



European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions

## Executive Summary

Specific Contract 1 - Framework Contract No. 2009/S 33-047554  
Eurofound Internal Reference No 09/0434/01

# Ex Post Evaluation of Eurofound – Four Year Work Programme 2005-08

February 2010



*Centre for*  
**Strategy & Evaluation  
Services**

P O Box 159  
Sevenoaks  
Kent TN14 5RJ  
United Kingdom

Tel/fax: +44 (1959) 525122  
Web site: [www.cses.co.uk](http://www.cses.co.uk)

# *Executive Summary*

**The assignment ‘Ex Post Evaluation of Eurofound – Four Year Programme 2005-08’ was carried out for Eurofound by the Centre for Strategy & Evaluation Services (CSES) under Lot 1 of the Framework Contract No. 2009/S 33-047554. A summary of the main conclusions and recommendations is provided below.**

## **1. Aims of the Evaluation**

The overall aims of the assignment were to examine and evaluate the:

- Extent to which the commitments made by Eurofound in the 2005-08 work programme and its constituent annual work programmes of 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2008 have been achieved;
- Effectiveness, impact and added value of Eurofound;
- Useful lessons and recommendations for the challenges facing Eurofound in the programming phase 2009-12 (and beyond).

A number of more specific key evaluation issues relating to the relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness and impact demonstrated by Eurofound’s 2005-08 work programme were defined in the terms of reference. The more specific issues are summarised in the table on the next page along with an indication of where the corresponding analysis can be found in this report. A resume of the methodological approach to the evaluation is provided at the end of the executive summary.

## **2. Main Conclusions and Recommendations**

**Overall, Eurofound performed well in the 2005-08 period, delivering high quality research and other information on living and working conditions in Europe to key stakeholders.** The Foundation performed strongly in delivering key objectives set out in the 2005-08 work programme and in providing decision-makers at a national and European level with the information required to develop better policies. The major challenge of the 2005-08 period - EU enlargement - was successfully tackled. Less positively, there were strains in Eurofound’s governance and weaknesses in the mechanisms needed to reach target audiences at a national level.

### **2.1 Relevance and Coherence**

**Feedback from the research indicates that the aims of Eurofound’s 2005-08 work programme were highly relevant to key stakeholders and target audiences.** In the survey, target audiences were slightly less positive in this respect than key stakeholders with 59% saying that the work programme was ‘very’ or ‘quite’ relevant compared with 72% in the case of key stakeholders. There was similar feedback from the interviews. These suggested that relevance was higher for key stakeholders at an EU-level than at a national level.

**Not surprisingly, particular aspects of Eurofound’s 2005-08 work programme were seen as being more relevant to some key stakeholders than others.** That said, the key stakeholders we consulted accepted that the definition of Eurofound’s priorities, and the nature of its activities, necessarily involved a degree of ‘give and take’ on all sides in terms of relevance, reflecting the tripartite nature of the organisation. Viewed from the

## *Executive Summary*

perspective of the ‘older’ and ‘newer’ EU Member States, we did not find any evidence of significantly different views on the relevance of Eurofound’s activities and outputs.

**The internal and external ‘coherence’ of Eurofound’s 2005-08 work programme was high.** There is an inherent coherence built into Eurofound’s remit of monitoring and analysing living and working conditions. Feedback from the research suggests that this was successfully translated in the 2005-08 work programme into activities that were complementary and mutually-supportive. From an external coherence perspective, the 2005-08 work programme was closely aligned with the EU policy framework – at the highest level, the Lisbon Strategy and European Social Policy Agenda – both in its design and implementation.

### 2.2 Efficiency

**During the 2005-08 period, Eurofound deployed its financial resources efficiently in supporting implementation of the work programme.** One of the main challenges Eurofound faced as an organisation was integrating the new Member States into its structures following EU enlargements in 2004 and 2007. This process clearly had costs associated with it. However, there was only a slight increase in Eurofound’s funding in the 2005-08 period (from €19.2m to €20.0m or +3.9% over four years - a negative trend in real terms given the Eurozone inflation rate of +2.3% p.a. during the 2005-08 period).

**There was also only a rather modest increase in Eurofound’s (authorised) personnel levels during the 2005-08 period.** Between 2005 and 2008, the number of authorized Eurofound posts increased from 94 to 101 (+7.4%) although actual staffing levels (excluding contract agents) actually fell from 82 in 2005 to 77 in 2008 (-6.1%). With regard to the distribution of human resources between different units within Eurofound, the main development was a substantial strengthening of Eurofound’s in-house research capacity with the addition of 15 new staff.

