



**CALL FOR PROPOSALS
VP/2013/012
CALL FOR PROPOSALS**

FOR SOCIAL POLICY EXPERIMENTATIONS SUPPORTING SOCIAL INVESTMENTS

PROGRESS 2013

BUDGET HEADING 04.040102

In view of the large number of enquiries, please do not telephone.
Questions should be sent by email only to:
EMPL-VP-2013-012@ec.europa.eu

This text is available in English, French and German. The English version is the original.

To ensure a more rapid response it would be helpful if applicants sent their queries in
English or French.

*Employment,
Social Affairs
and Inclusion*

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TEXT OF THE CALL VP/2013/012

1. PROGRESS programme

1.1. PROGRESS introduction

PROGRESS¹ is the EU employment and social solidarity programme, set up for the period 2007-2013 to provide financial support for the attainment of the European Union's objectives in employment, social affairs and equal opportunities and of the Europe 2020 Strategy. This new strategy, which has a strong social dimension, aims at turning the EU into a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy delivering high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion. The European Union needs coherent and complementary contributions from different policy strands, methods and instruments, including the PROGRESS programme, to support the Member States in delivering on the Europe 2020's goals.

The PROGRESS mission is to strengthen the EU's contribution in support of Member States' commitments and efforts to create more and better jobs and to build a more cohesive society. To this effect, PROGRESS is instrumental in:

- Providing analysis and policy advice on PROGRESS policy areas.
- Monitoring and reporting on the implementation of EU legislation and policies in PROGRESS policy areas.
- Promoting policy transfer, learning and support among Member States on EU objectives and priorities.
- Relaying the views of the stakeholders and society at large.

More specifically, PROGRESS supports:

- The implementation of the European Employment Strategy (section 1).
- The implementation of the open method of coordination in the field of social protection and inclusion (section 2).
- The improvement of the working environment and conditions including health and safety at work and reconciling work and family life (section 3).
- The effective implementation of the principle of non-discrimination and promotion of its mainstreaming in all EU policies (section 4).
- The effective implementation of the principle of gender equality and promotion of its mainstreaming in all EU policies (section 5).

The call for proposals is issued in the context of the implementation of the 2013 annual work plan which can be consulted at <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=658&langId=fr>.

¹ Decision No 1672/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 October 2006 establishing a Community Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity — Progress, *JO L 315 of 15.11.2006*.

1.2. New EU Programme

As PROGRESS is ending in 2013, the Commission has adopted its proposal² for a new programme on the 6th of October 2011, the Programme for Social Change and Innovation (PSCI)³. This new programme should come into effect on 1st January 2014.

The Commission's proposal for the new Programme integrates and extends the coverage of three existing programmes: Progress (Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity), EURES (European Employment Services) and the European Progress Microfinance Facility. The general objectives of the programme are defined as below:

Strengthen ownership of the Union objectives in the employment, social and working conditions fields among key Union and national policy-makers, as well as other interested parties in order to bring about concrete and coordinated actions at both Union and Member State level.

- a) Support the development of adequate, accessible and efficient social protection systems and labour markets and facilitate policy reform, by promoting good governance, mutual learning and social innovation.
- b) Modernise Union law in line with the Smart Regulation principles and ensure that Union law on matters relating to working conditions is effectively applied.
- c) Promote workers' geographical mobility and boost employment opportunities by developing Union labour markets that are open and accessible to all.
- d) Promote employment and social inclusion by increasing the availability and accessibility of microfinance for vulnerable groups and micro-enterprises, and by increasing access to finance for social enterprises.

The PROGRESS axe of the new Programme is foreseen to continue the current activities of PROGRESS (i.e. policy coordination, sharing of best practices, capacity-building and testing innovative policies). It would also increase its contribution to social policy experimentation and to the identification of good practices, the aim being to up-scale the most successful measures with the support of the new European Social Fund.

The European Parliament and the Council reached a political agreement regarding the new Programme on the 28 June 2013, including for a new name the "EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation" (EaSI)⁴.

All activities commencing after the 1st of January 2014 under this contract will have to take into consideration the changes related to the new Programme and will have to satisfy with the implementing conditions including in term of monitoring and evaluation. The Commission might change the objectives, activities, specifications and deliverables of the contract accordingly, during the extension for 2014 and onwards.

² COM(2011) 609 final

³ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2011:0609:FIN:EN:PDF>

⁴ <http://portal.empl.cec/Units/01/Pages/PROGRESS.aspx>

2. Characteristics of the call

2.1. Policy background

Social innovations give new or/and better answers to social problems that are often more efficient and sustainable than present solutions. These solutions (products, services or new process) bring more than just jobs, growth and competitiveness - they contribute with something to the society as a whole. Social innovation is about developing solutions to tackle social demands (e.g. eldercare, childcare, job opportunities and training) and societal challenges (e.g. ageing society, climate change, poverty and exclusion). Social innovations are not only answers to specific necessities, but they also aim towards the empowering of people, especially those who are deprived, through their active involvement in the innovative process. Social innovations are also about creating and improving social relations and models of governance by developing new forms of organization and interactions between public sector, civil society organizations, private enterprises and citizens to respond to social issues.

