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# Eurofound external multiannual programme evaluation – Ex post evaluation of 2009-2012 Work Programme

Final Report

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# Executive Summary and Recommendations

## Introduction

Ipsos MORI were commissioned by The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound) in June 2014 to undertake the ex-post evaluation of the multiannual Work Programme 2009-2012. The study objective was to gather reliable evidence about Eurofound's performance during the completed programme period 2009-2012, as well as to provide input to improve Eurofound's capacity to implement its current four year programme.

Eurofound is a tripartite European Union Agency, whose role is to provide knowledge in the area of social and work-related policies. Eurofound was established in 1975 by Council Regulation (EEC) No. 1365/75 to contribute to the planning and design of better living and working conditions in Europe. Eurofound's role is to provide information, advice and expertise – on living and working conditions, industrial relations and managing change in Europe – for key actors in the field of EU social policy on the basis of comparative information, research and analysis.

The evaluation aimed to answer specific evaluation questions that were developed by Eurofound's Evaluation function, published in the Evaluation Mandate, and approved by the Evaluation Steering Group. The scope of the study was restricted to activities within 2009-2012 period but acknowledges that their impact would have taken place also in the following two years.

The evaluation team designed a methodological approach to cover all thirteen evaluation questions, organised under three evaluation areas of Eurofound's mission, Programme Focus, and Operational Framework. These questions were designed to meet the operational needs of the Agency and covered all main evaluation criteria set out by the evaluation guidelines of the European Commission.

The evaluation approach combined a mixture of quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. These comprised of 13 staff consultations, 49 interviews with stakeholders and wider user groups, a user survey with 244 responses, three workshops with the Governing Board groups and a voting session with the whole Governing Board. Triangulation of this primary evidence was complemented by an extensive review of internal documents including internal guidelines and project evaluations and monitoring information including internal databases of impacts and policy hotspots. Evaluation tools applied in the study included contribution analysis, cost effectiveness analysis and programme logic development. The logic model was discussed in the Governing Board workshops and in numerous iterations with Eurofound Evaluation Steering group. The evaluation also drew on six project level case studies. The case study selection process used several data collection strands to construct a long list of 18 potential candidates in order to cover projects in variety of sizes, research units and methods. The main objective of the case studies was to highlight the ways in which each project was successful or not in translating into policy impact and identify factors that enable it.

Despite the comprehensiveness of the approach, there were certain limitations. One originated in interviewing those closer to the Agency's governance processes or involved in the wider consultations that Eurofound conducts during Work Programme development. The second was resulted from the way the budgeting information was organised during the 2009-2012 period. These limitations were taken into consideration when forming evidence-based conclusions.

## Key findings:

Below we set our key findings in line with the three evaluation areas, first in a form of a table summarising Eurofound's performance in that with the assessment of the level of a need for improvement and then in form of a narrative assessment.

## Eurofound's Mission

1. Eurofound's mission	Result of the assessment	Need for improvement
To what extent are Eurofound's 'intervention logic', activities and choices grounded in its mandate, and in line with the needs of socio-economic policy-makers and stakeholders?	The intervention logic, activities and choices were <b>fully in line</b> with the needs of socio-economic policymakers and stakeholders consulted within this evaluation.	<b>None</b>
Why does Eurofound do what Eurofound does?"	Eurofound does what it does because its original mandate and mission be the provider of unique information has been <b>confirmed to be valid</b> in ex ante evaluations. Stakeholders generally shared the perception of this quality.	<b>None</b>
What is the unique added value of Eurofound?	There is a strong general view that the Agency has a role in informing and contributing towards better evidence-based policymaking in areas relevant to living and working conditions. The one most important characteristic varies based on consulted group but <b>European coverage</b> and <b>reliability of data</b> stand out.	<b>None</b>
To what extent do Eurofound's activities and outputs contribute to relevant socio-economic policy developments?	Evidence gathered within the evaluation suggests that Eurofound's projects to a large extent contributed to policy developments in some way (see below). The <b>complexities in the policymaking process prevented establishment of a direct link</b> between research and policy change.	<b>Small</b>
By which means? [Contribution to impact assessments, preparation of new proposals, quotation by official reports, quotation in scientific papers, etc.?]	Users indicated that the most frequent means for contributing to policy developments is through <b>preparation of policy proposals</b> and <b>contributions to policy impact assessments</b> . The majority of Governing Board members confirmed that in their view the most important means by which Eurofound contributed to relevant socio-economic policy development was <b>informing policy debate by providing background and contextual knowledge</b> .	<b>Small</b>

Eurofound staff have developed a comprehensive understanding of the needs of the various stakeholder and user groups that the Agency targets. Stakeholders can be split into four distinct user categories moving along the influence/power continuum from those with the least direct influence on policy developments to those heavily involved in drafting new policies on EU and national levels. This strategic knowledge held by Eurofound staff, in combination with the early determination of the high level priorities and a process of extensive internal and external consultation resulted in a high alignment of the Work Programme with the needs of the Agency's stakeholders.

Involvement of employers, workers, national governments, and the European Commission ensures the relevance of the Work Programme to these groups of stakeholders. Indirectly represented organisations were satisfied with Agency's activities being aligned to their needs. There was a general consensus among the consulted stakeholders that some projects were more aligned with the needs of one of the groups than others and therefore by nature none of the groups could be fully satisfied and that compromise was necessary. Stakeholders who could comment on this issue acknowledged that this is an acceptable consequence of a tripartite system and commented that all projects were, however, undertaken professionally and to the highest quality.

Some specific remarks on the alignment with stakeholder needs were voiced by members of the tripartite groups during the stakeholder workshops. For example, the Government representatives indicated a high level of alignment with needs signified by the fact that a number of Governing Board members use Eurofound's research in advising Ministers at national levels and the workers highlighted that the factual research produced by Eurofound perhaps aligns better to their needs than evaluative projects – since providing a judgement potentially politicises the issue.

### Why does Eurofound do what Eurofound does?

Eurofound's mission and rationale for existence is deeply grounded in its original mandate of 1975. This relevance was confirmed in the ex-ante evaluation of 2008 by conducting a problem analysis. The exercise recognised that the Agency has built up a substantial body of knowledge in the field of living and working conditions in Europe. The most recent ex-ante evaluation, undertaken in 2012, went further by stating that the current mission 'to provide knowledge to assist in the development of social and work-related policies' effectively became the new reference point to interpret Eurofound's mandate. From this assessment it can be concluded that throughout the period 2009-2012 Eurofound did what it did because it had proven to be a unique information provider in its field of operation.