**Strengthening Eurofound’s in-house research capacity during the 2005-08 period was appropriate and it is to the Foundation’s credit that it was achieved without increasing overall (actual) personnel levels.** It is clearly important for an organisation such as Eurofound to have personnel who are capable of managing research projects undertaken by external contractors, and of analyzing and making use of the results, and this presupposes that staff members themselves have relevant research skills.

**Recommendation 1:** Eurofound should review its approach to developing intellectual capital, starting with the recruitment of suitable people but also including some of the issues highlighted in the report (staff retention, striking a balance between immediate operational requirements and developing staff research interests, sharing knowledge, etc). Some aspect of this (e.g. career development, training, staff retention) are being addressed in the staff policy strategy that is under development but a comprehensive approach is needed covering all aspects of intellectual capital.

### 2.3 Effectiveness

**Overall, the feedback from our research is generally positive on the extent to which Eurofound achieved the objectives of the 2005-08 work programme.** Thus, over half

## *Executive Summary*

the survey respondents indicated that the 2005-08 work programme's 'general objectives' were 'fully' or 'nearly' achieved. This was especially so with Eurofound's core areas of research and monitoring, but less so with the aim of extending gender mainstreaming to all Eurofound's research activities. Although there was a similar overall pattern, target audiences were generally less positive in their assessment than key stakeholders. From a different perspective, 'newer' EU Member States were more positive in their opinions than the 'older' ones.

**The fact that Eurofound's 2005-08 work programme did not include a fully developed performance measurement framework from the outset, in particular measurable performance targets, makes an assessment of the extent to which it achieved key aims more difficult.** This applies both to the external evaluation but equally to the capacity of Eurofound itself to monitor its own performance. Eurofound's own monitoring data suggests that in a number of ways (number of citations in EU documents, use of Eurofound research, participants at events, etc), performance improved very considerably in the 2005-08 period.

**Recommendation 2:** Eurofound should further develop its EPMS system so that periodic surveys are carried out to obtain feedback from target audiences on its outputs and performance generally (perhaps using the CRM as a tool). Adequate financial and human resources should be made available for this to be done on a reasonably frequent basis (ideally every 1-2 years). It might be appropriate to obtain feedback from different end users of Eurofound's outputs rather than expecting target audiences to provide opinions on the full range of outputs.

**Recommendation 3:** Eurofound should continue to develop other aspects of the EPMS and ensure that the results of performance monitoring are fed back into management decision-making and planning. As part of the further development of the EPMS, Eurofound should continue to act on the recommendation made in the 2007 external evaluation with regard to on-going evaluations.

**During the 2005-08 period, Eurofound was generally very effective in communicating information to key stakeholders at a European level.** The fact that the EU-level target audience was well defined and limited in size, and the role of Eurofound's Brussels Liaison Office, were clearly helpful in this respect. Feedback from the survey work (with 39% saying that awareness of Eurofound's information was 'very' or 'quite' high in EU institutions), and from the interview programme, supports this conclusion.

**However, there is a more mixed picture with regard to the effectiveness of Eurofound's dissemination mechanisms at a national level.** Notwithstanding differing views on the extent to which Eurofound's target audiences extended beyond key stakeholders to others at a national level (considered below), the evaluation suggests that it was considerably less successful in disseminating information at this level. The decision to disband the NOCs reduced the capacity to reach target audiences. There was also a mixed picture with regard to the role played by Board members in disseminating information

## *Executive Summary*

with some being more active than others in this respect. A further constraint on reaching target audiences was the fact that most of Eurofound's output was only available in English.

**More fundamentally, there is a question of how Eurofound's target audience should be defined at a national level.** In the 2005-08 period, beyond the key stakeholders and social partners, Eurofound's role in disseminating information (and the corresponding target audiences) was not clearly defined. In our view, however, highly debatable whether Eurofound's existence, and the funding required to maintain it, can be justified if its target audience is essentially limited to EU-level policy-makers, especially given the importance of Member States as key stakeholders. More positively, the evaluation suggests that the information provided by Eurofound is greatly valued and as such should be disseminated as widely as possible.

**Recommendation 4:** Eurofound should work with its Board members and Member States to define target audiences at a national level, i.e. whether (and if so how) Eurofound should go beyond national authorities and policy-makers, and the organisations represented on Governing Board, and try and reach the broader group of employers and employee bodies that Board members represent at a national level. In our view, Eurofound should seek to do this.

**Recommendation 5:** Assuming target audiences are more clearly defined at a national level, Eurofound should consider setting up a network of focal points based on the national authorities represented on its Governing Board. EU Member States should contribute to the costs of operating focal points (perhaps making this explicit through an amendment to Eurofound's regulation).