The Europe 2020 Strategy⁵ success in delivering smart, sustainable and inclusive growth largely depends on its ability to innovate across all fronts. Two of its flagship initiatives - Innovation Union⁶ and Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion⁷ - put this priority on the centre stage. The Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion promotes social innovation and social policy experimentation as renewed ways to address challenges of social policies: "evidence-based social innovation, particularly in the form of social experimentation can be a powerful tool to guide the structural reforms that will be needed to implement the Europe 2020 vision".

The Social Investment Package (SIP)⁸ "Towards Social Investment for Growth and Cohesion" launched by the EU Commission in February 2013 to support EU 2020 strategy represents an important paradigm shift in European social policy. The National Reform Programmes (NRP's) and the Country Specific Recommendations (CSR's) encourage the implementation of the SIP and reinforce its key messages. SIP urges Member States in pursuing active policies prioritising the social investment and the modernisation of their welfare states. Social investment relies on social policy innovations to provide solutions that produce results better than the existing solutions or the status quo. Social policy innovations can help to create efficiency gains in social policies and effectiveness in addressing societal challenges as well as to facilitate investment in human capital throughout the life course.

Some of these innovative solutions to social challenges remain successful on a small scale, but some of them have the potential to be replicated in other contexts or to contribute to a wider social change. Social policy experimentation is considered in this call as a tool to test the impact of a new policy or a new measure on a small scale with a view to up-scale it if its effectiveness has been demonstrated. As new social programs and policies always contain some uncertainty and risks, social experimentations offer to decision-makers valuable opportunities to base their decisions on objective results. Indeed, when properly

⁵ <http://ec.europa.eu/eu2020/>

⁶ http://ec.europa.eu/research/innovation-union/index_en.cfm

⁷ <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=961>

⁸ <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1044&langId=en>

designed and executed, social policy experimentation is a powerful methodology which permits to collect evidence about the real impact of an intervention.

SIP stresses that social innovation and social policy experimentation need to be embedded in policy making and connected to social priorities. SIP recognizes also that an enabling framework is needed for partnerships as well as support to social innovators in order to test and implement innovative solutions. This call aims to expand the knowledge-base, support evidence-based policy-making and intensify the mutual learning among various actors in the PROGRESS participating countries and facilitate the adaptation of social programmes and policies to real needs. The significance of the social policy experimentations depends not only on the valuable information they provide, but also on whether they are used to estimate the impact of new social policies or programmes and on the possibility to eventually replicate and/or upscale these 'experimental' policies or programmes.

The present call focuses on the methodological aspects of the different phases of social policy innovations, policy reforms or policy adaptations. Consequently, particular attention should be given to the evaluation and dissemination. This approach is consistent with the emphasis on good governance of the European Union, the increased need to ensure quality of public spending while responding to citizens' needs and expectations. This is reflected by the principle - from both a social and budgetary perspective - that the impact, adequacy and effectiveness of social reforms should be tested before their generalisation.

2.2. Methodology

In the context of this call, the social policy experimentation should aim at measuring the impact of a relevant social policy intervention and be based on a sound methodology.

1 - Relevance of the policy intervention

- Needs' diagnosis: the proposal should start with a rigorous description of the social need the policy intervention seeks to address and to document the nature of this need⁹. Applicants are also asked to indicate how they came up with the innovative idea and how they established that the intervention is indeed innovative. Applicants are invited to write two short paragraphs outlining the lessons that they would learn in case the experiment succeeds (they will find a significant difference in outcome between the treatment and the control group) or fails (they will find no significant difference).
- Social policy intervention (the "treatment"): the proposal should precisely describe the set of actions envisaged as part of the policy intervention, and explain why they might help address this social need. The relevance of the policy intervention should be supported by a thorough search for examples of similar policy interventions that have been conducted domestically or abroad. This search can also provide supplementary evidence that the program is likely to address the social need that was identified. In particular, the proposal should identify and describe the different incentives, opportunities or constraints with which the targeted population will be confronted. This policy intervention should be compatible with those incentives, opportunities and

⁹Social policy experimentations typically investigate effects of a policy intervention on groups of persons such as major innovations in social policy, incremental changes in existing programs. They can also be used to test the efficacy of existing programs.

constraints, and to ensure that the targeted population will indeed be willing and able to participate.

2 - Design of the social policy experimentation

- Eligible population: the proposal should clearly describe the population from which the participants to the experiment will be sampled. The proposal will discuss if needed the potential trade-offs that could arise in defining the eligible population (external validity concerns, take up rate among the treated units, evaluation costs).
- Sample size: the proposal should discuss how many participants should be included approximately in the sample in order to have a good chance of detecting an effect of the intervention if this effect is indeed present in the population. This discussion should be based on a statistical power analysis.
- Assignment to the social policy intervention: the proposal should describe how the random assignment of the members of the sample to the treatment and control groups will be achieved. The treated group is the group subject to the social policy intervention. If the random assignment has been properly done, the treated group will be identical to the control group along all observable and unobservable characteristics, except that the former benefited from the social policy intervention. The comparison (or control) group allows evaluating what would have happened to the members of the group subject to the policy intervention if they had not been exposed to it. The proposal should enounce, if relevant, the potential threats to the internal validity of the social experiment (i.e. contamination effects, cross-overs or low take up rate of the treatment among the treated units). It should also list the units' characteristics that will be recorded to control the effectiveness of the random assignment and to possibly define ex-post subpopulations of interest.
- Follow-up data collection and impact evaluation: the set of outcomes on which the policy intervention is expected to have an impact should also be defined precisely and in measurable terms, so that they may be measured appropriately by the experimentation. Additionally, the proposal should discuss how long to track both the treated and the comparison groups. The time of the follow up survey will depend on whether the intervention is expected to have short term or/and more long-term impacts. The proposal should also explain how it will apply an informed professional judgment (impact evaluation *per se*¹⁰) about the degree to which the policy interventions have caused differences in outcomes between the groups. The impact of a social policy intervention is defined by the difference between the outcome of the beneficiaries after receiving the program and the outcomes of the comparison group (control group). Social experimentation is regarded as the “gold standard” of the evaluation of social policy interventions.