Eurofound has throughout the period in question made extensive efforts to ensure that it remains relevant and listens to its key stakeholders and primary target groups which are well defined and link to the original communications strategy from 2006. There were strategic changes made to the way in which the Agency chose to deliver and communicate the results from its work over this work programming period. Of particular note this included: reducing the number of publications per project (from 7.8 in 2009 to 2.5 in 2012), restructuring the research units, and increasing the in-house research capabilities so that more of the project delivery could be in-sourced. In-sourcing of research was considered by Governing Board representatives and Eurofound staff to have positive effects on Eurofound's ability to deliver high quality research. In the final two years of the Work Programme the Agency received increases in the user satisfaction ratings which would, despite slight changes in the methodology of user satisfaction surveys<sup>1</sup>, indicate that these changes may have had a positive impact in this regard.

### What is the unique added value of Eurofound?

The Agency is seen to provide a unique added value for its key stakeholders who see its main strength in the provision of European coverage, and reliability of trend data. As such it is seen as a trusted source with a tripartite governance structure. All consulted parties; some closer to the Agency's governance structures and some as irregular users, have seen value in Eurofound's research.

### To what extent do Eurofound's activities and outputs contribute to relevant socio-economic policy developments? By which means?

A vast majority of those who are close to the policymaking process<sup>2</sup> indicated that the data and information that the Agency produces is invaluable background and contextual information, while some of them were also able to point out specific examples of how this information fed into the policy development process. For example, one member state representative stated that Eurofound research was useful as background information for better informed policies when drafting proposals for new programmes or initiatives. It was highlighted by policymakers themselves that this process is long and complex and in order for the policies to be informed by evidence – produced by Eurofound – a number of factors need to be present. The most important factor is the alignment of

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<sup>1</sup> In 2013 the online questionnaire underwent a restructure of the format and content revision in order to increase low response rate, introducing questions about the overall usage of Eurofound publications (rather than just frequency of usage), preferred format of publications, publications of principle importance, and information providers most often used.

<sup>2</sup> Those that have a directly impact on policy development, i.e. respondents with the following roles: Advising on policy, Shaping policy and Advocacy and lobbying

the timing of the relevant research outputs and the political agenda, the latter outside the control of the Agency. This limitation has been explored to a great depth in interviews and case studies that indicate the variety of means through which Eurofound feeds into the policymaking process but the actual attribution of a causal link is very difficult to prove as events behind the drafting and approval of a particular policy are challenging to unpick. Evidence of what makes a project have a direct policy impact gathered from the case studies is summarised in the Text box following the Executive Summary.

## Programme Focus

2. Programme Focus	Result of the assessment	Need for improvement
To what extent do Eurofound's activities / outputs reflect the priorities of the EU socio-economic policy makers, and EU social partners?	The extensive <b>consultation process</b> and wide <b>representation</b> of key stakeholders in governance of the Agency <b>translates into highly relevant projects</b> . Those <b>projects</b> which were <b>considered not to be contentious by the Governing Board</b> had a <b>more clearly specified objectives and scope</b> .	None
Flexibility and responsiveness to change: How responsive has Eurofound been to unforeseen changes arising notably from the economic and financial crisis during the programming period?	<b>Annual Work programme design and approval process</b> had some flexibility built into it in order to address challenges faced by Europe posed by the economic crisis. Eurofound's Governing Board assessed the shift in a programme focus but decided to address it by incremental changes to existing projects. The majority of <b>users</b> indicated that Eurofound was responsive and the majority of <b>stakeholders did not identify it as a problem</b> .	Small
Gaps / priorities not covered	Portfolio of projects selected by the Governing Board ensured high level of coverage of priorities of socio-economic policymakers and social partners. <b>Advisory Committees kept close oversight</b> over implementation of planned activities. <b>Refocusing on crisis</b> in the last two years, and <b>avoiding overlaps with EU OSHA</b> might have resulted in gaps.	Small
How does the Work Programme preparation (consultation of stakeholders, process etc.) ensure that Eurofound activities/outputs reflect the priorities of the EU socio-economic policy makers and EU social partners?	<b>Work Programme development cycle</b> is an <b>effective and mature process</b> that began over a year prior to final discussions and approval of the draft programme by the Agency's Governing Board. Stakeholders felt that they were consulted and that their priorities have been reflected in the Work Programme. Individual stakeholders could point at specific projects that addressed their direct needs.	None
To what extent did Eurofound fulfil the expectations set out in the programming in relation to:		
Matching the areas of expertise with the challenges, orientation and topics that were selected and implemented (were there gaps, did they meet the needs of those Eurofound wanted to serve)	The <b>internal oversight procedures ensured</b> that all approved projects are executed and highlight any problems in execution once encountered. Data stored in the project management system does not allow assessment of which projects did not result in outputs.	Small
Methods (methodology, quality assurance, etc)	Eurofound implemented <b>tried and tested methods</b> and <b>continued strengthening in-house research capability</b> . <b>Standard quality assurance practices in place</b> however ensuring <b>quality</b> input from <b>national correspondents</b> a <b>challenge</b> for research managers.	Moderate
Communication strategy (target groups (people), products, placement)	<b>Established and well thought out communication channels</b> . Several <b>improvements and innovative approaches</b> to presenting information took place throughout the period.	None
In terms of filling knowledge gaps and synergies, to what extent does Eurofound's research take account of and builds on previous / existing research?	Eurofound research to a <b>large extent built on existing research</b> . There were numerous examples of two way <b>flow of knowledge</b> to/from <b>academic partners</b> . During the period there were opportunities for more <b>formal collaboration with other EU agencies</b> .	Small

## To what extent do Eurofound's activities / outputs reflect the priorities of the EU socio-economic policy makers, and EU social partners?

Eurofound's programme focus during this period reflected the priorities of EU socio-economic policymakers and EU social partners to a large extent, especially taking into account the differences between these various groups. Some of the groups, in particular the workers, indicated that they would have preferred the balance of activities to focus on one of the three research areas<sup>3</sup> more than others, but there was a general sense of satisfaction with the focus of the 4 year and annual Work Programmes due to the high level of involvement of all groups in the theme and project selection processes. The workers group by nature tends to be most interested in research on industrial relations related topics whereas the government representatives are most interested in findings relating to effectiveness of policies in improvement of living and working conditions.