Although much of Eurofound's output can be disseminated by email and/or via website downloads, the role of focal points would be to identify individuals who should be contacted, to establish their precise information needs, explain the role of Eurofound, etc. Linked to this, the CRM system should be improved to ensure that contacts are relevant and kept up-to-date, and to facilitate the electronic dissemination of information.

**Recommendation 6:** to ensure that Eurofound's outputs can be used more widely at a national level, consideration should be given to translating more material from English into other languages. Eurofound has recently begun to do this but there are clearly constraints, given the costs involved, on the extent to which material can be translated into different languages in an EU with 27 Member States. We suggest that Eurofound only makes short summaries of key outputs available in different languages and that national authorities should assume responsibility for translating whole documents into their languages if they consider this to be worthwhile.

## *Executive Summary*

**Although financial and other direct support for the CLIP project is ending, Eurofound has played a key role in laying the basis for the network to continue its work.** The importance of migration to Europe's economy is generally accepted. CLIP has a useful function in bringing together those who deal with integration issues on a day-to-day basis in major cities across the EU. The research suggests that CLIP's role in providing research support, networking opportunities, etc, is greatly valued. It is also clear from our evaluation that there is a strong desire among CLIP members for the network to continue its activities. But it is equally clear that the decision by Eurofound to discontinue its financial support, it is appropriate for this to be done by obtaining the necessary resources from elsewhere.

**Recommendation 7:** Eurofound's funding of CLIP research and its role in providing the secretariat for the network has been essential in facilitating the network's development but it is appropriate to now terminate this 'pump-priming' support.

Together with other key stakeholders, Eurofound should encourage the CLIP network to raise the necessary funding from its own members to sustain activities, (e.g. to pay for secretariat and for research services). Ideally, Eurofound should continue to play a role – the added value it can offer lies not only in funding but also in providing an EU-wide and tripartite perspective, as well as research capacity and specialist know-how. However, any further inputs by Eurofound should be paid for by CLIP.

**During the 2005-08 period, a number of steps were taken to improve the way that Eurofound functions and this has improved the effectiveness of its operations.** The steps taken included: initiative under the BREAK initiative such as the adoption of an activity-based budgeting, training for Eurofound's managers, the introduction of Annual Management Plans and the development of project management methods (e.g. Projex), the Eurofound Performance Monitoring System' (EPMS) and the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. There was also more emphasis placed on developing external relationships with key stakeholders at a national and European level. Overall, it seems to us that there was a lot of change at Eurofound during the 2005-08 period, most of which should have positive long-term effects on efficiency and effectiveness.

**The changes brought about by the 2007 reorganisation took place towards the end of the 2005-08 period under review and it is therefore beyond the scope of the study to fully assess the outcomes. However, there are quite divided opinions on the merits or otherwise of the reorganisation.** One view is that the changes led to responsibilities becoming blurred with a lack of clear 'ownership' of the research function at Eurofound. We also noted criticisms of the way the reorganization was implemented. An alternative view of the 2007 re-organisation is that it led to efficiency gains and improved outputs. On balance, those aspects of the reorganization linked to the setting up of NEO should have produced benefits in terms of cost-effective data collection and processing although one drawback is that it has increased the workload on research units which have taken over responsibility for quality assurance.



## *Executive Summary*

**Recommendation 8:** the changes brought about through the reorganization of Eurofound should be reviewed to establish how well they have worked, both from a staff point of view as well as in relation to the organisation as a whole and target audiences. There is a case for this exercise to be carried out when the term of office of a newly appointed Director starts and to be completed to provide a timely input into preparation of Eurofound's 2013-2016 work programme.

**Because of its increased size following EU enlargement in 2004, the reduced number of meetings, and the relatively high turnover of members, Eurofound's Governing Board was not an effective decision-making body in the period under review.** However, assuming that Eurofound remains a tripartite entity – and this is one of its strengths – and each EU Member States continued to be represented, there is no obvious way round the problem of having a very large and unwieldy Governing Board. It is doubtful whether increasing the number of meetings per year would make much, if any, difference in this respect. The Board continues to play an important role as an authorizing body and as a mechanism for key stakeholder representation. The role of Board members at a national level in promoting Eurofound is, however, far from clear.

**Recommendation 9:** Steps should be taken to strengthen the Governing Board's role in providing overall direction to Eurofound. For example, at the Board meetings, after dealing with 'routine' matters, time could be made available for a discussion on strategic issues/priorities.

The role of Governing Board members should be more clearly defined, especially with regard to their function in the Member States in helping to define target audiences and disseminating information.