But randomized evaluations of social programs take time and can be complex to implement. For these reasons, when only observational data can be used, non-experimental statistical methods are employed in an attempt to mimic a social experiment. However, non-experimental methods may provide biased results because of the so-called selection

¹⁰ In the proposal, the applicant should not present the impact evaluation *per se* but instead being able to prove that the experimentation is both relevant and based on a sound methodology.

bias. This occurs when the comparison group and treatment groups have different characteristics – unobserved to the evaluator – which influence both participation (i.e. selection) in the program and also directly affect the outcomes of interest. .

Applicants can get information on the six most commonly used methods in the impact evaluation literature in the Annexe III - "Methodological guide for policy makers" published on the call website. Emphasis is placed on the principle of each method and on the assumption on which it relies. Methods are “ranked” according to the degree of credibility of their underlying assumption: randomised experimentations, comparing participants to non-participants, before-after comparisons, difference in differences and regression discontinuity.

For in-depth information on randomised experimentations and on non-experimental or quasi-experimental designs, applicants should consult extra-sources and mobilise specific expertise (useful links are also presented in the "Methodological guide for policy makers"). Applicants could also get information on this issue in the methodological guide published on the call website.

It is important to involve all relevant stakeholders from the moment the project discussion starts. This helps to build consensus on the design of the policy intervention, the methodology used in the evaluation and the set of outcomes which will be considered during the experimentation. A consensus should also be developed beforehand on a set of conditions for scaling this program up if results are positive.

2.3. Lead applicant and co-applicants

The social policy experimentation project has to be submitted by a consortium of stakeholders involved in the process of social policy innovation. The lead applicant must be a public authority at central, regional or local level, or bodies governed by public law. The role of the lead applicant consists not only in holding the consortium's legal responsibility but also in getting actively committed into the project.

The lead applicant has to involve in the consortium at least one co-applicant. Co-applicants must be public authorities at central, regional or local level, or bodies governed by public law, and/or civil society organisations, and/or private sector organisations¹¹. Including academic structures is strongly encouraged. Broadening cooperation between the public sector, the private sector and the third sector could ease the way to innovation in reorienting social policies. Lead applicant and co-applicants must be properly constituted and registered legal persons, established in one of the PROGRESS participating countries.

The European Commission expects from the consortium members that they do place to the social policy experimentation into a policy perspective. Public authorities have a role to play in shaping policies using social innovations, as well as in creating the necessary enabling environment for innovation. Thus, the proposed social intervention implemented at small scale - if proved successful - shall be able to pave the way for a more structural measure or policy.

¹¹ The project will be carried out in one single country, but different projects designs are possible, e.g. two or more parallel identical social policy experimentations in different PROGRESS countries or partnerships with stakeholders from other PROGRESS countries. In all cases, the compatibility of the project design with the envisaged social policy intervention should be carefully argued.

All co-applicants need to confirm by commitment letters attached to the application their participation in the project.

2.4. Evaluation process and transnational dimension

The transnational aspect of this call is ensured at least through a final transnational peer review. The peer review – considered in the context of this call as an external evaluation provided by external group of experts - will be organised at the final stage of the project and will involve experts with specific knowledge and expertise on the evaluated project from at least two other PROGRESS participating countries.

The transnational peer review will be built on a compulsory self-evaluation conducted by the team project as part of their efforts for quality assurance. The group of peers will review the quality of various aspects of the social policy experimentation project and will prepare specific feedback on a list of topics agreed in advance. The team project will prepare a synthesis report at the end of the peer review process. Lessons learnt from this exercise would be drawn to the attention of the highest political level.

The peers will come from a similar environment - public authorities, civil society sector, academic or private sector - depending on the composition of the consortium carrying out the assessed project. All the external experts (peers) need to confirm by commitment letters attached to the application their participation in the transnational peer review organised by the consortium members.

2.5. Scope

The Social Investment Package (SIP) provides the guidance on how Member States can carry out some of the structural reforms needed to modernise their welfare systems and to designing integrated active inclusion strategies that combine adequate income support, inclusive labour markets, and access to quality services. SIP aims at helping reach the Europe 2020 targets by establishing a link between social policies, the reforms as recommended in the European Semester and the relevant EU funds as vital instruments to social investment in the Member States. The implementation of this policy guidance will feed into the European Semester and will inform the Country Specific Recommendations (CSR) for Member States reforms.

SIP promotes a life-cycle approach to social investment, recognising the vital role that social policy plays at key points in the lives of individuals through helping them to confront life's risks and cope with key transition points. SIP's key message is that much of social spending is investment in people, with real and lasting returns in the future.