## Flexibility and responsiveness to change: How responsive has Eurofound been to unforeseen changes arising notably from the economic and financial crisis during the programming period?

Evidence from both staff and stakeholder interviews indicated that the wide audience involved in the Work Programme design however resulted in a marginally slower response to the economic crisis, especially if measured by introduction of specific topical projects. The general focus of the programme allowed flexibility in the annual Work Programmes to respond to topical issues but the rigidity in the system (structures involving 78 Governing Board members from all EU member states) was seen to not allow for this to an optimal level. Some efforts on existing project levels were made in the first year of the Work Programme (for example the European Jobs Monitor had an amended methodology to measure the effect of crisis on jobs and to analyse structural shifts on employment in Europe) but specific projects targeted at the effect of crisis on living and working conditions were not set up as quickly as they could have been. There is not too much flexibility built in beyond the annual Work Programme development and a limited budget for the stakeholder enquiry service. There are clearly inherent risks in both extremes – having in place a system dedicating too much of the budget to 'arising topics' or being too rigid. The challenge is to increase the flexibility within the existing official processes for Work Programme development and approval which enhance trust in research specified in the tripartite setting.

A review of Annual Work Programmes developed over the period validated that the majority of specific research projects to be delivered had clear objectives aligned with the logic towards achieving positive outcomes on policy. Evidence from this review, project case studies undertaken by the evaluation team, and feedback from Eurofound staff suggested that projects considered contentious by the tripartite groups of the Governing Board, such as income after retirement or the posted workers (see case studies), ended up with considerably less clear objectives and scope or were rejected despite having high policy relevance (automatic stabilisers). On the other hand those projects which were not considered to be as contentious, for example NEETs project (see case studies) had a more clearly specified objectives and scope.

## Gaps / priorities not covered / Matching the areas of expertise with the challenges, orientation and topics that were selected and implemented

The tripartite Governing Board selection and approval processes seek to ensure a high level of coverage of priorities for socio-economic policymakers and social partners. There was nevertheless a certain level of re-focusing of the projects once Eurofound made a conscious decision to respond to the financial economic crisis. As a result there may have been some topics selected in 2007-8 that were not fully implemented or did not receive the emphasis they were originally planned to. Another identified area of potential gaps was on the bordering remit with the European Agency for Occupational Safety and Health (EU-OSHA). Both agencies attempt

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<sup>3</sup> The three research areas are: Employment growth and demand and supply of labour in changing labour markets, More and better jobs and higher productivity through partnership, Promotion of social inclusion and sustainable social protection



to avoid overlap and as a result the themes relevant to both may have been left in 'no-man's-land'. General views of the stakeholders, both on the Governing Board and not, was that the overlap with other EU agencies, including EU OSHA, CEDEFOP or FRA, is on the one hand inevitable and on the other hand so small that it is not a problem.

The Agency had in place collaborative agreements with all EU 'sister' agencies but the formal collaboration rarely extended beyond informing each other's Work Programme during the development and planning stages. There was however a substantial collaboration of an informal nature and some evidence of more formal collaboration such as procurement of sampling of the second ECS in collaboration with EU OSHA. The main barrier to formal collaboration on research projects were administrative complexities involved in joint commissioning. It is important that collaborative projects are introduced only in areas where necessary rather than for the sake of collaboration. Members of the Governing Board perceived that the level of collaboration with the ILO was the most appropriate whilst the links with the OECD were seen as those which required improvement. This perception might be influenced by the specific reference to improve collaboration with international organisations in the 2009-2012 four year Work Programme.

The internal oversight procedures ensured that all approved projects are executed and highlight any problems in execution once encountered. Data stored in the project management system does not allow assessment of which projects did not result in outputs.

[How does the Work Programme preparation \(consultation of stakeholders, process etc.\) ensure that Eurofound activities/outputs reflect the priorities of the EU socio-economic policy makers and EU social partners?](#)

Work Programme development cycle is an effective and mature process that began over a year prior to final discussions and approval of the draft programme by the Agency's Governing Board. Stakeholders felt that they were consulted and that their priorities have been reflected in the Work Programme. Individual stakeholders could point at specific projects that addressed their direct needs. Some of them were able to point specifically towards projects that addressed their direct needs. The government representatives highlighted the Stakeholder enquiry service projects and a representative of the European structures the project on 'Green Jobs'.

It was also the first work programme to benefit from collaborative agreements with the other EU agencies and involvement in discussion of their respective four year and annual Work Programmes. The consultations at the time involved external stakeholders and the beginning of the period also included internal brainstorming events on Agency-wide level and symbolic prizes given for the best research idea – one of which was won by the lead researcher behind the most successful NEETs project.

[Methods \(methodology, quality assurance, etc\)](#)

Eurofound applied a suit of tried and tested methods during the four year Work Programme and continued in the recent trend towards increasing its in-house research capacity. These in combination with employing standard project management quality assurance practices resulted in high quality outputs receiving relatively high levels of user satisfaction. The core activities of the organisation were based on sound research methods which provide a suitable foundation for comparative analysis and time series in order to identify developing trends both in time and geographical locations. Case studies of projects conducted as part of the evaluation as well as users of the EIRO reports with national member state knowledge indicated variable quality and reliability of data produced by some national correspondents. The main challenge is that often the research manager does not have the member state level knowledge to spot any omissions. Therefore it is not easy to cure this issue simply by giving the research managers opportunity to exercise more contracting power.

[Communication strategy \(target groups \(people\), products, placement\)](#)

The 2009-2012 Work Programme delivered its outputs to the users via established channels specified in the Information and Communication Strategy that was updated in 2006. Throughout the period it was recognised that communication was one of the Agency's key roles. Communication activities have undergone a number of improvements throughout the period, notably in the areas of the packaging of the knowledge and information to be disseminated. In addition to these there were improvements in processes such as the introduction of user satisfaction surveys and close monitoring of downloads of the priority publications in their initial periods after launch.

