



Ex-ante evaluation of Eurofound's four year programme 2013-2016

Final report

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Executive summary

Eurofound has interpreted the requirement for an ex-ante evaluation of its new four year programme to be a 'formative' evaluation process, conducted internally, and accompanying the four year programme development. Its primary purpose was to help Eurofound develop a 'good' four year programme and to ensure that it can be feasibly implemented, monitored and evaluated, rather than being an independent assessment.

This report is a **summary of observations** by the internal evaluators at the end of this process.

The **structure** of the report is oriented on the European Commission's ex-ante evaluation guidelines (2001), which helped Eurofound in structuring the development process by addressing the elements suggested in the guidelines.

Overall, the report comes to the **conclusion** that in many aspects the new programme meets the expectations of a potentially 'good' programme:

- The development process addressed programme relevance and rationale with clear references to Eurofound's mandate in its Founding Regulation, adapted to the changed policy contexts, and sought feedbacks from a broad range of stakeholders to ensure it meets priority needs;
- Alternative options were actively considered as part of the process;
- The programme follows a clearly expressed programme logic and objectives which will form the basis for monitoring and evaluation;
- Mechanisms are in place to implement this programme through the four annual work programmes in the period.

Whilst the programme can be considered to provide a helpful framework designed to assist Eurofound, the proof of successful implementation will have to be delivered in the annual programmes, and operationalization of what the intentions are.

This report has identified a number of challenges that Eurofound has to tackle when implementing its new four year programme through its annual work programmes. The high-level risk factors that can already be identified are similar to those of previous programmes due to the approach of continuity that was chosen for this four year programme.

Some challenges and issues

- Covering a very broad field of observation inherent in Eurofound's mandate harbours a **risk of losing coherence**. External coherence of the programme text can be considered to be quite good due to close alignment with the overarching policy framework and the consultation process. The definition of four policy priority areas, and ten cluster themes for focused communication should be helpful to ensure coherence over the implementation period. There are however challenges to maintain this, particularly in selection of projects in annual work programmes against meaningful criteria. Mechanisms set in place for WP 2013 planning like a newly established internal 'review board' to assist the Directorate in preparing the work programme for the Governing Board will be helpful tools to manage these challenges.
- **Eurofound's position vis-à-vis other organisations is a strategic issue**. The importance of this is likely to grow further in the light of the current macroeconomic and institutional climates as well as a global trend towards more networked collaborations between organisations. The programme text itself mentions the need to cooperate other organisations in related fields quite briefly, particularly other EU agencies. The newly established action plans to implement and monitor cooperation agreements with other EU agencies are positive, ensuring complementarity and synergies between neighbouring EU agencies more systematically than previously. This could be built on further through regular scanning for collaboration and partnership opportunities with other players and organisations, where opportunities arise to provide mutual benefits and complementarities.

- **Operational issues:** Programme implementation through four annual work programmes needs to address all aspects of operational planning and implementation. From an operations perspective, there are elements that are widely considered to be good practice that should be in place.
 - The *planning process* for the first annual programme 2013 included detailed guidelines which provide clear signals that resource allocation, scientific quality and strategic developments are integral parts of programme development.
 - *Resource allocation and management* are crucial to enable successful implementation, particularly in expectation of further reduced resources in the future. There is room for further improvement in the area of Activity Based Management (ABM), adopting an approach that is fit for Eurofound's purpose. Project management as the main way to implement activities will also benefit from further strengthening in Eurofound.
 - The recent push to increasingly insource activities requires a careful and considered management approach, to *maximise the return on investment* made in the human resources especially in the area of research.
 - A detailed *risk analysis is a management task* at the level of annual work programme development. This process of risk analysis and management for annual work programme implementation is understood to be further improved compared to previous years to optimize its effectiveness.

Preamble

Why does Eurofound need this ex-ante evaluation for its intended four year programme for 2013-2016? For these basic reasons:

1. The ultimate purpose of this ex-ante evaluation is to help Eurofound to develop a 'good' four year programme, that meets expectations of budgetary and external stakeholders, and to ensure that it can be feasibly implemented, and monitored and evaluated.
2. To provide an outlook on challenges implicit in the decisions for choices for programme implementation.
3. It is a formal requirement for Eurofound to perform an ex-ante evaluation according to article 25 of its Financial Regulation.

The four year programme for 2013-2016 is ***Eurofound's updated corporate strategy*** for that period, and regarded as such by the European budgetary authorities. It has to satisfy many different expectations: in the first instance, that of its tripartite Governing Board, but also those of other stakeholders with a range of concerns.

The ex-ante evaluation intends to help Eurofound to meet these expectations. The main focus of the ex-ante evaluation process was internally focused and 'formative' (development-oriented) to accompany and support the programme development process throughout its duration.

The structure of this report follows the European Commission's ex-ante evaluation guidelines from 2001, and addresses specified aspects to be addressed in ex-ante evaluations according to these guidelines.

This final ex-ante evaluation report is based on the final version of the text of the four year programme 2013-2016, which was approved by Eurofound's Governing Board at their meeting on 29 June 2012, and on draft 2 of the Annual Work Programme for 2013, the first year of implementation of the four year programme.

This final report will be submitted to the Governing Board meeting on 26th October 2012, accompanied by a quality assessment by an independent evaluation contractor (CSES).

The intended readers of this report are:

- Eurofound programme development team;
- Eurofound senior management;
- Eurofound staff;
- The Governing Board (meeting October 2012).

1. Problem analysis and needs assessment

1.1. Rationale – the interpretation of Eurofound’s mandate for the new programme period

Eurofound’s mandate

The new 2013-2016 Programme provides a good summary of Eurofound’s mission and vision, explaining that it is directly derived from the mandate given to it in its 1974 founding regulation (or basic act).

The articulation in the ‘mission and vision’ part of this programme effectively replaces the expression in the previous programme period, and should become the new reference point to interpret Eurofound’s mandate in the current context.

Section 2 of the draft programme quotes the key paragraphs from the founding regulation (lines 102-106), and interprets its meaning for Eurofound’s work in the programming period 2013-2016 (lines 107-120). Eurofound’s challenge in its new programme consists of adapting its continuing mandate and unique assets (its considerable body of knowledge on living and working conditions in Europe, accumulated over the last 35 years, and its expertise expressed through this knowledge and its human capital), to the new circumstances created through the dynamic changes in the context it operates in. The choices made to manage this challenge are expressed in the programme for the 2013-2016 period, especially in its strategic objective, the defined policy priority areas, and its main activities in this period.

Eurofound’s ‘programme logic’

This section examines to what extent the programme logic is correctly expressed in line with the Founding regulation and mission/ objective.

In examining what Eurofound hopes to achieve in the new programming period, it is difficult if not impossible to make any direct links between its specific contribution and the ‘improvement on living and working conditions’. Within the framework of the programme logic, in the strictest sense, it would be conceptually and technically correct to only speak about achieving the more immediate desired outcomes, and to avoid the mention of ‘impact’ altogether. This is because there are many factors affecting living and working conditions in Europe of which Eurofound’s activities, are only one input among many others.

Bearing these considerations in mind, Eurofound’s new Four Year Programme correctly expresses this in focusing on policy makers - and more specifically the role of the policies they devise – rather than seeking to have an effect on the ultimate achievement of desired changes to the problems the policies are designed to address.

The final programme includes a diagramme to illustrate its ‘programme logic’ concisely (p. 25), mapping it onto the monitoring and evaluation framework.

(For more details about the programme logic, see Annex 1).

The text of Eurofound's 2013-2016 programme attempts to express and maintain the programme logic quite clearly.

Having this explicitly in place is an important prerequisite for being able to monitor the implementation of the programme with corresponding performance indicators.

1.2. What problems will the programme help to address?

According to its founding regulation ([EEC, 1975](#)), Eurofound is mandated **to support European policy makers** in their endeavours *“to improve the working conditions and living conditions in Europe, assisting them in the development of social and work-related policies”*. In **section 2 “Eurofound’s mission and vision”**, the draft programme quotes the key paragraphs of the founding regulation relating to Eurofound’s aim (102-106), and summarises its main activities to address it (107-108): ***“Eurofound advises the European Institutions and serves the information needs of policy makers in governments, in trade unions and employer organisations.”***

Concerning the problems to be addressed, Eurofound’s ‘raison-d’être’ goes back to this founding regulation which states: *“the problems presented by the improvement of living and working conditions in modern society are increasingly numerous and complex”*.

The four year programme correctly highlights the increasing severity and complexity of problems particularly in section 1 ‘policy context’:

- The economic crises since 2008 resulted in mass unemployment in many EU member states, and have wiped out years of ‘progress’ in social and economic advancement and closer social integration in Europe.
- There is continued uncertainty about the prospects for economic and social development in Europe.
- The gap between those with jobs and sustainable sources of income and those without continues to widen, threatening the social cohesion in our societies.

In our view, the new four year programme provides a good description of the problems affecting the environment in which Eurofound will be operating in coming years, providing a convincing rationale for the definition of key objectives and priorities.

The four year programmes explains well how Eurofound should respond to these urgent problems, i.e. through the provision of knowledge and its expertise in its established core areas, continuously accumulated over the years of Eurofound’s activities, applied to the four defined ‘policy priority areas’.

These core areas of expertise are described in **Section 4** of the programme, applied to the **“policy priority areas for Eurofound activities 2013-2016”**. These policy priority areas have been directly derived from Eurofound’s analysis of the policy context (**Section 1** of programme).