**The 2005 Regulation formalised the role of Eurofound's Bureau and, as with some other European agencies, it had an important role to play in the period under review.** However, a disproportionate amount of the Bureau's time seems to have been taken up discussing internal Eurofound management issues and not enough on questions relating to its strategy, research activities and outputs. There is also a view that the Bureau has not been good at taking decisions and that once decisions have been taken they were not always implemented by Eurofound's management. It is not appropriate for us to make judgments on 'who is right and who is wrong'. However, it is clear that during the 2005-08 period, various factors combined to complicate Eurofound's overall governance.

**Recommendation 10:** The Bureau should ensure that an appropriate balance is struck in its proceedings between considering strategic and management issues.

**The decision, confirmed in the 2005 Regulation, to disband the Committee of Experts was appropriate but insofar as the Advisory Committees have taken over this function, there is scope to improve the way they operate.** There seems to be a considerable difference between the Advisory Committees in how they function, interpret their role and how they generally conduct proceedings, and in their coverage of Eurofound's activities. Arguably, there are too many Advisory Committees. Nevertheless,

## *Executive Summary*

apart from their function in advising Eurofound, the Advisory Committees also provide a way of strengthening the engagement of Governing Board members.

**Recommendation 11:** The number and role of the Advisory Committees should be reviewed and clearer terms of reference provided to them. At the same time, their function as a mechanism for ensuring that Board members have an opportunity to participate in Eurofound deliberations should be developed.

**Recommendation 12:** insofar as it is feasible, the appointment of future Eurofound Directors should take place at a point in the programming cycle that allows the person concerned to be involved in preparing the Foundation's four-year work programme.

### 2.4 Added Value and Impacts

**Eurofound's research outputs provide comparative information on living and working conditions in Europe and because of this demonstrates a high degree of added value.** Providing a European perspective on key questions is self-evidently important for EU policy-makers but also helps national authorities by putting particular issues into context, providing comparative information, enabling good practices to be identified and experience to be shared.

**The impact of Eurofound's activities during the 2005-08 period was more pronounced at an EU level than at a Member State level.** At an EU-level, the survey results for example indicated that over half (54%) of key stakeholders and approaching a third (30%) of target audiences said the impact is 'very' or 'quite' successful (this compares with 21% and 19% respectively at a national level).

**During the 2005-08 period Eurofound was successful in integrating the new Member States into its structures after EU enlargement.** Ensuring that the new Member States developed the capacity to provide good quality data to Eurofound's observatories in a timely and harmonized way was a significant challenge that was successfully met. Similarly, representatives from the new Member States have been integrated into Eurofound governance structures and in its activities generally. Challenges do of course remain. This includes the high cost of research projects in an enlarged EU of 27 Member States.

**Overall, in the 2005-08 period covered by this evaluation, Eurofound contributed to the improvement of living and working conditions in the EU by providing the EU and national authorities, and other social partners with the information needed to take better decisions.** Living and working conditions in the EU are determined by very many factors (macro-economic conditions, public policies, actions taken by companies and individuals, etc), most of which are well beyond Eurofound's influence. However, insofar as Eurofound influenced EU policies during the 2005-08 period, it contributed to the 'better' aspect of the goal set out in the Lisbon Strategy of creating 'more and better jobs', and to most aspects of the European Social Policy Agenda. Eurofound's influence on policy-makers beyond those at an EU level is less clear and as highlighted earlier, a future priority should be to strengthen its role in relation to Member States (see Recommendation 2).



## *Executive Summary*

### **3. Methodological Note**

The research for this evaluation was carried out in the second half of 2010 in three phases:

**Phase 1: Preparatory Tasks** – set up meeting with Eurofound and various preparatory tasks leading to an inception report (July 2009).

**Phase 2: Survey Work, Interviews and Case Studies** – surveys of key stakeholders and wider target audiences. A total of 38 key stakeholders and 184 target audience members responded to the main surveys for the evaluation. In addition, 61 responses were obtained from two smaller case study surveys. A total of 81 interviews were carried out, mostly on a face-to-face basis, at a European and Member State level. Two documents were prepared during the course of Phase 2 – an interim report (September 2009) and a second document prepared at the request of Eurofound and mainly consisting of survey updates and a presentation for the Governing Board meeting of 23 October 2009.

**Phase 3: Analysis and Final Reports** – during the final phase, a number of outstanding research tasks were completed with the research findings being subject to detailed evaluation. A draft final report was submitted (mid-November 2009). This was presented to the Advisory Committee in December 2009 with a revised version being produced and then presented to Eurofound's Bureau at the end of January 2010.