## Operational Framework

3. Operational framework	Result of the assessment	Need for improvement
To what extent has Eurofound efficiently deployed its resources (human and financial) to achieve the objectives in the 2009-2012 programme?	Eurofound has a <b>good setup for efficient production and delivery of research outputs</b> for its main target groups. Topline indicators suggest increased efficiency but detailed data for a more granular level assessment is unavailable. There is a need for an introduction of a project-focused monitoring system.	<b>Moderate</b>
To what extent are Eurofound's outputs delivered timely for decisions by stakeholders?	There were a number of <b>project delays experienced over the period</b> . Most users and external stakeholders either did not notice or did <b>not</b> consider these being a <b>significant issue</b> . Specific projects require more timely execution.	<b>Moderate</b>
To what extent do Eurofound's structures and processes support the implementation of the [2009-2012] programme and the achievement of its objectives?	<b>Eurofound's structures are well aligned with its objectives</b> . Involvement of key stakeholders from the Governing Board in dissemination of research results is a key factor for realising higher level of policy impact. Varied level of involvement reduces the extent to which they support implementation of the Work Programme.	<b>Moderate</b>

To what extent has Eurofound efficiently deployed its resources (human and financial) to achieve the objectives in the 2009-2012 programme?

The Agency has been operating for over nearly 40 years and therefore it is unsurprising that its operational framework is well setup for production and delivery of new relevant information to its main target groups. There were however a number of characteristics of the monitoring system which prevented the evaluation team from assessing the efficiency of Eurofound at more granular level. Most importantly, the Agency's costs were monitored at the level where projects only consisted of research activities (internal and contracted out) and communications and information as standalone activities. The topline indicators suggest that the Agency ran close to its target budget and with an acceptable level of carry-overs which were reduced over the period, whilst it efficiently increased its internal research capabilities.

In order to implement cost-efficiency/cost-effectiveness into the assessment and decision-making processes Eurofound would be required to implement a more project-focused monitoring system. Such a monitoring system would require attribution of time from both research and communication functions and a strong measurement of outcomes linked to individual publications that can be linked to projects and their costs. There is however a tension between such an approach and the Agency's corporate decision at the time of the 2009-2012 programme to take a thematic-view approach, in light of producing horizontal type publications utilising research from a number of projects which make it nearly impossible to attribute outcomes from such publications to the costs associated to their production. A cost-benefit analysis would require both a precise assessment of the influence of research activity over the course regulatory or legislative change, as well as estimates of the net present value associated with the regulation or legislation in both its counterfactual form and the form it was implemented. As the characteristics of these policies cannot be readily quantified, and there is no realistic counterfactual group of territories that could be realistically constructed, the difficulties involved with such an assessment are intractable.

## To what extent are Eurofound's outputs delivered timely for decisions by stakeholders?

There was evidence from the monitoring information collected by Eurofound and from the case study work that there were a number of project delays experienced over the period. In most cases these delays were not significant and Eurofound staff demonstrated proactive behaviour to solve these challenges. For the majority of users consulted as part of this evaluation these delays were either not noticed or not considered a significant issue<sup>4</sup> (possibly due to the shelf-life of some of the research outputs). There were however a small number of occasions where delays were considered problematic for the users, for example the representativeness studies which are conducted by Eurofound on behalf of the Commission. These delays were due to a number of reasons, including balancing these complex studies alongside other research projects utilising the same capacities – both internally and within the EIRO network; as well as factors not within the control of the Agency such as delayed input from the EC. The new project management system put in place in the current Work Programme period should warrant better quality data for delays in delivery and an assessment of whether this shortcoming has been resolved in the current period. With the move towards forward planning and identification of policy hotspots, delivery towards deadlines is of increasing importance.

## To what extent do Eurofound's structures and processes support the implementation of the [2009-2012] programme and the achievement of its objectives?

Eurofound's structures such as the Governing Board were established to ensure that Agency's activities are well aligned with its objectives. In practice the Governing Board has over the years exercised its powers and its members have a strong feeling of responsibility for assuring that the Agency achieves its objectives. In addition to the formal role, members of the Governing Board are expected to serve as the Agency's ambassadors in their home countries and in many cases distribute the Agency's research outputs within their organisations and beyond. There appears to be a varied level of commitment across the members in fulfilling their intended roles and case study evidence indicates that stakeholder support from the Governing Board members and their levels involvement are one of the key factors for Eurofound's work realising direct policy impact at national levels.

Advisory committees are a crucial component of the internal structure and were considered to have improved in their workings during the period as significant efforts were made to organise them better. Involvement of academics on these committees for challenging projects or even ad hoc setup of meetings with groups of academic experts helped the Agency to gain credibility in disseminating and justifying its results. The largest projects also benefited from data quality assessments which deepened the trust in the data that the Agency produces according to user feedback collected as part of the project-level case studies.

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<sup>4</sup> Though 2011 user satisfaction identified a need for schedule' type alerting system regarding research publications  
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## Factors increasing likelihood of achieving direct policy impact:

### INCEPTION

- Having a high ambition and a strong interest in the research topic by the researcher. Support from the Head of Unit and internal organisation buy-in in the project.
- A clear definition of the objectives and scope of the proposed project requiring little or no further validation after approval by the Governing Board. If further validation (e.g. inception workshops with the Advisory Committees) is needed, it should be done as soon as possible to avoid delays from early on.
- Projects with a focus on a pressing societal issues tend to have a higher probability to generate direct impact, especially when research is needed in order to establish (or confirm) terminology and define indicators.
- A novel research question or method of approaching an existing research question (addressing a research gap).
- Setup of the right size project team based on required competencies and abilities to execute the tasks.

### EXECUTION

- (for projects requiring external contractor) Selection of an external contractor knowledgeable in the topic area, with proven track record and ability to deliver on time.
- Effective and early communication within project team and with external experts involved in the project early on in the process in order to flag any expected issues.
- Effective collaboration with advisory committees to receive advice which in turn results in policy-relevant research outputs.
- Using academics to challenge methods at the interim stage of the project to ensure its rigour and obtain ideas on strengthening the approach and gaining credibility.
- Using innovative research methodologies, drawing on a number of sources and involving national level case studies.
- In large complex projects with a large contracted-out component, having the quality of data assessed by an external contractor led to actions improving the dataset.
- Having a dedicated team which remains largely the same for the duration of the project will reduce any delays resulting from the need to train new team members.
- In cases of cross-unit project teams good communication and regular meetings are key for effective execution of the project.