1.3. What is the intended target group for this programme, and what are its needs and interests?

This is addressed in **Section 5.3. “Communicating knowledge and organising debate and exchange with its targets groups.”**

The definition of whose needs Eurofound’s work is directed to is only explicitly addressed quite late in the programme, under the heading ‘main activities and operating framework’ and the sub-section dedicated to communicating with its target groups.

To maximise the effects, it is however necessary for Eurofound to focus its efforts and resources on where it is needed most, and can achieve the intended outcomes, in line with its mandate and the programme logic. This is all the more important in the light of a general changed policy context (austerity), and expected EU institutional developments in particular (decisions to cut EU agencies’ resources by 5%), which are likely to lead to decreasing resources, and increasing pressures to contribute to where it matters the most, and the highest outcomes can be achieved.

Primary focus is on reaching EU level

The new four year programme indicates that the **main focus of Eurofound’s activities is on targeting EU level policymakers and other stakeholders**. It is here where the majority of Eurofound’s efforts will be directed to, and this finds its expression in the definition of target groups at the EU level, and the allocation of resources. Key stakeholders continue to be the EU institutions and EU-level social partners. A number of important committees at EU level have been defined in the programme (lines 376-380) which Eurofound will increase its regular engagements with (for example, Employment Committee, Social Protection Committee and European Economic and Social Committee).

At the same time Eurofound will continue its outreach to the national level. In this regard, Eurofound aims to further improve its efforts, making its outreach more effective and efficient by using a pragmatic and streamlined approach towards the Member States. The programme describes a range of methods to reach out the national levels (lines 370-372; 380 – 384).

The envisaged distinction between EU and national level efforts is described in lines 370-372:¹

“While priority is given to the EU level, Eurofound will continue its outreach to the national level, specifically where it concerns the influencing or implementation of EU policy at national level or where Eurofound can clearly contribute useful comparative information on issues relevant at European level.”

This is a somewhat clearer distinction than was in place in previous programme periods. In the past, there have often been ambiguities about the extent to which Eurofound ought to exclusively concentrate on the EU level as represented by the main EU institutions, or whether it would also consider reaching the national level as a priority. This ambiguity has caused tensions and substantive

¹ Note: the distinction was even clearer in the formulation of draft 2: *“Eurofound cannot give the same level of priority to the national level...but will continue to communicate to member states where appropriate”*. The current formulation is talking about *‘continuing outreach to national level...’*, although qualified, which seems to imply a slightly stronger commitment compared to the earlier draft. This shift is understood to be the result of a compromise reached through interaction between Eurofound and its stakeholders on the Governing Board representing the national levels.

debates in the past (e.g. evidenced in previous ex-post evaluations, esp. 2010; and long-standing discussions with GB and Bureau).

The orientation in this programme provides some clearer criteria and conditions to provide guidance under which conditions it is useful for Eurofound to concern itself directly with the national level:

- *Where influencing or implementation of EU policy at national level is concerned;*
- *Where Eurofound can clearly contribute useful comparative information on issues relevant at European level.*

This clearer strategic positioning is principally very helpful and can be considered a strength of the new four year programme text.

Will this orientation be implementable in the annual work programmes?

The strategy expressed in the programme to reach defined target groups has implications for resource allocations, work organisation and activities in the implementation phase. These are addressed in the four year programme text only at a very high and abstract level. The key assumptions are included in the communication strategy expressed in section 5.3., detailing how Eurofound intends to communicate with its target groups.

With the four year programme being the general strategic framework which is to be operationalized through four annual work programmes, the assumption is that the implications of the strategic ambitions of this programme will be addressed in detail in the Annual Work Programmes, and managed during the implementation of these annual programmes. It is important to realize that it for these annual programmes to make the strategy operational.

Possible risk factors include:

- The strategy for reaching the relevant key target audiences relies on focusing on the EU level, whilst continuing its outreach to the national level. Achieving the right balance in the views of key stakeholders is a challenge, and has been so already in the past.
- Following a decision by the Inter-Institutional Working Group in June 2012 on a future 'common approach' to EU Agencies, there are envisaged changes at EU institutional level concerning the future composition of Management Boards of EU agencies. The implementation of these changes is still under discussion at the time of writing this report (Commission's 'roadmap' expected for Q4/2012).
- Potential changes to the governing structure may impact on the future views about the right balance between EU and national level priorities in terms of resource allocations in the future annual programmes, and thus this formulated strategy.

It remains to be seen how well the WP 2013 (and those of subsequent years) will implement the approach intended in the 4YP.

1.4. Relevance and coherence

The **assumption** for this programme is based on the continuation of Eurofound's work into the next four years: (lines 122-127: *"Eurofound can make its most valuable contribution by **building upon the core areas of expertise it has so far developed**. The agency is known for its **strong knowledge base in the area of working conditions**. It is also the first port of call for **comparative information on industrial relations and social dialogue in the EU**, ...deep understanding of issues related to **living conditions and quality of life**. Another area of expertise, **structural change and restructuring**, has been developed since 2001..."*)

Readjusted to the changed policy contexts, Eurofound seeks to build further on this previously established knowledge base, with the essentially same activities and transformations, but adjusted to the changed environment and policy context, and endeavouring to achieve further integration and synergies within its activities.

Other than the fine-tuning of the policy priority areas on which Eurofound will focus its work, and aiming towards a more integrated approach, there is no radical shift foreseen in any of its main activities. This is appropriate. There are essentially three distinct types of **core activities** (see programme section 5 ‘main activities and operating framework’), which basically return to similar expressions as in the 2001-2004 and 2005-2008 programmes:

1. ***“Monitoring trends and developments in quality of work and life, industrial relations and structural change”***
2. ***“Exploring and assessing policies and practices”***
3. ***“Communicating knowledge and organising debate and exchange with its target groups”***.

The key monitoring instruments through which activity 1 ***‘monitoring trends and developments’*** are being undertaken are the ‘engines’ of most Eurofound’s operational activities, feeding into others, and absorbing a *significant proportion of Eurofound’s operational budgetary resources (for more detail, see section 4 ‘cost-effectiveness of the programme’)*.

There is a commitment to retain all three established surveys in this period, although some room for further reflections is reserved to further explore areas for synergies and savings, considering a range of possibilities. In terms of the observatories, there is an intention to merge the currently separately branded EIRO and EWCO observatories into one combined observatory on working conditions and industrial relations during the programme period.

Section 5.2 deals with ***“Exploring and assessing policies and practices”***. Whilst this includes much of Eurofound’s traditional ‘research’ (using a range of methods and approaches), this is now directed not only to phenomena to be studied, but also to policies themselves (lines 355-360:

“It [Eurofound] also contributes to the assessment of policy measures which can be done through the identification of reliable, independent evaluations of instruments in the Member States and their analysis. [...] can also combine reports on the application of a measures with interviews of the key actors involved in its development and implementation, and also the recipients of the measure. This helps not only to assess impact but also to gain understanding of the process of successful implementation.”)

This description of intended activities and methods under this heading implies an ***intended shift of some of Eurofound’s activities towards aspects of policy analysis and/or policy evaluation***. This envisaged shift harbours some questions:

- Where is the precise demand for Eurofound to undertake policy evaluation?
- What are the assumptions and implications of this intended shift?
- Where precisely is a niche for Eurofound in this field, compared to other players?
- What does it mean for Eurofound to undertake it in terms of capabilities and capacities?
- Is Eurofound independent enough to enable it to conduct policy evaluations?

It is recommended to take tackle these questions as a strategic development issue right from the start of this four year programme.

It is encouraging that in the WP 2013 text, the future intention is expressed more concretely as follows:

“In 2013, Eurofound will focus on developing its capability in the area of policy evaluation. The aim is to improve support to policy makers in identifying and understanding which national policies in the employment and social area have been more effective than others. “

The stated intention in WP 2013 to further develop its capability in this area can be expected to contribute to establishing an agreed understanding about what and how Eurofound can realistically do in this niche.

The assumption in Eurofound’s programme logic of reaching the intended outcomes is particularly realised through activity 3 **“communicating knowledge, and organising debate and exchange with its target groups”** (section 5.3. in programme). It is through the eventual uptake of Eurofound’s targeted information by the defined target audiences that Eurofound will achieve its results (outcomes).

Here it is noticeable that the term ‘debate’ continues to be used prominently. Is this term (and its connotations) still appropriate, especially combined with the expressed ambition to use a more integrated, interactive and innovative approach in undertaking this activity? Also with view to the spirit of the original mandate, it could be questioned whether this core activity could not be better framed through more interactive and participatory terms – for example emphasizing ‘dialogue’ or ‘conversations’, which also might do more justice to the envisaged integrated and bilateral nature of communicating with target groups, in which ‘research’ and ‘communication’ are integrated elements, and interactive engagement with policy makers and Eurofound is endorsed.

Tensions between ‘relevance’ and ‘coherence’: some lessons from the past four year programme

In the past, (arguably particular in the preceding 2009-2012 programme period, as indicated by findings of its 2011 mid-term evaluation) differing key stakeholder priorities for past programmes have sometimes been difficult to combine in a coherent way.