The scope of the call is to attract proposals designing social policy interventions in line with SIP¹² which contains three policy reforms strands to help Member States adapt their social protection systems to the societal challenges:

1. Activating and enabling benefits and services to support people's inclusion in society and the labour market

¹² <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1044&langId=en>

SIP stresses that the adequacy of benefits must be ensured to provide sufficient social protection, and that benefits should be integrated with accessible, quality services that strengthen people's capabilities and raise people's capacity to participate in society and economy. This includes, for instance, job search assistance, skill training, lifelong learning opportunities, and affordable quality care and social services.

SIP also stresses the promotion of inclusive labour markets, so that women, as well migrants, older people and others all have a fair chance of entering the labour market and earning a living. Specifically, SIP urges Member States to take measures to close the gender pay gap and address barriers to women's and other underrepresented workers' participation in the labour market.

2. Social protection systems to respond to people's needs throughout their lives

SIP pursues an individualised approach that addresses people's unique and complex needs at various stages of life – in childhood, during adolescence, when making the transition from school to work, in parenthood, when the end of one's career approaches, and in retirement and old age.

This implies focusing on people needs, rather than focussing on specific groups, as well as investing as early as possible to prevent disadvantages from compounding. Investing in children and youth is especially important to prevent the intergenerational transmission of disadvantage. In particular, SIP pleads for a much stronger social investment focus on quality early childhood education and care. This is key for a sustainable, efficient and competitive knowledge economy and an intergenerational fair society. Good-quality childcare and early-childhood education have been proven to have a strong positive impact on children's chances of finishing studies and finding employment, and can help children avoid extreme risks like delinquency and drug abuse later on.

Childcare provision is also good for parents. For instance, investing in making childcare accessible can remove barriers to women's labour market participation. There is a strong correlation between the employment rates of women with young children and the proportion of women who have access to formal childcare, especially in the first three years of a child's life.

3. More effective and efficient spending to ensure adequate and sustainable social protection

At a time when Member States are trying to make the most out of their budgets, SIP highlights that there is room to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of budgets for social policies. SIP emphasises that simplifying benefits administration services - for instance through one-stop-shop approaches - can save time, money, and make access to support easier.

Efficiency and effectiveness of social budgets can also be raised through better targeting of the benefits and social services offered (e.g. progressively universal access to child benefits) and making some benefits conditional (e.g. unemployment benefits and participating in job training conditional to some specific individual characteristics). Social

policies should be better targeted towards those most in need, ensuring better take-up rates and coverage to improve adequacy and sustainability at the same time.

2.6. Communication and dissemination

New social programmes and policies often contain some uncertainty and risks. This call offers opportunities for decision-makers to base their decisions on objective and rigorous results. It also aims to expand the knowledge-base on how policies work, support evidence-based and participative policy-making and intensify the mutual learning among various actors in the PROGRESS participating countries. The significance of a social policy experiment depends not only on whether it is used to improve or estimate the impact of new social policy measures, but also on the information it provides to improve existing social policies or programs.

Adequate communication and dissemination of results is essential in ensuring the EU added value of the action and its sustainability after the funding has ended. Information-giving and awareness raising are key activities to ensure that other interested parties benefit from the project and can create new opportunities to extend it or develop new partnerships. The proposals must therefore include a detailed plan for communication and dissemination of the projects' results. In particular, such a plan must include information on dissemination activities and targeted audiences. This plan will reinforce the project's external image and ensure a transversal coherence between all project communication channels (e.g. website, presentations, publications, workshops, seminars etc.).

At final report stage, the beneficiary will be required to provide details about how and to whom the results, best practices and findings have been disseminated and how interested parties have been involved in the project. As part of the contract, project managers are required to feed the summary results (a few paragraphs) into the collaborative site of the Social Investment Knowledge Bank; the European Commission will provide a link to the site and guidelines for contributing. The European Commission could also consider disseminating the results to the European Social Fund authorities as the new evidence provided by the social policy experimentations funded under this call could be useful to identify social innovations producing positive results and that could be possibly replicated/scaled up.

2.7. Indicative budget and rate of co-financing

The overall indicative amount made available for this call is 3 500 000 €. The grant requested must be 700 000 € minimum and 1 000 000 € maximum.

1 000 000 € will be allocated to projects focusing on youth opportunities measures in relation to the objectives of this call. If the quality of the applications dedicated to this theme is not judged sufficient by the Evaluation Committee, the Commission reserves the right to reallocate this budget to the applications addressing other themes.

The European Union financial aid granted will not exceed 80% of the total eligible costs of the action. The consortium members must guarantee the co-financing in cash of the remaining 20%. Contributions in kind are not accepted as co-financing.

2.8. Requirements on how the activities shall be carried out

The PROGRESS Programme aims to promote gender mainstreaming in all its five policy sections and supported activities. Consequently, the beneficiary shall take the necessary steps to ensure that:

- Gender equality issues are taken into account when relevant for the drafting of the proposal by paying attention to the situation and needs of women and men.
- Implementation of proposed activities includes a perspective informed by a systematic consideration of the gender dimension.
- Performance monitoring includes the collection and gathering of data disaggregated by sex when needed.
- Its proposed team and/or staff respect the gender balance at all levels.