### DISSEMINATION AND IMPACT

- A highly engaged group of stakeholders and their intensive involvement in consultation and review process ensures high relevance and accessibility of findings. This is especially the case for GB.
- A definitive number (such as a high cost of inaction) as a main finding provides easier presentation of results and is more attractive as a media headline.
- Alignment of research to upcoming policy needs (policy hotspots process).
- Pro-active cross-team coordination and concerted efforts by the directorate, BLO, I&C and research team in dissemination activities.
- Organising pre-publication events that provide early feedback for the draft versions of the report – useful for improving the tone of messages and securing audience buy-in.
- Having a strategic communication plan for a research project (developed in collaboration of the research and communications teams), linking to policymakers' needs extending beyond the end date of the project.

## Recommendations

The European Foundation's four year Work Programmes have been externally evaluated since 2001. The recommendations have rarely been significant in terms of the level of change which has been suggested<sup>5</sup>. At the point of the 2009-2012 Work Programme's implementation the organisation could be considered well versed in operating within a tripartite structure, delivering to its stakeholders, and is known well within the policy environment. As such it is perhaps not surprising that the conclusions drawn from this evaluation process indicate that Eurofound's delivery of the Work Programme broadly met what was expected by its stakeholders; addressed its mandate to a significant extent and that the internal structures were appropriate to supporting its activity under the programme. In many cases areas identified for improvement by this evaluation (as per the Agency's performance during the 2009-2012 period) are already being proactively acted on by the Agency. There are only five recommendations which are not at this point of time acted upon already. This is a modest number in comparison to other evaluations and it signifies the high level of performance to which the Agency has been working in the recent years. Recommendations in this section arose from the evaluation findings and were discussed at an evaluation steering committee meeting to ensure their relevance and ability to be taken forward as actions<sup>6</sup>. That being said they are presented in a form of actionable options rather than prescribed way forward.

The specific recommendations for improvement on which Eurofound are already acting, but still warrant noting, include:

- **Implementation of an activity based budgeting** approach is included in the Agencies' roadmap<sup>7</sup> requirements. This involves development of systems which will allow for full project costs to be analysed. This will enable some level of efficiency assessment to take place. It is however important to ensure attribution of research and communication activities to individual projects which result in outputs. The Agency is currently working on these improvements.
- **Introduction of project management training and a project management system** to ensure consistency of project management delivery within the Agency. Performance during the 2009-2012 period indicated that there was a need to focus more on enabling actual use, and promoting project management excellence (triangle of time, quality, and project / resource management). This included encouraging collaborations between units, keeping the project teams to a reasonable size and holding regular meetings of the whole teams so everyone is aware of the timelines. This is in line with the growing emphasis on quality over quantity and the European Commission's roadmap for reducing Agency staff by 5-10% by 2020. The Agency is currently working on improvements in this area.
- **A rolling action plan to improve the process and meet yearly production of 6 representativeness studies** has been put in place and progress should be reviewed. While it is accepted that representativeness studies are within Eurofound's broader remit, the approach to these studies should be explored re: the possibilities to extend their usefulness beyond single user. The specificity of the well-defined product might not allow such efforts to be successfully implemented.

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<sup>5</sup> External evaluation of Eurofound (2001) organised recommendations on Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Impact, Governance and Internal organisation and recommended for example establishment of closer links working with the European Commission and clarification of roles with the Bilbao Agency; Ex post evaluation of the 2001-2004 Work Programme recommended specific operational level recommendations such as systematic collection of feedback from stakeholders, regularly monitoring unit costs of projects and improving evaluation planning of the agency; Ex-post Evaluation of Eurofound – Four Year Work Programme 2005-08 proposed incremental improvements in EPMS, more targeted dissemination and highlighted the necessity to streamline/improve governance aspects; Ex ante evaluation of the 2009-2012 programme proposed a short set of recommendations in Internal and external risks areas, some of which included ensuring flexibility and responsiveness to execute and meet changing needs and ensuring implementation of formal cooperation and partnership development strategy as part of annual work programmes

<sup>6</sup> There was a longer list of recommendations presented at the interim meeting some of which were discussed and not formally included in the final report. For example one such proposition was to dedicate a share of the budget to emerging topics.

<sup>7</sup> [http://europa.eu/agencies/documents/2012-12-18\\_roadmap\\_on\\_the\\_follow\\_up\\_to\\_the\\_common\\_approach\\_on\\_eu\\_decentralised\\_agencies\\_en.pdf](http://europa.eu/agencies/documents/2012-12-18_roadmap_on_the_follow_up_to_the_common_approach_on_eu_decentralised_agencies_en.pdf)

- **In-sourcing research staff and reduction in quantity but increase in quality were** seen as successful strategies implemented during the period and should be maintained over the next programming period.

There are a number of strategic recommendations which should be considered by Eurofound and on which the Agency has not currently been focusing, these include:

1. **Consider potential options for optimising the level and quality of input from the Governing Board.** In particular it is suggested that actions are taken to:
  - a) *Maximise engagement of the Governing Board members represented at the key meetings* and not just the pre-meeting plenary. Systems and procedures both laid out in the founding regulation and additional efforts from Eurofound are thorough (e.g. meeting dates agreed one year in advance and substitutes are available for each representative). However motivation and incentives for Governing Board members shall be reconsidered especially taking into consideration upcoming changes resulting from the update of the founding regulation (one meeting a year) and the roadmap for decentralised EU agencies.
  - b) *Further incentivise / encourage Governing Board members to engage on national levels* in supporting dissemination of relevant studies to national actors. Case study evidence highlights that this kind of support is key for achieving further impact but it is not happening consistently.
  - c) *Introduce an approach that can ensure that irrespective of Governing Board discussions that the scope and objectives of projects are limited to what is practically feasible and relevant against the Agency's mission in the EU policy context.* A solution could be the Director, in his current powers, to have the space to discuss with the Governing Board in order to find operational solutions in a context of mutual trust. It could also be the inclusion of Academic Experts to comment on the project scope for projects which are identified as being particularly challenging (see also recommendation 2). Another approach would be to define objective judgment criteria for what is an acceptable scope and objective for a generic project and publishing the GB decisions.
2. **Consideration should be given as to how the Agency can build in approaches at key stages in the delivery of the projects to benefit from academic expert involvement.** Evidence of the use of academic expert involvement from the case studies and also from stakeholder feedback suggested that it can have significant benefits in enhancing both the quality of output but also its perception. It was suggested that academic involvement may be useful in particular to independently assess whether a project scope is reasonable within a timeframe, budget and methodology perspective (especially for those projects which are considered controversial in nature). Furthermore involvement of academic experts can benefit Eurofound in terms of further dissemination and wide awareness of the research produced by the Agency.
 