There is an inherent tension between achieving ‘relevance’, particularly for stakeholders and the policy context in which they operate on the one hand, and ‘coherence’ on the other hand (both ‘external coherence’, vis-à-vis other actors, and ‘internal coherence’, concerning Eurofound’s own programme, activities and the results achieved by them). This tension is difficult to manage, and in the past Eurofound has not always done this very successfully (see also under ‘stakeholder consultations’).

Reportedly there are a number of drivers which have contributed to this tension in Eurofound in the past:

- *Bottom-up*: every year, Eurofound research staff are invited to make proposals for research topics as part of the annual work programme development process. Proposals are made for each priority area, and with explicit reference to the four year programme framework.

The process involves providing justifications and detailing intended outputs and outcomes for these proposals according to guidelines provided. Typically, a great number and range of (new) research project proposals are generated in this phase. Contributing factors for this may include: policy and content knowledge of staff members; recognition of future research needs based on previous related research and closeness to target audiences; personal

research interests; a professional development goal to 'lead a research project' (seen as a key task of a research manager), etc.² Given the significant increase in research staff over the last 3-4 years, these effects are amplified. Whichever the explanation what feeds this phenomenon may be, it is a considerable challenge to reduce the number of proposals to a feasible and realistic number (especially in light of resource commitments implied), inevitably leading to some projects needing to be rejected despite their possible intrinsic merits. For the first time for WP 2013, an internal 'review board' has been established responsible to assess the merit of all project proposals based on a list of defined criteria.

- *Top-down*: it has been claimed in the past that stakeholders also competed with each other to get 'their' project ideas into the programme. This reportedly resulted in long 'shopping lists' of ideas for projects Eurofound ought to undertake according to each of the groups represented in the Governing Board and Bureau, and sometimes other stakeholders, and to 'negotiations' during the annual work programme development process

Whether generated bottom-up or top-down, the 'give and take' pattern of such 'negotiations' during the programme development process did had negative effects for programme coherence in the past, whilst simultaneously resulting in high level of responsiveness by Eurofound towards its stakeholders' expressed needs (positive in terms of policy relevance).

This was especially pronounced during the earlier years of Eurofound's current (2009-2012) programme (as identified for instance in the 2011 mid-term evaluation).

The *negative effects* include:

- A large number of individual projects included in annual work programmes to accommodate expressed needs;
- Resources being spread too thinly: oftentimes, requested and approved research projects had insufficient budget assigned to them, leading to compromises in research design and implementation (typical example: available budget only allows a limited number of case studies or countries covered). These challenges had and have a potential to weaken the quality of the research and intended project outcomes from the outset.
- Having too many projects in any one work programme negatively impacted on Eurofound's ability to deliver this volume of work, especially with achieving a balance between timely delivery, and reasonable quality of outputs, and outcomes.
- The overall coherence of the four year programme, and the annual work programme implementing it, was weakened as an effect: it was not always clear how the selected projects 'fit' into the overall framework of the programme, and how their outcomes would contribute to the overall programme.

Whilst a detailed analysis of this past phenomenon is rather a topic for the forthcoming ex-post evaluation of the 2009-2012 four year programme, it has been recognised in the programme development process as an important programme design feature of the new programme to learn from these problems, and avoid them for the future. This is hoped to be accomplished through the

² This is based on a tentative assessment, no empirical evidence is available in this regard.

four year programme being a stronger framework than previously, giving both strategic direction, whilst simultaneously leaving sufficient scope to deal with the unexpected. The policy priority areas on the one hand, and cluster themes on the other hand are devised as instruments to ensure stronger programme coherence.

In this context it is relevant to remind of the importance of paying due attention to operational excellence and organisational development which need to be in place to underpin and further strengthen Eurofound's capacity to deliver this programme to the expected quality (see also chapters 3 and 4).

Eurofound's added value

The key question to achieve and maintain programme coherence will be whether the annual work programme processes will consistently manage to guide project selection against meaningful criteria determined by the overall programme logic and coherence. Early impressions on the WP 2013 suggest that some elements already have been put in place to achieve this.

The start of the implementation of this four year programme provides a good time and opportunity to **update the process description and implementation for the development of the annual programmes to take note of these organisational changes and to reflect the ambitions of the four year programme.**

Position of Eurofound vis-à-vis other organisations

Eurofound's position compared to other organisations is an element of its 'added value' as well as another important aspect of 'external coherence'. Cooperation is mentioned in the programme under Section 5.4. 'operating framework'. This topic is of strategic significance. The assumption in this programme is that Eurofound will continue to maintain its competitive advantage in its traditional 'niche market' as a unique provider of comparative, comprehensive, cross-EU data and analysis on living and working conditions.

- Eurofound indeed has some unique and well-established tools at its disposal in particular with its monitoring tools (3 EU-wide surveys, and an EU-wide network of observatories). These are still un-rivalled by any other provider in Eurofound's field of observation, as was confirmed through the most recent evaluations (2007 and 2010 ex-post evaluations, and 2011 mid-term evaluation). This established position should however not lead to complacency, nor be taken for granted for all times. Over **other research institutions**, Eurofound has several 'unique selling propositions':
 - Eurofound can provide cross-EU, comparative information national-focused institutes or universities cannot match;
 - International organisations active in (parts of) Eurofound's areas of expertise have a broader geographical orientation beyond EU;
 - In contrast to universities, Eurofound is very closely EU policy oriented;

- Over commercially funded research organisations or those associated with one side of the social partners, thanks to its tri-partite governance structure Eurofound has the advantage that it is considered and accepted as impartial and objective, and hence highly credible, and trusted by all these stakeholders.
- **Other EU agencies** operate in related, but separately treated fields (e.g. EU-OSHA, Cedefop, FRA, EIGE, etc). Whilst theoretically their respective fields of activities are well defined and carefully guarded and kept apart from each other, this landscape is a dynamic one – in particular in the overall policy context of EU 2020, to which all EU agencies in the social and economic fields are contributing respectively. Whilst each agency has their own unique mandate, and the European Commission’s Directorate Generals as their respective ‘parent DG’s’ are supposed to guide their strategic direction in line with their respective mandates, to ensure cooperation and synergies between agencies (guided by the Commission’s responsible DGs), and avoid overlaps and duplications, there have been already occasions where it happens that one or more agencies work on overlapping areas of work.

Whilst this is a matter for the European Commission, it could be desirable that in the light and spirit of the recently (June 2012) agreed ‘common approach’ to EU agencies, the role of the Commission might perhaps be strengthened in future to provide effective guidance for inter-agency cooperations (also across DGs).

Cooperation with other organisations:

Section 5.4 ‘Operational framework’ in the programme addresses how Eurofound intends to cooperate with other key players.

Eurofound’s “contribution to achieving the goals of Europe2020” (lines 413-414) provides the framework; followed by identification of the most relevant Europe 2020 flagship initiatives and how Eurofound will contribute to them. Eurofound intends to build on its long-standing cooperation with the European Commission, especially with the Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (423-424), and intends to contribute to some named Commission flagship publications and to be involved in a number of actions relating to the ‘Employment’ and ‘Social’ ‘packages’. (-427).

Other European level key players are mentioned, for example the social partners’ work programme, or the agendas of the EU institutions and relevant committees (434-436).

A paragraph is devoted to the topic of cooperation with other EU agencies (lines 438-447). Cooperation agreements are in place with EU-OSHA, CEDEFOP, ETF, EIGE and FRA, which foresee early consultations on work programme developments, and are complemented by yearly action plans for further forms of exchange, and where appropriate, joint activities, with the aim to ensure complementarity of activities and to allow for synergies to be achieved, and the identification of knowledge gaps which can be addressed through distinct contributions.

Furthermore, partnerships with research institutes conducting comparative research in the socio-economic field for specific topics and activities will be explored (446-447).

As ex-ante evaluators, we **consider the existence and consistent implementation and update of these cooperation agreements with the specified EU agencies a positive development, which seems to address the long-standing concerns about ensuring complementarity and synergies between (neighbouring) EU agencies more systematically than previously.**

It is likely that the **necessity for cooperation with other players will even further intensify** during the programme period, particularly in light of increasing resource pressures.

It could be **recommended to adopt similar formal cooperation agreements as with EU agencies with all partners and players listed in the programme** (and others that yet may emerge), **and to further evolve the current approach towards a comprehensive ‘partnership programme’** to take a strategic as well as opportunistic approach to developing partnerships further, towards a ‘win-win’ partnership strategy with complementary partner organisations. A previous recommendation to deepen cooperation with other international organisations (ex-post evaluation 2007) should also be borne in mind.

2. Objective setting and indicators

2.1. Have the objectives been defined in terms of expected results?

Section 3 in the programme describes Eurofound’s strategic objective for 2013-2016 as follows (lines 133 - 143):

“The strategic objective for 2013 – 2016 is **to provide high quality, timely and policy-relevant knowledge as input to better informed policies in four priority areas:**

- 1) *Increasing labour market participation and combating unemployment by creating jobs, improving labour market functioning and promoting integration.*
- 2) *Improving working conditions and making work sustainable throughout the life-course.*
- 3) *Developing industrial relations to ensure equitable and productive solutions in a changing policy context.*
- 4) *Improving standards of living and promoting social cohesion in the face of economic disparities and social inequalities.*

Eurofound will provide facts and figures, show trends and analyse policies and practices as the basis of evidence-based advice for the development of policy responses in these policy areas.”

To what extent is this objective SMART?

