demand comparative analytical studies.
- The Foundation will collect data on the representativity of social partner organisations following a request from the Commission. The results will become part of EIROnline.
- The company level will remain the prime focus of EMCC activities. It will further advance the European Restructuring Monitor (ERM) as its main instrument for monitoring the employment consequences of restructuring. EMCC will conduct follow-up analysis of announced restructurings. ERM data will be further validated through systematic comparison with data from other statistical sources. Furthermore, the aim is to increase knowledge about the special conditions and requirements of SMEs and micro firms.

Database updates

- EURLife with statistical information on the quality of life of European citizens;
- dictionary of European industrial relations terms.

Quality assurance of the various research methods used by the Foundation is essential for ensuring confidence in its results. In 2006 the Foundation will further strengthen its quality assurance approach through qualitative post-testing of the 2005 European Working Conditions Survey. The results will benefit all future surveys.

The objective for 2006 is to also enhance the quality assurance for case study methodologies. By the end of the current four-year programme, the Foundation should be recognised for the consistent quality of its case studies in the same way as it is currently recognised and appreciated for the quality of its surveys and monitoring instruments.

The Foundation both carries out its own surveys and collaborates with other parties for analysis on issues relevant to all four key themes. The data collected through the observatories are another important source of comparative research.

The monitoring activities involve extensive analysis, but the Foundation also carries out in-depth research studies on factors influencing the development of specific policies and practical initiatives. This means exploring both what works and what does not. The main focus will be on experiences at workplace level, identifying measures that contribute to sustainable improvements. The research will be based on case study methodology and action research. Most projects address more than one key theme.

Employment

- The analysis of the Eurobarometer survey on geographical and labour market mobility will address:
 - mobility patterns;
 - drivers and barriers to mobility;
 - economic and social effects of mobility in Europe.
- EMCC will continue to provide case studies on good practice in managing restructuring, looking, for instance, at job creation and the role of social partnership in anticipating restructuring effects. It will also increase the number of analytical studies based on the results of their own data collection. Future studies will prioritise the sectoral level and the situation in the new Member States. Exploring and understanding the drivers of change at sectoral level will continue, introducing a regional perspective where possible.
- In the context of EWCO, comparative analysis on the quality of work and employment will focus on career and employment security, health and well-being, skills development and a gender-sensitive work-life balance.
- A new project will commence with the aims to describe and analyse the changes in the structure of jobs in a selection of European countries, assessing the quality of jobs over time.
- The case study collection and analysis of workplace developments in ‘old’ and ‘new’ EU Member States will look at various aspects of improved attractiveness of workplaces, both with regard to employment policies (employability) as well as the capacity for innovation and management of change.
- Employment creation is the focus of the project on labour supply in care services and the development of sustainable childcare services.
- The case study collection and analysis of employment initiatives for an ageing workforce will continue to cover all 25 Member States.

Work-life balance

- The data from the company survey on working time will be used to analyse the link between social dialogue, working time arrangements and work-life balance. Attention will be given to different sizes of companies, notably to diversity among SMEs.
- Flexibility practices used by companies and their impact at company and individual employment level will be studied, based on the company survey data and the case studies collected around the ‘attractive workplace’ (see above under the key theme of employment).
- Patterns in and out of employment over time are the focus of the project concerned with the organisation of working time over the life course.

Industrial relations and partnership

- EIRO will present comparative studies on topics such as industrial relations in the public sector, wage flexibility, the Europeanisation of collective bargaining, social plans put in place in cases of restructuring and employee financial participation in the new Member States.
- The research into codes of conduct and framework agreements will look into new developments in social regulation at the company level.
- The work on the future trends of industrial relations and challenges of globalisation will aim to benchmark the industrial relations in all 25 Member States against the objectives of the Lisbon Strategy (competitiveness, productivity, employment and respecting social inclusion).