This recommendation requires careful consideration and exploration of options by which the decision will be made to include an academic panel or not. Lessons are available from the decision to discontinue the existence of the academic board in 2004. It is especially challenging to introduce such an instrument as the current Work Programme planning stage runs to a tight agenda.
3. **Action should be taken to reduce the variability of output generated by national correspondents as this has potential to impact negatively on the quality of the Agency's outputs.** Options for doing so should be considered by the Agency.
4. **Identify areas where formal collaborations and working with the OECD and other international organisations** could take place in the framework of the arrangements in place between the Agency and the Commission with regard to the management of international relations. If working with ILO was particularly seen as appropriate during the time period, it may be relevant to transfer this to working with other organisations.

5. Identify areas for collaboration with sister agencies, in particular EU OSHA., not only to avoid overlap but also to avoid creating a gap on the bordering remits. This concern was shared by many Governing Board members and internal stakeholders. The main instruments for communication with sister agencies are directorate level conversations during Work Programme development defined in the collaboration agreements.

# 1 Introduction

Ipsos MORI were commissioned in June 2014 under the Eurofound Framework contract for evaluation services to undertake an ex post evaluation of the 2009-2012 Work Programme. This is the final report presenting the findings from all four research phases of the evaluation (inception, primary research, data analysis and reporting).

This report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 1: An outline of the study objectives and evaluation methods
- Chapter 2: A descriptive account of the Eurofound's 2009-2014 Work Programme
- Chapter 3: Eurofound's Mission
- Chapter 4: Programme Focus
- Chapter 5: Operational Framework
- Chapter 6: Conclusions and recommendations

## 1.1 Eurofound

The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound) is a tripartite European Union Agency, whose role is to provide knowledge in the area of social and work-related policies. Eurofound was established in 1975 by Council Regulation (EEC) No. 1365/75 to contribute to the planning and design of better living and working conditions in Europe. Eurofound's role is to provide information, advice and expertise – on living and working conditions, industrial relations and managing change in Europe – for key actors in the field of EU social policy on the basis of comparative information, research and analysis.

The Agency organises its activities in four-year Work Programme cycles. This evaluation concerns the activities within the Work Programme 'Europe at work: Better life and opportunities for all' which ran between 2009 and 2012, with some activities under the Work Programme finishing in 2013-2014.

## 1.2 Objectives of the evaluation

The study objective of the ex-post evaluation of Eurofound's multiannual Work Programme 2009-2012 was specified in the Agency's Evaluation Mandate<sup>9</sup> *"to gather reliable evidence about Eurofound's performance during the completed programme period 2009-2012, as well as to provide input to improve Eurofound's capacity to implement its current four year programme"*. The second objective specified in the mandate *"to inform the development of its future programme for the 2017-2020 period"* was only addressed by collecting evidence but is not reported upon in this final ex-post evaluation report<sup>10</sup>.

The evaluation aims to answer specific evaluation questions that were developed by Eurofound's Evaluation function and approved by the Evaluation Steering Group. These are organised under three main headings: Eurofound's Mission, Programme Focus, and its Operational Framework. In the table overleaf we demonstrate

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/htmlfiles/ef0906.htm>

<sup>9</sup> [http://eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef\\_files/about/publicaccess/documents/general/evaluationmandate2014.pdf](http://eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef_files/about/publicaccess/documents/general/evaluationmandate2014.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> It is intended that an ex ante evaluation will be performed during early 2015 using the data which has been collected during the primary research phase of this study to avoid evaluation fatigue for the consulted stakeholders.



that these questions cut across all mandatory evaluation criteria defined in the then DRAFT European Commission guidelines for evaluation (November 2013), i.e. Effectiveness, Efficiency, Relevance, Coherence and EU Added Value.

Figure 1: Evaluation Questions

1. Eurofound's mission		Evaluation Criteria
1	To what extent are Eurofound's 'intervention logic', activities and choices grounded in its mandate, and in line with the needs of socio-economic policy-makers and stakeholders?	Relevance
1.1	Why does Eurofound do what Eurofound does?"	Relevance
2	What is the unique added value of Eurofound?	EU Added Value
3	To what extent do Eurofound's activities and outputs contribute to relevant socio-economic policy developments?	Effectiveness
3.1	By which means? [Contribution to impact assessments, preparation of new proposals, quotation by official reports, quotation in scientific papers, etc.?]	Effectiveness
3.2	At EU level	Effectiveness
3.3	At National level (Governments and social partners)	Effectiveness
3.4	Through other multipliers (research / academic community, think tanks, NGOs, tripartite organisations, other organisations...)	Effectiveness
2. Programme Focus		
4	To what extent do Eurofound's activities / outputs reflect the priorities of the EU socio-economic policy makers, and EU social partners?	Effectiveness/ Coherence
4.1	Flexibility and responsiveness to change: How responsive has Eurofound been to unforeseen changes arising notably from the economic and financial crisis during the programming period?	Effectiveness/ Coherence
4.2	Gaps / priorities not covered	Effectiveness/ Coherence
4.3	How does the Work Programme preparation (consultation of stakeholders, process etc.) ensure that Eurofound activities/outputs reflect the priorities of the EU socio-economic policy makers and EU social partners?	Effectiveness/ Coherence
5*	To what extent did Eurofound fulfil the expectations set out in the programming in relation to:	Effectiveness/ Coherence
5.1*	Matching the areas of expertise with the challenges, orientation and topics that were selected and implemented (were there gaps, did they meet the needs of those Eurofound wanted to serve)	Effectiveness/ Coherence
5.2*	Methods (methodology, quality assurance, etc)	Effectiveness/ Coherence
5.3*	Communication strategy (target groups (people), products, placement)	Effectiveness/ Coherence
6*	In terms of filling knowledge gaps and synergies, to what extent does Eurofound's research take account of and builds on previous / existing research?	Effectiveness/ Coherence
3. Operational framework		
7*	To what extent has Eurofound efficiently deployed its resources (human and financial) to achieve the objectives in the 2009-2012 programme?	Efficiency
8*	To what extent are Eurofound's outputs delivered timely for decisions by stakeholders?	Effectiveness
9	To what extent do Eurofound's structures and processes support the implementation of the [2009-2012] programme and the achievement of its objectives?	Effectiveness
9.1	The Governing Board structures	Effectiveness
9.2	Advisory Committees	Effectiveness
9.3	Work Programme decision-making processes	Effectiveness