- The current formulation of the objective is **‘specific’** by expressing Eurofound’s role and the programme logic with focus to the envisaged outcome. The conciseness and relative clarity have the potential to be motivating.
- The objective is **‘relevant’** as it states how Eurofound will address the problems described earlier in the programme (policy needs) and through which specific interventions (‘provision of knowledge as an input to better informed policies’). In terms of being **‘measurable’**, whilst this strategic objective is at a very high level, it does provide scope for defining relevant input, output and outcome indicators, at operational levels. The qualifying

adjectives ‘*high quality, timely and policy relevant*’ (*knowledge*) provide ‘hooks’ for the definition of relevant indicators.

- It is also both specific, and ‘**time-bound**’, through precisely defining the four policy areas on which Eurofound will work on during the programme duration. However, concerning the ‘time’ aspect, it is still open to what extent this assumption will be sufficient? We have to be conscious of the ‘rolling’ nature of the four year programme. As a rolling programme, it is not written in stone, and needs to be sufficiently flexible to respond to changing circumstances, at the annual programme development review points. The degree of emergence due to the rolling programme nature may play against the time-bound aspect within the objective. This needs to be addressed in the formulation of derived annual objectives, which ought to address the time-bound criterion in particular.
- The assumption is that the objective will be ‘**attainable**’ through the focus on the four specified policy areas, and through the implementation of this programme via the specified “**main activities and operating framework**” (see section 5 of draft programme), achieved through annual work programmes (see figure 6 below). Again, this assumption needs to be tested, and addressed in the operationalization of the annual programmes, as ‘achievable chunks’ to implement the overall programme framework over the four year time frame.

2.2. Indicators: what indicators are planned for measuring inputs, outputs, and outcomes?

In order to be in a position to monitor throughout the programme, and evaluate at the end of this programme period to what extent the programme will have ‘performed’, i.e. will have achieved its intended outcomes, it is necessary to define specific indicators that appropriately and reliably monitor the inputs, outputs, outcomes and 1st order impact, which in turn have to be linked to the programme objectives.

For this to happen, it is necessary to have a comprehensive indicator framework in place and operational before the commencement of the programme. This section of the ex-ante evaluation sets out to describe the approach that is being taken for the indicator framework and measurement of Eurofound’s performance in implementing the programme.

2.3. EPMS indicator framework review

Eurofound is in a quite good starting position prior to the start of the new programme:

A comprehensive performance indicator framework (based on Balanced Scorecard methodology) is already in place and operational since 2006. The “Eurofound Performance Measurement System” (EPMS) has been further developed and refined ever since. In its current form it was customised to the 2009-2012 four year programme’s objectives, and includes input, output and outcome indicators.

Over recent years, data collection and reporting has become a regular activity. Performance information from the EPMS is regularly on the MAC agenda, and frequently discussed there. A detailed analytical report is prepared twice a year, jointly authored and agreed by all data owners

and collectors. High level EPMS reports also go to the Governing Board and Bureau as part of the Director's progress report, and are included in the Annual Activity Report.

Adaptation of EPMS to the new programme

Based on the assumption that the basic EPMS framework is already in place, it is necessary to customise it to fit the new programme. The main customisation task is to ensure a close fit with the programme objectives, as it is the reaching of these objectives which is in fact monitored through the EPMS indicator framework, and to review and revise the existing indicators on this occasion.

Review of EPMS framework

A review on the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the existing indicators and measures within the current framework has been carried out to inform the formulation of the revised framework for the new programme period. This review consisted of two components and several phases: a 'top down' assessment of the overall performance monitoring framework based on a SWOT analysis, and a parallel 'bottom-up' assessment ('stress test') of the current EPMS indicators and measures against RACER criteria ('relevant', 'accepted', 'credible', 'easy').

This review³ resulted in a reduced set of indicators which merit continuation on these technical grounds.

The assessments were conducted initially in the Operational Support Unit, with iterative consultations of relevant internal stakeholders (still in progress): current data owners, senior management (MAC), Directorate.

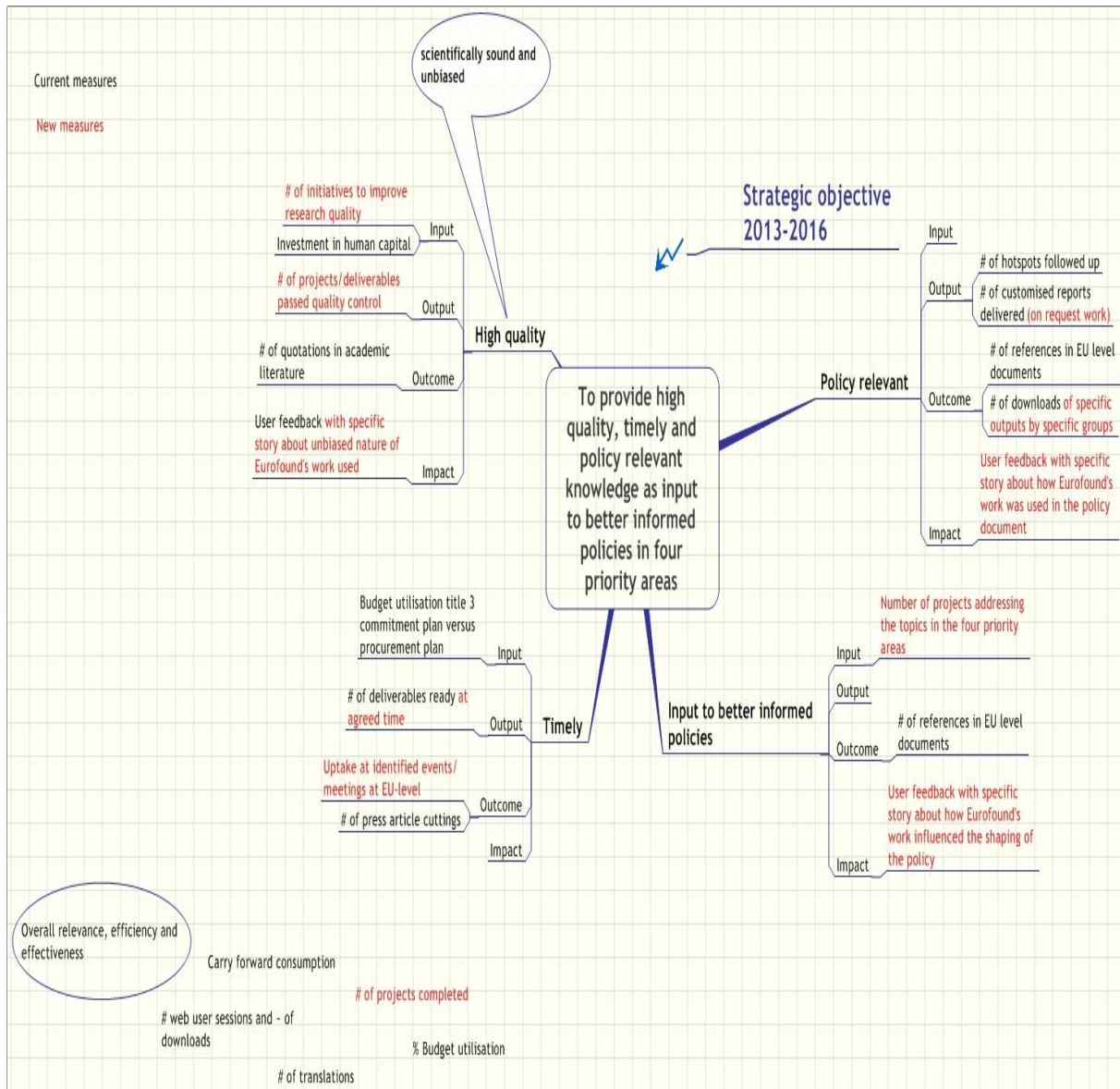
Both analyses taken together provided a starting point and input to the review of the EPMS, with view to revising and updating it as Eurofound's corporate performance monitoring system under the next four year programme 2013-2016, and adjusted to the objectives of that new multiannual programme.

This process is still ongoing at time of writing and is to continue throughout the autumn, to be completed by December 2012 at the latest, for implementation from the beginning of 2013.

It is also important to note that it is envisaged to achieve a further improved integration between monitoring and evaluation in the next four years. Both instruments have their respective purposes, and work best in conjunction with each other. This firmer integration is another important ambition in order to strengthen Eurofound's efforts to manage and account for its performance. (see chapter 5 for more detail).

³ TRIM reference to full report: GR-12-13310 "EPMS Review – SWOT and RACER Analysis - 4 May 2012"

Fig. 1: draft EPMS indicator framework for 2013-2016 (under development – subject to further revision and selection of priorities)



3. Alternative approaches and risk assessment

This section deals with the question whether alternative approaches to the chosen approach could be considered equally or more appropriate to reach Eurofound's objectives, and this concerns particularly *programme implementation* aspects, and as such is closely associated with risks.

At an overarching level the question can be asked whether the chosen approach to implementing the programme is appropriate. **The basic approach is one of continuity of operations through well-established instruments and activities**, based on the assumption of largely similar (marginally reduced) resource availability in future as in the past. Based on this assumption, the chosen approach appears to be appropriate.

However, issues such as balance between using in-house resources/outsourcing, ways of operating the NEO system, working with other partners (e.g. EU agencies), etc, are important factors that may impact on the continued viability of the current approach to implementation.