Social cohesion

- Practical experience on policies for the social, economic and cultural integration of migrants at municipal level will be gathered and analysed using a network of local authorities.
- Employment retention and reintegration into employment are the main issues of the projects concerned with older workers and people with long-term health problems.
- Research into measures to promote the quality of life for people in rural areas will focus on the new Member States.
- An in-house study will gather Foundation research to date and expert views on the topic of boosting European economic performance while maintaining/reorientating social partnerships. It will be used for high-level debate on competitiveness and its social dimension at the third Foundation Forum in November 2006.

Communicating and sharing ideas and experience

3

Communication, one of the Foundation's key roles, is targeted at those who develop and influence European social policy. Traditionally, these have included policy makers in public authorities, the social partners at EU and national levels and representative organisations of civic society. In recent years, the Foundation has expanded its communication strategy to include the business community and the general public. Reaching these new groups has been a crucial element of the Foundation's information and communication strategy for the last number of years. Important vehicles for this are the Foundation websites, its press activities, visits to Member States via the 'road shows' and the use of communication outreach services.

Communication activities will be strengthened by improving the packaging of the knowledge and information to be disseminated. The publications programme will be continually streamlined, producing more targeted publications of a high quality. Greater attention will be paid to adopting a policy-oriented approach with the launch of new products such as the *Foundation Focus* and *Foundation Findings*. Editing standards will aim to eliminate jargon and 'eurospeak' and the visual appearance of products (covers and graphics) will be enhanced. Communication objectives are included in the design of all research projects.

Foundation information will be presented via thematic campaigns. 2006 will be the European Year of Worker Mobility and the Foundation will prepare and provide input, with its analysis based on the 2005 Eurobarometer survey on geographical and labour market mobility.

The Foundation will organise a high-level debate on competitiveness and its social dimension through the third Foundation Forum. An in-house preparatory study will gather Foundation research to date on this topic.

Proposed dissemination and debate activities are:

- First results and thematic analysis of the European Working Conditions Survey.
- Results from the European Quality of Life Survey on the following themes: quality of work-life, rural-urban differences, time use over the life course and participation in civil society.
- The case study database and first analysis about access to and retention/ reintegration in employment of older workers.
- Topic results from the company survey on:
 - childcare leave;
 - phased and early retirement;
 - part-time work;
 - extended operating hours and unusual working hours.
- The EMCC company network seminar series will look at corporate mobility, the role of regional development agencies in facilitating change and job creation and change management in SMEs.
- Network building and knowledge exchange in the new Member States on the capacity of social dialogue to anticipate and manage change.
- The Foundation seminar series will continue to be used as a forum for exchange between tripartite national teams on topics that are high on the policy agenda and to which the Foundation can contribute data and analysis.
- Presenting the Foundation work to relevant EU policy meetings and responding to ad hoc requests from these actors for more tailored details.

Work organisation

The Foundation's commitment to gender mainstreaming applies to the content and organisation of its activities. In the area of monitoring, the Foundation continues to ensure the availability of relevant data which can be analysed by gender through the development of gender-sensitive indicators and analysis. In terms of analytical work, the purpose is to ensure that staff and potential contractors consider the gender dimension and, if applicable, can demonstrate and ensure that this is incorporated into the work. The presentation of Foundation research findings in conferences will take account of the gender dimension. The Foundation will also look for opportunities to contribute to events that will be prepared in the context of the European Year of Equal Opportunities (2007). The Foundation will establish contacts with the new Institute on Gender Equality in order to share expertise and experience.

The aim of achieving further synergy in the Foundation's activities and working methods will remain a priority for 2006. This includes collaboration with the European Agency for Health and Safety at Work and other European and international organisations. Activities in the area of human resources will continue to support the development and performance of staff at professional and individual level. The ICT services will support the Foundation's operations, notably the use of the web to deliver an increasing amount of online services. The activities in the area of monitoring and evaluation will focus on the corporate evaluation which is to cover the period of the Foundation's previous four-year programme (2000–2004).

EF/05/39/EN