\*Questions with an asterisk solely to be covered by the ex-post evaluation

### 1.3 Methodology

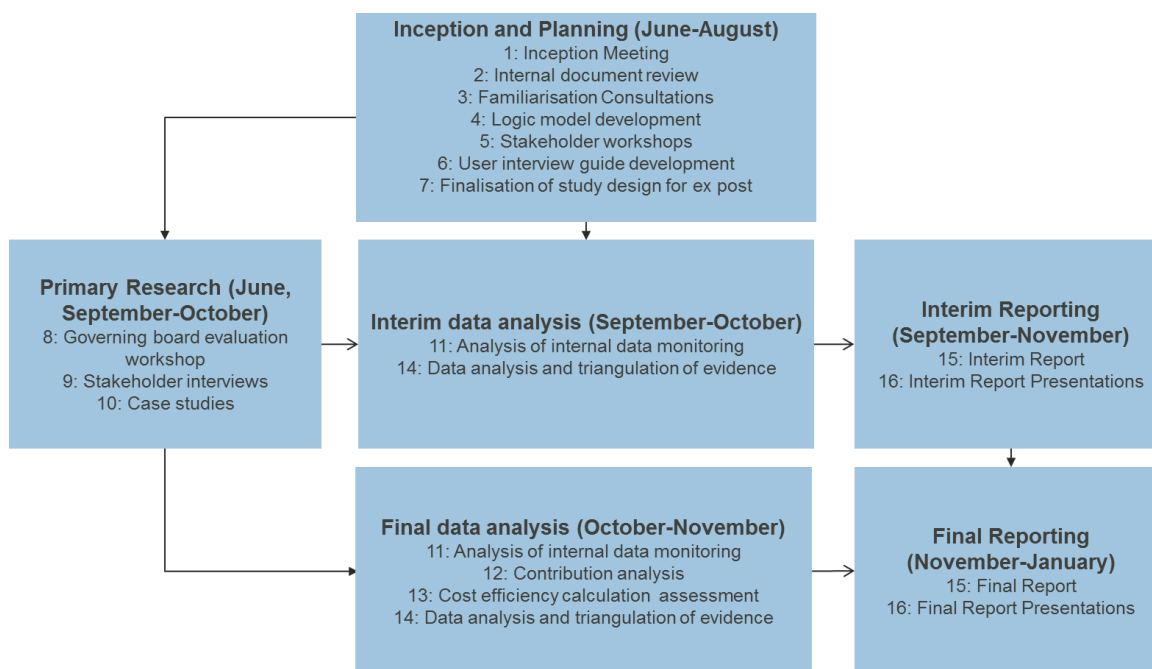
The ex post evaluation was undertaken under 4 main phases: Inception and planning, primary research, data analysis and reporting, and final data analysis and reporting. The timeframes for which are detailed in Figure 2 below.

The research methods employed combined the use of secondary data, and primary data collection of qualitative and quantitative data. Primary data collection included three workshops and a voting session with members of the Eurofound Governing Board, interviews with internal staff from the concerned period and external stakeholders, and utilised user satisfaction survey and interviews which have been conducted by GfK Group under a separate contract<sup>11</sup>. By not running a separate survey of wider stakeholder groups the study attempts to reduce evaluation fatigue by these groups. These data collection methods covered all evaluation questions (and sub-questions) specified within the evaluation mandate.

The triangulation of the evidence from primary data collection was complemented by an extensive review of internal documents and monitoring information, contribution analysis, cost effectiveness analysis and by project level case studies highlighting success factors in achieving policy impact and lessons learnt from the inception, execution, dissemination activities within each case studied project.

Figure 2 below illustrates the interdependencies and timing between individual workstreams of the ex-post evaluation. It highlights the interdependencies that are within the building blocks and the tasks that have been undertaken within them.

**Figure 2: Tasks and Workstreams of the Ex-post Evaluation of 2009-2012 Work Programme**



\*Governing Board voting session was not anticipated at the start of the evaluation project but was used to collect a quantitative account of the perception that the members have on evaluation questions.

<sup>11</sup> This data has been utilised instead of including a large scale survey of external stakeholders as part of the ex post evaluation and is therefore a cost-effective evidence gathering tool.

### 1.3.1 The review of internal documents

The evaluation team initially identified and mapped some 54 documents against evaluation questions. Throughout the inception period Eurofound staff supplied additional internal documents outlining internal processes that were in place during the Work Programme period such as the communications strategy or a note detailing process of identifying 'hotspots'<sup>12</sup>. In the inception phase, further scrutiny of these documents resulted in production of hand-outs for the workshops with the Governing Board, and refinement of the underlying logic of the Work Programme. Relevant information from EPMS (Eurofound Performance Monitoring System) monitoring reports such as the KPIs monitored throughout the period were summarised and referred to in the assessment of effectiveness of the programme activities and the EU impact tracking reports and related data were re-analysed and fed to selection of shortlist of project level impact case studies.

This review resulted in a good understanding of activities that took place during the period in scope of the evaluation, and highlighted changes in objectives or policy focus. The review also informed the design of interview guides of internal and external stakeholders. Some of the documents fed directly as evidence to triangulate for answering evaluation questions.

### 1.3.2 Development of logic model

The development of the logic model was based on the initial review of internal documents. Notably the ex-ante and the mid-term reviews of the 2009-2012 periods both contained versions of the programme intervention logic. The later version of the logic model was presented subsequently and discussed at three workshops with the Governing Board groups representing the government, employers and workers. In addition to these two tasks, the logic model for the 2009-2012 Work Programme was informed by consultations with Eurofound staff and a detailed discussion and iteration with the Monitoring & Evaluation Officer. The logic model was also critiqued and discussed during the evaluation steering group meeting which resulted in further refinements.

### 1.3.3 Qualitative data collection

For each qualitative research component of the study the evaluation team developed a topic guide and specified a list of job roles that should be included within the consultation. The topic guides (which are available in the [Annex A](#)) were commented on and approved by the Eurofound evaluation function.