3.1. Alternative programmes

This section addresses the concept and consequences of making choices.

The ex-ante evaluation guidelines (2001) explain the purpose of this section as follows (p.15): "*An analysis of alternative delivery mechanisms will identify what options are available and compare them on the basis of chosen criteria. This should be done in order to:*

- *Ensure that the instruments chosen for the implementation of the intervention are the most appropriate ones (in terms of effectiveness, efficiency or other chosen criteria), and to*
- *Demonstrate to decision-makers why the proposed approach should be considered the 'best possible' means to achieve the ends."*

3.1.1. Are the instruments chosen for the implementation of the programme the most appropriate ones?

The programme development process for this programme has been conscious of developing alternative options, and different scenarios. For example, for draft 1 (December 2011/January 2012), explicit alternative options were developed: two alternatives in relation to the main policy challenge were presented to the Bureau for their guidance. The respective implications of choosing one over another option were explicitly addressed with the proposals.

This transparent and consultative approach can be seen as a good practice, and is an example for the efforts undertaken to develop this programme guided by expectations of external bodies and decisions makers, and in the interest of increased accountability.

3.1.2. Are the chosen instruments the 'best possible' means to achieve the ends?

The following observations can be made for Eurofound's four year programme in this respect:

- The chosen delivery mechanism of the programme consists of the ‘main activities and operating framework’ described in section 5. This section starts (336-340) with the reference to Eurofound’s previous work over the last 35 years during which it has developed its capability in relevant key areas, and states that ‘*we will **continue to focus on these types of activity** in pursuing the strategic objectives in the policy areas for 2013-2016*’.

Thereby the assumption of continuation of well-established and developed activities is explicitly stated. It is therefore assumed that the continuation along the same trajectory is the most efficient and effective option for Eurofound to deliver its next programme.

This assumption is confirmed through the following sources:

- Eurofound’s programmes are largely derived from its founding regulation. The founding regulation is the legal basis for its activities, and Eurofound is therefore bound by the provisions in this regulation.
- Eurofound’s series of four year programmes is understood as ‘rolling programmes’. This concept itself implies an incremental adaptation process, and does not foresee major shifts in terms of activities and the type of ‘intervention’ Eurofound undertakes.
- The recent evaluations (in particular 2008 ex-ante evaluation of 2009-2012 programme; 2009 ex-post evaluation of 2005-2008 programme; and the 2011 mid-term evaluation of the 2009-2012 programme) have all confirmed that this assumption is still correct.
- All other stakeholder feedbacks received (e.g. annual user feedback collection, and the consultation process for this programme) also confirm this being the case (as example: joint stakeholder and expert seminar in March 2012). Stakeholders are overall very satisfied with the way Eurofound implements its activities, and no drastic changes have been suggested.
- Without undertaking further empirical research, there is no external evidence available to suggest any obvious major alternative feasible delivery mechanisms that could be imagined (for instance, more emphasis on innovation rather than continuation).

3.2. Risk assessment

At the level of the programme as overarching framework for Eurofound’s activities over the following four years, only a very high level risk assessment can be attempted for the overall four year programme, based on already known factors.

Eurofound’s approach is to do risk assessments on the basis of its annual work programmes. It is therefore assumed and intended that detailed risk analyses will be performed annually as part of the annual work programme planning, under responsibility of Eurofound’s management. Eurofound’s ability to assess and manage programme implementation risks has been recognised to be an area where its capacities could be further improved.

3.2.1. Risk factors to be considered in risk assessment for annual work programmes:

This section identifies some risk factors that ought to be considered in the annual risk assessment exercise. Their identification is based on high risk areas based on past and current evidence base,

and emerging potential risk areas, to which programme development and implementation should pay close attention to:

Internal coherence of programme:

- The danger of fragmentation and threat to coherence with the four year programme has been a documented problem in the past years (e.g. in the 2011 mid-term evaluation). It is quite possible that this risk persists within the organisation and processes. Whilst the text of the new programme is well prepared and designed to achieve better coherence, the proof of this to happen manifests itself in the annual programmes. Will all proposed projects fit convincingly into the programmatic framework? Will they really deliver the intended outcomes of this four year programme? It is fair to assume that this risk is likely to increase with each subsequent annual work programme. It is important that sufficient attention will be paid to ensure programme coherence during the annual work programme development, consistently in all years of implementation.
- In implementation, a balance must be met between a maintaining a programmatic approach, and responsiveness to stakeholder requests. How to deal with specific requests? (example: 'representative studies' included in the work programmes on specific request from the European Commission, and ad-hoc requests at annual programme level? (note fragmentation issue, and risk to coherence).

Capacity to deliver:

- Is there an appropriate balance between the level of ambitions (e.g. policy evaluation), and likely capacity to deliver? Are the promises and commitments we make in the programme realistic to deliver in the 4 year period (and how to achieve this?).
- There is also a need to maintain a balance between commitments, and retaining sufficient capacity for flexibility to respond to emerging issues.

4. Cost-effectiveness of the programme

According to the European Commission's ex-ante evaluation guidelines, the purpose of this part of the ex-ante evaluation is *"to analyse the different cost implications of the proposed option [programme], and to provide evidence, for example with the help of comparisons, on the cost-effectiveness of the proposed option"*. *"All proposals with financial implications must also be accompanied by a financial statement that includes a detailed calculation of the financial and human resources to be allocated to the intervention. This is usually the task of those in financial and human resource units, in consultation with management, although an ex ante evaluation may provide useful elements for filling in the financial statement."*

It is not possible to conduct a credible cost-effectiveness appraisal of the four year programme in this ex-ante evaluation in the strict sense of the definition of the ex-ante evaluation guidelines.

All this report can provide are some observations on the ex-ante ‘evaluability’ of this programme.

- Resource allocations in this four year programme are only included at a very high level; the concrete details and management will be included at the level of the annual work programmes. It is therefore not possible to say much at the 4YP level, and in this ex-ante evaluation.
- There are some relevant resource considerations that need to be addressed for assurance that the ambitions of the 4YP will be able to be implemented in the annual programmes:
 - Financial resources (four year perspective) (likely cuts)
 - Human resources (four year perspective) (5-10% cut in posts envisaged).

Indications of expected resources are provided in the budgetary four year framework as part of the 4YP text.

The challenge for Eurofound in the 2013-2016 period will be to try and deliver the same high-quality outputs as previously, but with reduced resources in an environment of budgetary constraints.

4.1.1. Human Resources strategy

Section 6.2 of the programme addresses “Human resources” (p. 23, lines 544-552).

It is a stated assumption in the development of the programme that there will be a 5% staff cut currently proposed by the European Commission (line 545). This is recognised to “*have an impact of Eurofound’s core activities and it will be necessary to deliver to a high level and to high quality with fewer resources.*” (546-547).

This pressure also becomes clear from the budget expenditure table, where planned expenditure for staff (title 1) is by far the most substantial cost driver, with small expected increases over the four years (despite the expected staff cuts).

Flexibility – responsiveness to changing and emerging needs:

The assumption in resource planning is a near 100% absorption of human resources, although it is recognised that it is important to remain responsive to possibly changing and newly emerging needs as the four year programme progresses. It will be important to ensure a realistic balance between resource efficiency (tending towards full absorption) and having sufficient flexibility in the human resources. This concerns both staff **capacity** (by reserving a certain margin for manoeuvre in allocating staff resources and activities) as well as **capability** (ensuring that the right expertise can be made available to a newly emerging priority).

Capacity is a widely recognised problem. However, in the absence of ABB being implemented for staff time expenditure on projects, there are no data available to provide evidence either way (other than general overtime figures which are now captured through the time and attendance system, but have not been analysed (yet?) for resource planning purposes).

Is there sufficient capacity flexibility? Perhaps it is more realistic to see whether the organisation has the capacity to organise its workloads more flexibly in future, rather than aiming for an across-the-board capacity cap.

In terms of capabilities, there are job descriptions for each staff member in place. The recent research recruitments have resulted in an increasing number of specialists on the staff, which was intended to meet the current needs of the organisation. With view to future flexibility, the issue of individual versatility ('poly-valence') of staff could arise. This may be linked with HR strategies and processes, (e.g. career management, training and development), but also intellectual capital development (recommendation in 2009 ex-post evaluation), knowledge management actions and/or related strategic actions.

4.1.2. How will Eurofound manage the resource constraints, and ensure optimal leverage of available resources to implement the programme commitments?

Overall Resource management issues:

- **ABB/ABM:** whilst good progress has been made to implement Activity Based Budgeting and Activity Based Management further, there are still gaps in operationalizing this approach as a tool for effective 'results-based management'. Newer developments, also at the level of all EU agencies can be helpful to inform Eurofound to adopt even more effective approaches.
- A particular concern is currently the lack of **accounting for human resource expenditure on projects**. Feasible solutions to plan and manage staff time spent on projects better and more transparently need to be investigated.
- **Insourcing versus outsourcing decisions:** there has been a shift in recent years to carry out more tasks internally that have previously done through external contractors. This has been both possible and strategically desirable due to the substantial increase in research staff in recent years. This recent strategy shift and the continued likely pressure on operational budgets make it likely that the insourcing of research tasks continues to be high on the agenda. However, whilst insourcing of research has increasingly and also reportedly successfully been done recently, it is less clear on the basis of which criteria concrete resourcing decisions for specific projects are being taken: the picture is currently very varied across units and projects. It needs to be ensured resourcing decisions will be based on clearer and more transparent criteria, and not only be determined opportunistically. The assumed benefits of insourcing over outsourcing could be examined in some more depth, and supported with actual evidence.
- The previous strategy of recruiting more research capacity needs to pay off during the next four year programme period, or needs to be managed appropriately in terms of capacity and capability of the existing internal research resources.