Equally, needs of disabled people shall be duly acknowledged and met while implementing the proposed activities. This will ensure in particular that where the Beneficiary organises training sessions and conferences, issues publications or develops dedicated websites, people with disabilities will have equal access to the facilities or the services provided.

Finally, the contracting authority encourages the beneficiary to promote equal employment opportunities for all its staff and team. This entails that the beneficiary is encouraged to foster an appropriate mix of people, whatever their ethnic origin, religion, age, and ability.

The beneficiary will be required to detail in its final activity report the steps and achievements made towards meeting these contractual requirements.

2.9. Publicity and information requirements

In accordance with the General conditions, all beneficiaries are under the obligation to acknowledge that the present activity has received funding from the Union in all documents and media produced, in particular final delivered outputs, related reports, brochures, press releases, videos, software, etc, including at conferences or seminars. In the context of the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity – PROGRESS, the following formulation shall be used:

This (publication, conference, training session etc) is supported by the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity - PROGRESS (2007-2013).

This programme is implemented by the European Commission. It was established to financially support the implementation of the objectives of the European Union in the employment, social affairs and equal opportunities area, and thereby contribute to the achievement of the Europe 2020 Strategy goals in these fields.

The seven-year Programme targets all stakeholders who can help shape the development of appropriate and effective employment and social legislation and policies, across the EU-28, EFTA-EEA and EU candidate and pre-candidate countries.

For more information see: <http://ec.europa.eu/progress>

For publications it is also necessary to include the following reference: "The information contained in this publication does not necessarily reflect the position or opinion of the European Commission".

With regard to publication and any communication plan linked to the present activity, the beneficiary will insert the European Union logo and mention the European Commission as the contracting authority in every publication or related material developed under the present grant agreement.

2.10. Reporting requirements

PROGRESS is implemented through a results-based management (RBM). The Strategic Framework, developed in collaboration with the Member States, social partners and civil society organisations, sets out the intervention logic for PROGRESS-related expenditure and defines PROGRESS' mandate and its long-term and immediate outcomes. It is supplemented by performance measures which serve to determine the extent to which PROGRESS has delivered the expected results. See in Annex the overview of PROGRESS performance measurement framework.

For more information on the strategic framework, please visit PROGRESS website <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=659&langId=en>.

The Commission regularly monitors the effect of PROGRESS-supported initiatives and considers how they contribute to PROGRESS outcomes as defined in the Strategic Framework. In this context, the Beneficiary will be asked to dedicatedly work in close cooperation with the Commission and/or persons authorised by it to define the expected contribution and the set of performance measures which this contribution will be assessed against. As a direct contribution to the PROGRESS Annual Performance Monitoring Report, the Beneficiary will be asked to submit a short quantitative questionnaire on the outputs produced over the course of a given calendar year. At the end of the action, the Beneficiary will also be asked to report on its own performance to the Commission and/or persons authorised by it against a template which will be annexed to the grant agreement.

3. Exclusion, eligibility, selection and award criteria

3.1. Exclusion and eligibility criteria

a) Exclusion criteria

The applicant should certify that they are not in one of the situations listed in the articles 106(1) and 107 to 109 of the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the European Communities¹³.

¹³ http://ec.europa.eu/budget/biblio/documents/regulations/regulations_en.cfm. The situations referred to include bankruptcy, compulsory winding-up, being under court administration, in an arrangement with creditors or any other similar proceedings; convictions of professional misconduct; non-fulfilment of social

b) Eligibility criteria

Eligibility of the lead applicants and co-applicants

1. The lead applicant must be a public authority at central, regional or local level, or a body governed by public law.
2. The lead applicant has to involve in the consortium at least one co-applicant. The co-applicants must be public authorities at central, regional or local level, and/or public bodies governed by public law, and/or civil society organisations, and/or private sector organisations. Including academic structures is strongly encouraged.
3. Lead applicants and co-applicants must be properly constituted and registered legal persons, established in one of the PROGRESS participating countries¹⁴.
4. All co-applicants need to confirm by commitment letters their participation in the project.

Eligibility of the application/proposal

Eligibility of the application

1. The application must be complete and submitted in the online application SWIM before the deadline.
2. The application must be submitted on paper and sent by post or notified by personal delivery in one original before the deadline.

Eligibility of the proposal

1. The proposal must be a social policy experiment as defined in point 2.2 of the call and must contain a description of how the scaling-up of the experiment could occur.
2. The proposal must organise a transnational peer review at the final stage of the project involving peers from at least two other PROGRESS participating countries. The team project will prepare a synthesis report at the end of the peer review process.
3. All the peers need to confirm by commitment letters attached to the application their participation in the transnational peer review organised at the final stage of the project.
4. The proposal must seek funding for activities only in PROGRESS participating countries.
5. The requested grant must be between 700 000 € and 1 000 000 €
6. The proposal must respect the maximum limit for EU co-financing, namely maximum 80% of the total eligible costs of the action.
7. The duration of the project must be between 24 months and 36 months.

security or tax payment obligations; convictions of fraud, corruption, involvement in a criminal organisation or any other illegal activity; declared in serious breach of contract in relation to activities funded by the European Union's budget; subject to conflict of interest; guilty of misrepresentation in supplying the required information.