It is recommended for Eurofound's management to review how resourcing decisions are done, to develop explicit criteria, and to include cost-effectiveness considerations explicitly.

Issues to address could include (for example): how flexibility to manage existing staff can be ensured; how organisational capacity to achieve / ensure cost-effectiveness in implementing the 4YP can be strengthened; exploring the feasibility of a central contract cost register to base budgetary estimates for project proposals on, etc.

In addition to exploring feasible ways how to optimise resource decisions internally, best practices elsewhere (e.g. European Commission, other agencies, etc. could be also be explored and considered (as this is a challenge for most public sector organisations in times of reducing resources).

5. Monitoring and evaluation

Eurofound is required to 'regularly carry out ex-ante and ex-post evaluations of programmes and activities', according to article 25 of Eurofound's Financial Regulation.

Regular monitoring and evaluation are also integral components of the "Internal Control" standards which are obligatory for all European Union bodies to implement and adhere to.

Monitoring and Evaluation (M & E) are closely interlinked, but they are different in nature. Each part intervenes at different stages in the programme cycle. **Monitoring** is the process of constantly checking and reviewing what we are achieving.

Overall delivery of the programme will be monitored at annual review points, triggered by the annual work programme processes. This annual process offers the opportunity to review progress achieved under the programme to date, and to adjust priorities and resource allocations for the subsequent annual work programme under preparation to take account of the actual status.

In Eurofound, the EPMS is the corporate monitoring system in place (see section 2.3). The monitoring process also contributes to evaluation: information compiled through the monitoring system serves as one input for the more in-depth evaluation of the programme.

The multi-annual evaluation programme provides an umbrella for a series of interrelated evaluation activities in relation to the multi-annual programme.

Evaluation is conducted once the programme has already been running for a certain period of time, allowing to go deeper into the examination of longer-term changes, and can more readily than monitoring attempt to say something about impact and added value of a programme.

M & E go hand in hand, serve both internal (formative) needs (with focus on learning and improvement), and external, summative needs (focus on accountability). A balance between these sometimes conflicting needs must be struck in the M & E efforts, and they must be placed at the very heart of the programme and its implementation, aiming for Integrated Monitoring

and Evaluation. It is not a separate, isolated 'add-on' activity, but integral part throughout programme development and implementation.

Since the 2009-2012 programme, Eurofound has a cyclical evaluation programme in place which accompanies each respective four year programme cycle. It includes ex-ante, mid-term and ex-post evaluations at programme level, as well as related evaluation activities, e.g. of specific projects and/or activities, or themes. This evaluation programme serves to meet the formal evaluation requirements, as well as providing useful and evidence-based information for the further improvement of the evaluated activities, and as input for management and strategic decisions about these activities.

A new four year evaluation programme cycle is being prepared for the 2013-2016 period. Currently, an 'effectiveness review' of the 2009-2012 evaluation programme is under way. This review will result in recommendations for improvements for the next cycle, with view to ensuring that the next evaluation programme will be 'fit for purpose', follow good practices, and above all, delivers useful and useable information for its users (particularly Eurofound's management), and facilitates implementation of recommendations. The outcome of this review (due by September 2012) will feed into the detailed planning and design of the evaluation programme for 2013-2016. Further details will be included in the final finalreport of this ex-ante evaluation.

It should be noted that the existence of a comprehensive and integrative evaluation programme, and having internal and external evaluation capacities at Eurofound's disposal is considered a great asset by the organisation, and also externally. Particularly Eurofound's obligation and capacity to commission and manage ex-post and ex-ante evaluation of its programmes itself directly, greatly supports Eurofound's endeavours towards an integrative adaptive programme management, and to develop an organisational evaluation and learning culture. Eurofound's management expresses concerns that this current organisational capacity may be negatively compromised in the future, should it be enforced that ex-post evaluations would be commissioned and managed external to Eurofound, by the Commission, as is currently suggested in the recommendations of the Inter-Institutional Working Group concerning the evaluation of all EU Agencies. The concern is that the effectiveness of Eurofound's own evaluation programme would be negatively affected through such changes to conduct ex-post evaluations in particular, by being too far removed from Eurofound's operations to be of direct benefit it.

Annex 1: Programme Logic

In examining what Eurofound hopes to achieve in the new programming period, it is difficult if not impossible to make any direct links between our input, and the improvement on living and working conditions.

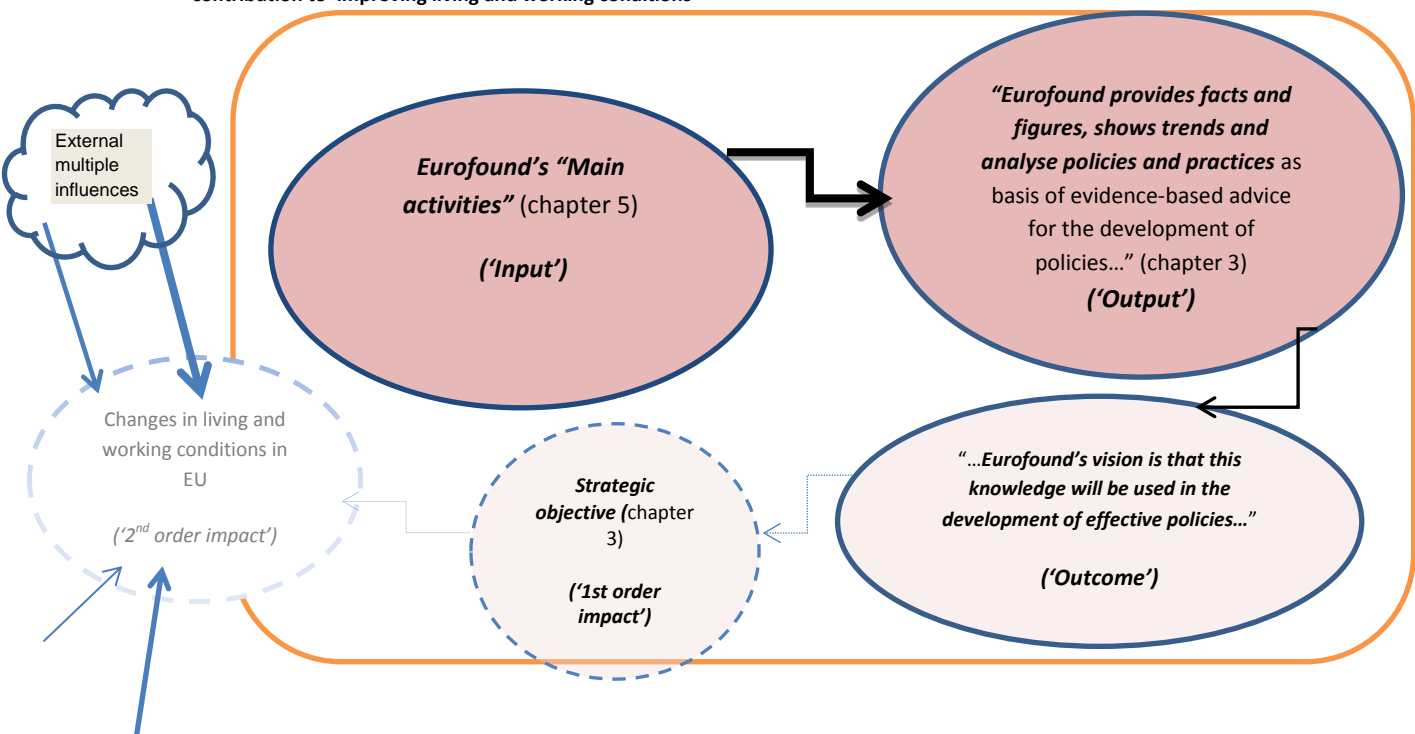
It is important to note that the ultimate impact (or '2nd order impact') is NOT within direct scope of Eurofound, and therefore is not directly included in Eurofound's programme logic.

In examining what Eurofound hopes to achieve in the new programming period, it is difficult if not impossible to make any direct links between our input, and the improvement on living and working conditions. Within the framework of the programme logic, in the strictest sense, it would be conceptually and technically correct to only speak about achieving the more immediate desired outcomes, and to avoid the mention of 'impact' altogether. This is because there are many factors affecting living and working conditions in Europe of which Eurofound's activities, are only one⁴.

Moreover, the further away the intended effect ('improvement') moves away from the 'intervention' ('Eurofound's input to better informed policy making'), the less we can influence it. We can certainly control the outputs and also the outcomes to a large extent. Beyond that, we can still have some, increasingly indirect, influence on the policy makers, but not on the effects of any policies they devise. With this logic, it may be permissible to extend the influence chain a little bit further, towards the behaviour of the policy makers. Here the distinction between 1st order impact (still within our influence) and 2nd order impact (beyond our influence) can be a helpful construct. But only within this boundary of the programme logic can we speak about achieving, and monitor, a 1st order 'impact'.