¹⁴ EU28, Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Serbia.

3.2. Selection criteria

Only proposals which comply with the requirements of the eligibility and exclusion criteria will be eligible for further evaluation. Applicants (lead and co-applicants) must have the financial and operational capacity to complete the activity for which funding is requested. Only organisations with the necessary financial and operational capacity may be awarded a grant.

1. Operational capacity to complete the proposed action: applicants (lead applicant and co-applicants) must have the operational resources (technical, management) and the professional skills and qualifications needed to successfully complete the proposed action, as well as the ability to implement it. Applicants must have a strong track record of competence and experience in the field and in particular in the type of action proposed. This operational capacity must be attested by the provision of the following items:
 - A declaration on honour concerning the operational capacity to carry out the activity.
 - A declaration on honour signed by the applicant stating that the policy issue addressed is within its legal area of competence.
 - Detailed CVs and job specifications of the project manager and of all the persons who will receive salaries to perform the main tasks.
2. Financial capacity to carry out the action: applicants (lead applicant and co-applicants) must have access to solid and adequate funding to maintain their activities for the period of the action and to help finance it as necessary (the verification of financial capacity will not apply to public bodies). The financial capacity will be assessed on the basis of the relevant accompanying documents indicated in the checklist.

3.3. Award criteria

The evaluation committee will assess the project proposals according to the criteria listed below. The maximum rating for each criterion is indicated in parentheses. The maximum total points that a proposal may obtain is 100. Proposals that do not receive 70 points will not be considered for funding. Proposals that do not receive at least 50% of the maximum score under each of the three areas below will not be considered for funding.

Policy criteria (60 points)

1. Relevance of the policy intervention: conformity with the objectives described in the call, the extent to which the proposal presents a well-supported diagnosis of the social needs to be addressed and demonstrates the relevance of the proposed policy intervention to advancing social policies and its ability to be implemented on a larger

scale. Target group and envisaged set of actions and expected impact must also be clearly defined (25 points).

- Needs' diagnosis: the proposal presents a rigorous description of the social need the policy intervention seeks to address and to document the nature of this need. (see section 2.2) (10 points).
 - Social policy intervention: the proposal precisely describes the set of actions envisaged as part of the policy intervention and explains why they might help address this social need¹⁵ (see section 2.2) (15 points).
2. Design of the social policy experimentation: ability of the proposal to deliver robust information on the impact of the tested policy intervention (relevant and clear objectives, robust methodology and precise indicators). In particular, the European added value: the extent to which the results of the project are expected to be useful for informing policy development and activities at EU, national and local levels (35 points).
- Eligible population: the proposal should clearly describe the population from which the participants to the experiment will be sampled (see section 2.2) (10 points).
 - Sample size: the proposal should discuss how many participants should be included approximately in the sample in order to have a good chance of detecting an effect of the intervention if this effect is indeed present in the population (see section 2.2) (5 points).
 - Assignment to the social intervention: the proposal should describe how the random assignment of the members of the sample to the treatment and control groups will be achieved (see section 2.2)¹⁶ (10 points).
 - Follow-up data collection and impact evaluation: the set of outcomes on which the policy intervention is expected to have an impact should also be defined precisely and in measurable terms, so that they may be measured appropriately by the experimentation.¹⁷ (see section 2.2) (10 points).

¹⁵ The relevance of the policy intervention should be supported by a thorough search for examples of similar policy interventions that have been conducted domestically or abroad. This search can also provide supplementary evidence that the program is likely to address the social need that was identified. In particular, the proposal should identify and describe the different incentives, opportunities or constraints with which the targeted population will be confronted. This policy intervention should be compatible with those incentives, opportunities and constraints, and to ensure that the targeted population will indeed be willing and able to participate.

¹⁶ The treated group is the group subject to the social intervention. If the random assignment has been properly done, the treated group will be identical to the control group along all observable and unobservable characteristics, except that the former benefited from the social intervention. The comparison group informs us on what would have happened to the members of the group subject to the policy intervention if they had not been exposed to it. The proposal should enounce, if relevant, the potential threats to the internal validity of the social experiment (i.e. contamination effects, cross-overs or low take up rate of the treatment among the treated units).

¹⁷ Additionally, the proposal should discuss how long to track both the treated and the comparison groups. The time of the follow up survey will depend on whether the intervention is expected to have short term or/and more long-term impacts. The impact of a social policy intervention is defined by the difference

Organisational criteria (25 points)

1. The operational, strategic and financial capacity of the consortium partners to achieve the objectives through the proposed activities within realistic deadlines (6 points).
2. The quality of the communication and dissemination plan (including the valorisation of results) ensuring a transversal coherence between all project communication channels (6 points).
3. The quality of the set-up:
 - The quality of the consortium between the lead applicant and co-applicants (public authorities or public bodies governed by public law, or civil society organisations, or private sector organisations). The inclusion of academic structures is strongly encouraged (6 points).
 - The quality of the transnational peer review strategy built on a project team compulsory self-evaluation. This exercise will be organised at the final stage of the project and involve peers from at least two other PROGRESS countries (7 points).

Financial criteria (15 points)

1. Adequacy of the human and financial resources to the planned activities (cost-effectiveness) (10 points).
2. Overall quality, clarity and completeness of the budget (5 points).