⁴ **"Contribution" rather than "attribution"**: in light of the impossibility to prove attribution of an intervention (such as Eurofound's) towards an envisaged impact (of improving living and working conditions) (in the absence of / irrelevance of counterfactual scenarios), it is advisable to use the more modest concept of 'contribution'. This acknowledges that Eurofound's 'intervention' (= programme) is only making one among many contributions towards the ultimate goal. See growing body of literature in the evaluation field on 'contribution analysis' (CA) as an alternative, 'theory-based' approach to 'impact' evaluation which is gaining wide-ranging acceptability and traction as a valid and sufficiently rigorous approach. (See publications by John Mayne (2001-onwards) and range of authors subsequently (e.g. in journal *'Evaluation'* 18 (3) July 2012, special issue: contribution analysis, Sage)).

Fig. 2: Research / Policy influence diagramme: Eurofound’s role of providing evidence-based advice to EU level social policy makers and contribution to ‘improving living and working conditions’⁵



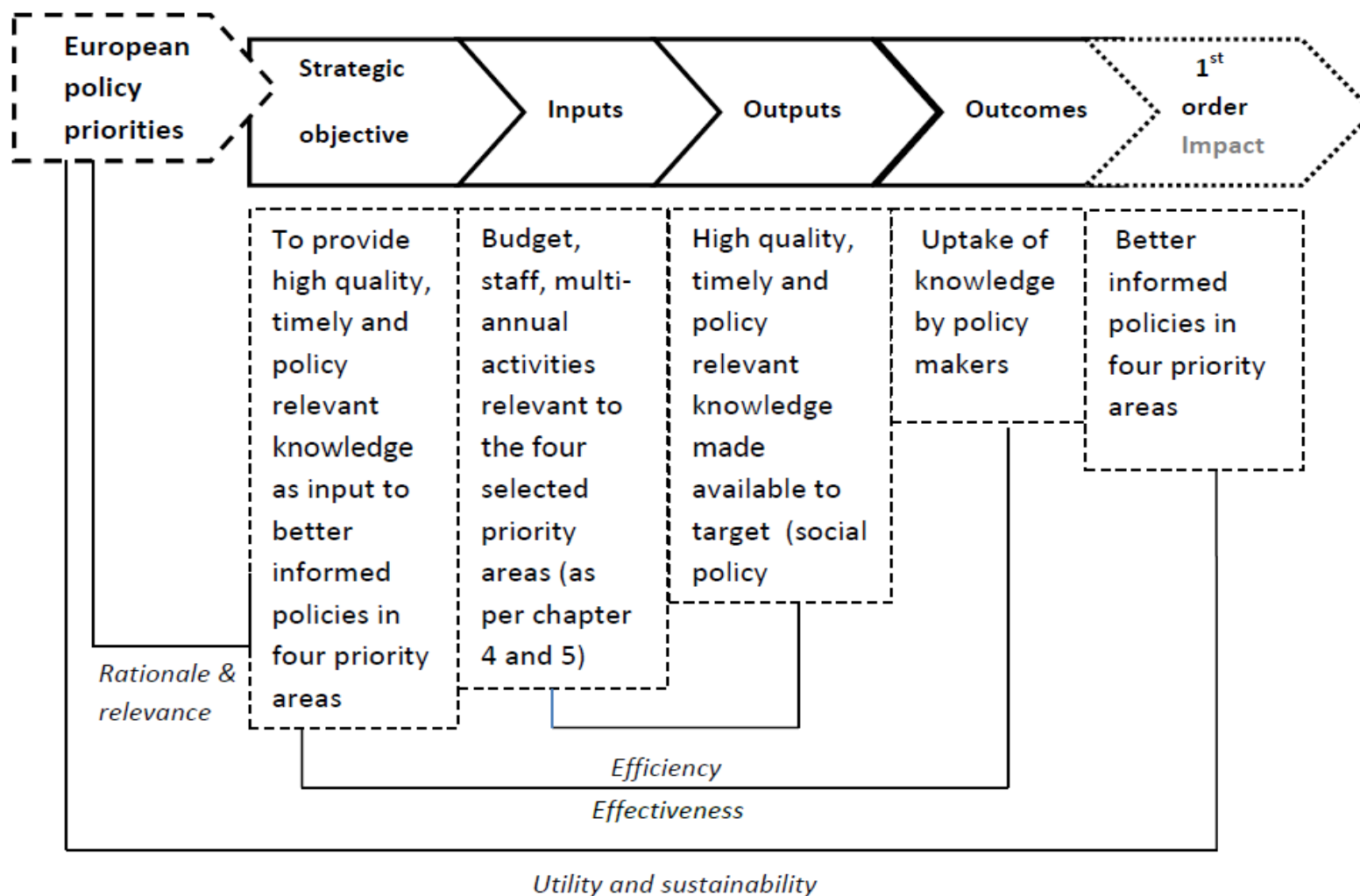
Eurofound’s role is ‘merely’ one of knowledge provision to the relevant EU policy makers, as clearly defined in Eurofound’s mandate.

Bearing these considerations in mind, Eurofound’s new Four Year Programme correctly expresses this in focusing on policy makers - and more specifically the role of the policies they devise – rather than seeking to have an effect on the ultimate achievement of desired changes to the problems the policies are designed to address.

The final programme includes the following diagramme (p. 25) to illustrate its ‘programme logic’ concisely, mapping it onto the monitoring and evaluation framework:

⁵ Notation of influence diagramme: coloured circles: within influence of Eurofound. Strength of arrow denotes strength of influence; ‘impact’ cannot be attributed to Eurofound’s contribution (nor to policy-making).

Fig. 3: Eurofound's programme logic



Annex 2: Stakeholder consultations

This section includes a description to the approach to stakeholder consultation on this programme, and a list of consultations with the most relevant external and internal stakeholders that took place throughout the programme development process. *Selection of parties to be consulted* has been informed by Eurofound's governance structure, political considerations, and programme logic:

- Highest priority was given to the **formal stakeholder representatives**: Governing Board and Bureau., At the next level, priority was given to **representatives of the key EU 'key target audiences'**, foremost the European institutions (European Commission; **European Parliament, ...**);
- **Other important stakeholders** to be consulted on Eurofound's draft programme included a number of **other EU Agencies** with whom Eurofound already has 'memoranda of understandings' in place which stipulate such mutual consultations (e.g. EU-OSHA, Cedefop, ETF, EIGE, FRA...). These consultations are particularly important with view to avoiding potential duplications or overlaps in the respective activities of the agencies, and to rather identify and strengthening possible synergies between them – a frequently expressed concern by EU institutions and budgetary stakeholders, in particular by Members of the European Parliament (esp the Budget committee).
- A range of other organisations and groups were consulted on the basis that these groups would have some interest in specific thematic aspects of the programme, or possible synergies and collaboration potential between Eurofound and these organisations. Therefore, a 'multi-stakeholder' seminar was organised involving representatives from several organisations, to have a diversified input.
- Eurofound,s staff were also consulted throughout the development process, through a series of internal seminars devoted to the programme development, an online discussion board, and participation of staff members in various topical working groups, and units' inputs to their respective areas of expertise relating to the programme.

The programme development process involved continuous consultations with Eurofound's Governing Board and Bureau throughout. For the first time, the entire Government Board was provided with all programme draft proposals from the start, and not only the Bureau. The feedbacks provided from these governance structures have been taken up and reflected in the successive versions of the programme. In addition, a range of other stakeholders were consulted through a number of meetings or in writing (see Annex 1).

Apart from political and strategic considerations, the approach to stakeholder consultation on the programme has also been informed by previous programme evaluation findings (2011 mid-term evaluation of 2009-2012) which resulted in feedback that the previous consultation process has been very, and possibly too elaborate, which was found to have had negative consequences: too many fragmented projects to respond to specific requests from various stakeholders.

To further strengthen the systematic engagement with all relevant programme stakeholders, which have 'a stake' (i.e. a legitimate interest) in Eurofound and its programme, it is suggested to consider using a model distinguishing between different stakeholder categories in terms of levels of influence

on Eurofound and its programme, such as illustrated in figure 4.⁶ Using such an approach can also be helpful for the monitoring of 'outcome' and '1st order impact' monitoring and mapping (to trace the outcomes achieved on specific stakeholder groups), and also for more explicitly **managing stakeholder identification and engagement**.