4. Submission of grant applications

4.1. Start and duration of projects

The projects should start after signature of grant agreements, expected within six months of the date of submission. The planned duration of the project may not be less than 24 months nor exceed 36 months. In view of the time required to evaluate applications, actions should not start before the deadline as set out in section 4.2 below.

Applicants should note that if their project is selected, they will not necessarily receive the grant agreement prior to the action starting date indicated and should, therefore, take this into account in programming the timing of their project. Any expenditure incurred before the signature of the grant agreement is at the applicant's risk.

between the outcome(s) of the beneficiaries after receiving the program and the outcomes of the comparison group. Social experimentation is regarded as the “gold standard” of the evaluation of social policy interventions.

4.2. Deadline for submission of proposals

The proposals must be submitted electronically online and sent by post or by personal delivery in one original to the European Commission, by **16 December 2013** at the latest.

Proposals which do not respect the date of submission will not be considered by the evaluation committee.

4.3. Rules of submission

Applicants are invited to fill in the application form online, on the SWIM secure website: <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/swim/displayWelcome.do>. Annexes, which are compulsory, must also be filled in and uploaded online. Before starting, please read carefully the "User's guide" that can be found at the top of the page ("Help on SWIM").

The electronic application in the online application SWIM must be "validated". Invalid electronic applications are automatically excluded from further evaluation.

After filling in the form, **applicants must submit it both electronically and in hard copy:**

- Electronic submission: in order to **validate** the application, click on the "send" button. This step is irreversible and must be carried out **before the deadline**.
 - Hard copy submission: a duly completed application accompanied by the annexes and all the required documentary proof should also be sent to the addresses below **by the deadline** (their submission date will be taken as the date of dispatch, as evidenced by the postmark or the express courier receipt date).
- a) By post to the following **postal address**:
- European Commission
 - DG EMPL D1
 - Call for proposals VP/2013/012
 - B-1049 Brussels
 - Belgium
- b) Or by **personal delivery** against an acknowledgement of receipt from the Commission's central mail service **by 16.00 hours on 15 December 2013** at the latest to the following address:
- European Commission
 - DG EMPL D1
 - Call for proposals VP/2013/012
 - Central Courier Service
 - Avenue du Bourget, 1
 - B-1140 Evere
 - Belgium

The applicant is requested to number the accompanying documents to be submitted with the application as shown below and send **one original and one copy**. Documents will be

printed double-sided, if possible. Only two-hole folders will be used. **The dossier should not be bound or glued.**

Please do make sure that the full set of the application form and all accompanying documents are included in your sending by post by the deadline. **The absence of any of these documents invalidates the application as specified in section 4.4.**

Order	Documents composing the paper application	Available in SWIM
1	Cover letter of application quoting the reference number of the call (VP/2013/012), signed and dated by the legal representative of the applicant organisation.	YES (compulsory template)
2	Submitted online application form. The print-out should be dated and signed by the legal representative. The online form must be electronically submitted before printing. Once the electronic application is submitted, no further changes will be possible.	YES (compulsory template)
3	A declaration on honour from the lead applicant and each co-applicant entity This must be written on the official letterhead paper of the applicant organisations and have the original signature of the legal representative, certifying that the applicant organisation is not in one of the situations listed in Articles 106(1) and 107 to 109 of the Financial Regulation and that it has the financial and operational capacity to complete the activity for which funding is requested..	YES (compulsory template)
4	A letter of mandate from each co-applicant. This must follow the template provided, be written on the official letterhead paper of the organisation and have the original signature of the legal representative. It must also be submitted electronically in annex to the on-line application form.	YES (compulsory template)
5	Letters of commitment signed by the legal representatives of the applicants explaining the nature of their involvement and specifying the amount of their financial contribution when relevant following the template provided to the on-line application form.	YES (compulsory template)
6	Letters of commitment signed by the legal representatives of all co-applicants explaining the nature of their involvement and specifying the amount of their financial contribution when relevant following the template provided to the on-line application form.	YES (compulsory template)
7	Financial identification form duly completed and signed by the account holder of the lead-applicant organisation and bearing the stamp and signature of the bank. It is also possible to attach a copy of a recent bank statement to the financial identification form, in which event the stamp of the bank and the signature of the bank's representative are not required. The signature of the account holder is obligatory in all cases.	YES (compulsory template)
8	Legal entity form , completed and signed by the legal representative of the lead-applicant and each co-applicant organisation.	YES (compulsory template)
9	The lead applicant and each co-applicant must also provide a copy of the certificate of official registration or other official document attesting to the establishment of the entity (for public bodies, a copy of the law, decree or decision establishing the entity in question) - not necessary for international organizations who have signed a framework agreement with the European Commission.	NO, but please upload