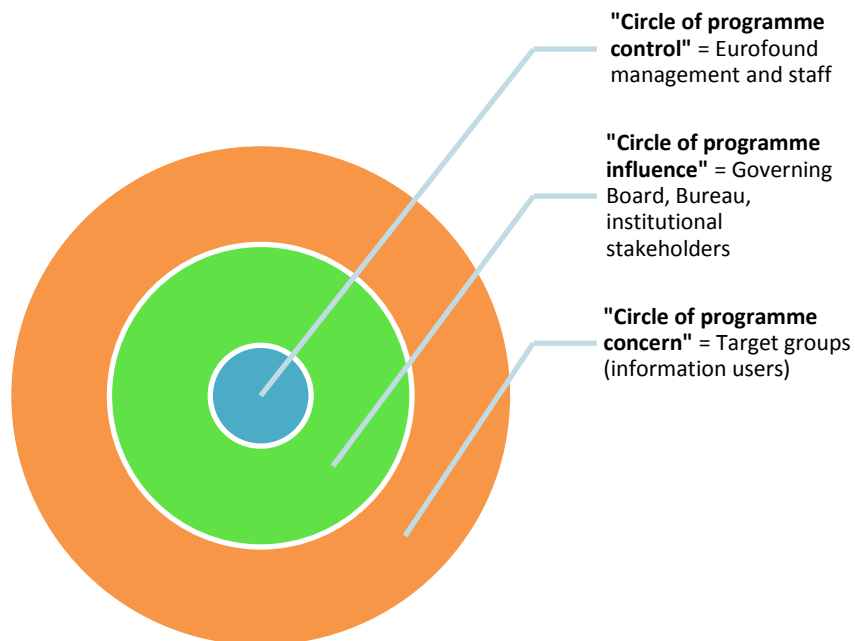


Figure 4: Circles of programme stakeholders

⁶Based on: inProgress (2012), [Integrated monitoring](#) – a practical manual for organisations that want to achieve results, p. 25 (Outcome mapping)

List of stakeholders consulted

Formal stakeholder consultations				
Stakeholder group / representative	Method of consultation	Date	Type of feedbacks provided	Evidence of uptake in final programme
Consultations with GB, Bureau, institutional stakeholders				
Governing Board Groups	Note: 'what kind of programme'?	July 2011 – Group Meetings	Guidance: shorter, more concise programme; framework of priorities	The new programme text is verifiably shorter and more concise than the previous 4 year programme (comparison word count), with a clearly documented framework of priorities.
Governing Board Meeting	Strategic questions to GB	October 2011 – GB Meeting	Guidance was sought and provided on strategic questions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Key challenges (cohesion, jobs, demographic change, living standards). 2. “back to basics” 3. Proactive approach (emerging issues, mid-term perspective) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In line with the guidance that all mentioned key challenges have priority, all are taken up and addressed in programme text. 2. Message ‘back to core activities’ was taken up in ‘mission and vision’ (119-124: core areas of expertise). 3. Proactive approach towards emerging issues reflected: line 255 “Eurofound will pay attention to emerging challenges”. 4. The sought for guidance that ‘less is more’ (quality vs quantity) was not provided by the GB.
Bureau of the Governing Board	Programme drafts	Bureau meetings September 2011 – May 2012	Detailed comments on respective drafts of programme; take-up in next iterations of programme document.	For each programme draft, an overview table was provided detailing how comments by each Group had been taken into account, and providing a justification where suggestions were not taken on board. Therefore a complete audit trail is available in Eurofound’s document management system.
‘EU Multi-Stakeholders consultation Seminar : Preparation of the four year WP 2013-2016 : “Shaping Eurofound Strategy for 2013-2016”	Own Eurofound seminar , including representatives from: Member States’ Social Affairs Attachés, NGOs, EP representatives, EESC members, (list of participants:GR-12-14825 - 7 march list -)	7 March 2012, Brussels (14:30-18:00)	Reporting notice in EUNews Strategy GR-12-10861 - EUNews Strategy – Issue 2012/05 (9 March 2012) 2) Two written contributions were separately sent to	This meeting provided a broad exploratory input generating some further forward-looking ideas which would meet these stakeholders’ (wider circle) needs. These inputs helped to develop questions to be addressed in the programme.

Formal stakeholder consultations				
Stakeholder group / representative	Method of consultation	Date	Type of feedbacks provided	Evidence of uptake in final programme
			BLO/Eurofound: from the BU Social affairs attaché and from European Youth Forum (and forwarded to BGE and WP working group). Results summarised in GR-12-1233.	
Stakeholder – Experts seminar	Joint seminar	15 March 2012	This seminar had been intended as an idea-generating brainstorming meeting. Stakeholders and experts feedback on EF medium and long-term policy challenges in Europe and on priority areas. Debate focused on main research topics to be investigated. Governing Board members' feedbacks dominated over expert inputs.	Documented inputs considered in draft 3. [For future programmes, it could be considered that this type of exploratory meeting as envisaged might provide more value earlier in the process, prior to programme texts.]
Eurofound presentation (by JME) of 2013-2016 Eurofound first orientations to the members of the EESC SOC section	Presentation to EESC meeting: aimed at presenting first orientations and collect contributions from EESC members	22 March 2012	Stakeholders and national social partners' feedback on first orientations with specific comments on keeping tripartism. Only one single written contribution from one EESC member followed. Reporting notice in EUNewsStrategy - GR-12-11033- EUNews Strategy – Issue 2012/06 (23 March 2012)	
Bi-lateral meetings / exchanges:				
Commission				
Commissioner Laszlo Andor (DG EMPL)	Meeting (Brussels)	9 December 2011	general outlooks how Eurofound can support Commission's work	
Koos Richelle (Director General, DG EMPL)	Meeting (Eurofound)	29 March 2012	Documented meeting outcomes [GR-12-14377]. Feedback on priorities (e.g. crisis as both hindrance and opportunity for change; medium- to long term perspective; feedback on Eurofound's mission in Founding Regulation)	Inputs considered in draft 3 and final programme (e.g. policy context, esp lines 18-22;; mission and vision, and throughout programme).
Business Europe	Meetings (Brussels)	12 December 2011;	December: general outlooks how Eurofound	Incorporated in early drafts

Formal stakeholder consultations				
Stakeholder group / representative	Method of consultation	Date	Type of feedbacks provided	Evidence of uptake in final programme
		9 March 2012)	can support BE's work	
ETUI	Meeting (Brussels)	9 December 2011, 14 March 2012	December: general outlooks how Eurofound can support ETUI's work. feedback and comments captured in seminar 15./16. March	Incorporated in early drafts. Incorporated in changes between draft 2 and draft 3
ETUC	Meeting (Brussels)	9 December 2011	December: general outlooks how Eurofound can support ETUC's work	Incorporated in early drafts
	Meeting (Eurofound)	14 March 2012	feedback and comments captured in seminar 15./16. March	Incorporated in changes between draft 2 and draft 3
Other organisations to whom programme was sent for consultation / feedback				
EU-OSHA	Consultation as per MoU (mutual observer status on GBs; iterative exchanges)	(Draft 2 sent by email	no feedback received	n/a
CEDEFOP	Consultation as per MoU	(Draft 2 sent by email	no official feedback received	n/a
FRA	Consultation as per MoU	Draft 2 sent by email meeting 20 April 2012	no concrete feedback on programme received	n/a
EIGE	Consultation as per MoU	Draft 2 sent by email	no feedback received	n/a
ETF	Consultation as per MoU	Draft 2 sent by email	feedback received by ETF Director, 24.4.2012: - Suggested more emphasis on skills	Not taken up (not considered to be Eurofound's priority).
European Parliament – MEP Pervenche Berès (Chair of Employment and Social Affairs Committee)	Direct consultation (per email) on draft 2.	Draft 2 sent on 19 March 2012	No contribution could be sent to Eurofound since this procedure should have been organised by all EMPL reporting agencies. It would have required the consultation of all groups coordinators which was not possible by the EMPL secretariat.	n/a
Employment Committee	Draft 2 sent to chair (Mik Woolley)	12 March 2012	response received 18.7.2012 (no content feedback)	(after programme completion)
Social Protection Committee	Draft 2 sent to chair (Lauris Beets)	12 March 2012	response received 25.6.2012 (positive feedback)	(after programme completion)
Internal consultations within Eurofound				
All staff	Internal seminar: 4YP development: Eurofound's identity and business model: purpose, mandate, capabilities	16 January 2012	Comments documented in meeting transcripts.	Documented inputs were considered in drafts 1 and 2.

Formal stakeholder consultations				
Stakeholder group / representative	Method of consultation	Date	Type of feedbacks provided	Evidence of uptake in final programme
	– now, and alternative futures?			
	Internal seminar: 4YP development: Focus research	27 February 2012	Comments documented in meeting transcripts.	Documented inputs were considered in drafts 2 and 3.
	Internal seminar: 4YP development: Communication strategy	16 March 2012	Comments documented in meeting transcripts.	Documented inputs were considered in drafts 2 and 3.
	Intranet discussion board	ongoing	Comments documented in discussion board on Intranet.	Documented inputs (discussion board) were considered in drafts 2 and 3.
Several specialised topical working groups established: 2011 – April 2012	1. Surveys	December 2011: Bureau paper B 228.4 “The future of Eurofound monitoring tools Options for the 2013-2016 programme period” (GR-11-43254)	Bureau feedback: preference to continue with all three surveys.	Preferred option reflected in 4 YP: Eurofound’s monitoring tools: European Surveys and Observatories (455-484)
	2. Observatories	December 2011: Bureau paper B 228.4 “The future of Eurofound monitoring tools Options for the 2013-2016 programme period” (GR-11-43254)	Bureau feedback: Agreement with proposal for integrated “European Observatory on industrial relations and working conditions”	reflected in 4 YP: Eurofound’s monitoring tools: European Surveys and Observatories (485 - 495)
	3. Communication	December – March	New communication strategy, agreed by Bureau March 2012.	Reflected in 4 YP: section 5.3. “Communicating knowledge and organising debate and exchange with its target groups”
	4. EMCC	Bureau December 2011: discussion and clarifications about Eurofound’s mandate and EMCC’s inclusion in it. May 2012: discussion on balance between observatories	Decision to use EMCC as a more structured ‘one-stop-shop’ website, and clearer balance as part of the observatories. (implementation discussions still in progress).	Reflected in 4 YP: Policy priority area 4.1. Monitoring tools: European Surveys and Observatories (496-504), and Link to EMCC through more anticipatory work.