10	The lead applicant and each co-applicant must also provide a copy of the articles of association/statutes or equivalent , proving the eligibility of the organization – not necessary for public authorities or international organizations who have signed a framework agreement with the European Commission.	NO, but please upload
11	The lead applicant and each co-applicant must also provide a copy of a document confirming the applicant's tax or VAT number , if applicable.	NO, but please upload
12	Letters of commitment signed by all the peers confirming their participation in the transnational peer review organised by the co-applicants at the final stage of the project.	YES (compulsory template)
13	Document " Description of the action ". This document must be provided as an annex to the online application form by using the mandatory structure for proposals (available online together with this document). The description of the action as reflected in this compulsory template intends to provide extensive information which would not fit into the application form and other annex. It will be used to assess the application against the criteria mentioned in the text of the call for proposals.	YES (compulsory template)
14	Document " Contracts for implementing the action " in case of subcontracting for external expertise.	YES (compulsory template)
15	Document " Summary of Quantitative Information on Planned Deliverables/Outputs ".	YES (compulsory template)
16	Detailed CVs (educational and professional qualifications) and job specifications of the project manager, of all the persons who will perform the main tasks and of the peer experts.	NO, but please upload
17	Declaration of the lead applicant that the policy issue addressed is within its legal area of competence quoting specific provisions of law/statutes or equivalent.	NO, but please upload
18	Any other information that is relevant to the project application can be attached (e.g. list of relevant projects carried out by the applicants and the co-applicants). In case of work done for the Commission, applicants must also include the reference number of the contract and department for which the contract was performed.	NO, but please upload
19	The most recent balance sheet of all co-applicant organisations which are not public bodies. The balance sheets, by definition, must include assets and liabilities. The co-applicant should specify which currency is being used in the balance sheet. The Commission reserves the right to request balance sheets from previous years, if necessary.	NO, but please upload
20	For grant requests over EUR 750 000: an external audit report produced by an approved auditor, certifying the accounts of the applicant organisation for the last financial year available. This obligation does not apply to public bodies. In the case of proposals submitted by a consortium the threshold mentioned in the first paragraph shall apply to each of the applicants.	NO, but please upload

If an organisation wants to submit more than one proposal, each application must be submitted separately.

4.4. Evaluation process

Applications are assessed by an evaluation committee. The work of the evaluation committee consists in assessing the applications against the exclusion, eligibility, selection and award criteria. The applications which are not submitted both on line and in hard copy by the deadline will automatically be rejected.

After the deadline for submission of proposals, the European Commission may contact the applicant to provide clarification. Failure to reply to the clarification request will invalidate the application. If any document listed in section 4.3 of the call is missing, incorrect or open to further interpretation or negotiation, the application may be rejected on that sole basis.

Only proposals which satisfy the exclusion and eligibility criteria will be evaluated further against selection and award criteria. The evaluation committee will deliver an opinion recommending a number of proposals for funding. The list will take into consideration the results of the evaluations within the remains of the budget available.

All applicants will receive a written notification of the outcome as well as feedback on the evaluation of their application. This could take several weeks.

Successful applicants will receive two original copies of the grant agreement detailing the conditions and level of funding for acceptance and signature. Both copies must be sent back to the European Commission which will return one to the applicant once it has been signed by both parties.

4.5. Indicative timetable

Deadlines	Date
Deadline for submitting the applications	16 December 2013
Requests of further information from the Commission to the applicants (when needed)	February - March 2014
Notification of results	June 2014
Signing of grant agreements	September 2014

4.6. Contact

Contacts between the contracting authority and potential applicants can only take place in certain circumstances and under the following conditions:

Before the final date for submission of proposals, at the request of the applicant, the European Commission may provide additional information solely for the purpose of clarifying the nature of the call. Any requests for additional information must be made in writing to **empl-VP-2013-012@ec.europa.eu**.

In the interest of equal treatment of applicants, the Commission cannot give a prior opinion on the eligibility of an applicant, a co-applicant or an action or on the outcome of the call before the official publication of results.

The Commission may, on its own initiative, inform interested parties of any error, inaccuracy, omission or other clerical error in the text of the call for proposals. Any additional information including that referred to above will be published on the internet in concordance with the various call-for-proposals documents.

Contact coordinates for the call:

ENQUIRIES SHOULD BE SUBMITTED BY E-MAIL ONLY, CLEARLY INDICATING THE REFERENCE VP/2013/012, TO: empl-vp-2013-012@ec.europa.eu

Applicants are hereby informed that in the interest of transparency and equal treatment of applicants, no queries will be dealt with by telephone.

4.7. Informative Seminar

The European Commission will invite the project leaders of the awarded projects to participate in a kick-off informative seminar. Applicants are therefore invited to plan in the budget relevant costs for travel, accommodation and subsistence allowances (2 persons for 2 days in Brussels).

5. FINANCIAL GUIDELINES FOR APPLICANTS

For more detailed information on the financial and administrative aspects of the call please see Annex I which is available on the call website:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=630&langId=en>

Only eligible costs can be taken into account for determining the amount of grant. The categories of costs considered as eligible and non-eligible are indicated in the section 4.2 of the above Guidelines.

In addition to costs specified in article 4.2.4 of the Financial Guidelines following costs are ineligible for funding under the present call:

- Direct financial support to the participants in the target groups.
- Acquisition of immovable property and/or vehicles.

Before awarding a grant, the Commission will check whether the budget does not contain problems such as arithmetical errors, inaccuracies, unrealistic costs or other ineligible costs. The check may give rise to a request for clarification and may lead the European Commission to ask for modifications or reductions of some budget items before delivering the grant. The amount of the grant and the percentage of EU co-financing should never be increased as a result of these corrections.

Annex II - Model grant agreement

For more detailed information on payment arrangements, general legal and administrative provisions please see the model grant agreement which is available on the call website.

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=629>