- **Consultation with Eurofound staff:** Qualitative data collection began with interviews of Eurofound staff during the on-site visit at the end of June and a number of follow up phone calls with a variety of Eurofound staff who were consulted (See [Annex B](#)). The evaluation team undertook 13 interviews with Eurofound staff including an interview with the former director of Eurofound. The face-to-face interviews were organised by Eurofound staff on the days of the Governing Board meetings on 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> of June 2014.
- **Workshops with the Governing Board:** Over two days the evaluation team ran three workshops – one with each of the three represented groups of the Governing Board. At the sessions the board members were split into groups based on their involvement in the governance of the Agency during the 2009-2012 period. Those who sat on the Governing Board were asked to assess the programme with respect to the aspects covered in the evaluation questions and then a number of questions relating to Eurofound's future direction. All participants were also asked to comment on the logic model developed during the mid-term evaluation.

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<sup>12</sup> The term 'hotspot' refers to EU policy-making initiatives and processes to be launched in the coming months/years by EU stakeholders (mainly European Commission, European Parliament, Council (including EMCO and SPC), EESC and social partners) to which Eurofound could qualify to prepare a proactive and anticipatory contribution. Hotspots might also be key high-level events organized by EU presidencies to which Eurofound could contribute.

- **Consultation with external stakeholders:** The core evaluation team conducted 23 in-depth telephone interviews with key external stakeholders (See [Annex C](#) for the list of stakeholders). Stakeholders were asked to provide their views on the relevance of the programme (where applicable) to their work, its effectiveness in meeting their needs, pointing at activities by which Eurofound demonstrated responsiveness to arising changes in the economic landscape in Europe. The list of potential interviewees was devised by the Eurofound members of the evaluation steering group. The evaluation team compared the list with interviewees consulted in the previous external evaluation and added several individuals based on organisations and roles not initially put forward. The final list of stakeholders was reviewed and amended by the full evaluation steering group, and contained 80 individuals, covering the whole range of stakeholder organisations from the European Commission (number of DGs), the European Parliament, and governmental, worker and employer organisations both on national and European levels. The response rate to this component was 29%<sup>13</sup>. The interviews were generally conducted in English but in several cases the interviewees requested to provide input in their own language and Ipsos MORI accommodated these requests.
- **Inputs from interviews with users:** One additional qualitative data collection component feeding into the evaluation was a series of interviews with users of Eurofound outputs conducted by GfK Group. The guide was developed by Ipsos MORI in collaboration with GfK Group who designed the user satisfaction component. The interview guide follows a chronological order by focusing on 2009-2012 period first, then current satisfaction and input for ex-ante evaluation of the Work Programme commencing in 2017. The evaluation team also held a briefing session with GfK Group interviewers and participated in feedback calls with Eurofound staff, including the Information and Communication function – the sponsor of the user satisfaction work.

#### 1.3.4 Quantitative data collection

**Inputs from user survey:** The evaluation team developed a survey component (which is available in [Annex D](#)) added to the user satisfaction survey which was conducted by GfK Group. The 5 minute component consisted of 11 questions. The survey – managed and administered by contractors GfK – was sent out to 5,841 contacts (excluding 275 panellists) contained in the Customer Relationship Management system (CRM) provided by the Eurofound Information and Communication function 306 users responded to the survey and 244 completed the evaluation component. This corresponds to a response rate of about 4.2%.

**Inputs from Governing Board voting session:** The evaluation team took advantage of being at the Governing Board meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> October 2014 and ran a voting session with electronic voting devices. The members of the Governing Board were asked to respond to 9 questions (which is available in [Annex E](#)) relating to questions in the evaluation mandate. They covered 3 main evaluation questions which were addressed also by the user survey in order to assess the differences in perception of effectiveness, means of contribution and responsiveness by both groups (Governing Board Members as well as those distant from the governance structures, users in general).

## 1.4 Analytical tools

### 1.4.1 Case studies

Four of the data collection strands fed towards identification and construction of a long list of 18 potential candidates for case studies. They were analysis of the monitoring information, stakeholder workshops, stakeholder interviews, user survey and interviews.

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<sup>13</sup> The actual response rate was even higher, considering that there were 17 contacts from the ETUC, an organisation that decided to delegate the secretary general to respond to the evaluation and circulate the list of Eurofound projects with colleagues with examples of impact they had on their work. Excluding these, the response rate to external stakeholder interviews was 36%.

This list was presented to the evaluation steering group and after a number of iterations six of them were selected to be included as case studies ([Annex E](#) includes the final selection and [Annex G](#) the case studies). Each case study involved a minimum of two in-depth interviews (one with the lead researcher and one with a key user) and interviews with the Brussels Liaison Officer and the head of Information and Communication unit. The key objective of the case studies was to highlight the diversity of projects executed during the period in scope of the evaluation and detail the project life cycle from the initial birth of the idea through, project inception, execution, dissemination through to realisation of impact. Selected case studies explored issues relating to specific evaluation questions and each of them contains a section on success factors or lessons learnt

#### 1.4.2 Contribution analysis

A number of developments in relevant policy areas was identified and explored both EU and national levels. These developments were extensively explored during the interviews with stakeholders and also in interviews with policymakers feeding to the case study developments. The contribution analysis focused on tracing back any activities that were instrumental in policy developments and contextualising these by in depth exploration of other factors that contributed towards the particular development of a policy.

#### 1.4.3 Triangulation of results

Full analysis of all aforementioned sources was undertaken prior to the reporting phase and all the evidence was aligned against each evaluation questions. Analysis of collected evidence was also being undertaken during data collection in order to test out emerging hypotheses.

#### 1.4.4 Cost efficiency calculation

The evaluation team reviewed the feasibility of undertaking cost efficiency calculations to address evaluation questions concerning efficiency of deployment of resources (human and financial) in achieving Eurofound's objectives in the 2009-2012 Work Programme. This exercise included discussions with Eurofound budgeting officer and involvement of an expert in economic evaluation methods. As during the period 2009-2012 Eurofound did not operate a full-cost-accounting system and costs associated with dedicating resources to this internal exercise would not outweigh the benefits and therefore it was not deemed possible to calculate the unit costs of outputs.

#### 1.4.5 Limitations of methodology

The evaluation team attempted to reduce limitations in the approach by conscious additional steps, for example in the development of the sample of potential interviewees. Nevertheless, there was a certain bias towards consulting those who are close to the Agency's governance processes and / or involved in the wider consultations that Eurofound conducts during Work Programme development. The fact that the consultations are so broad limited the contractor in selecting a greater number of interviews with target groups that are not the Agency's direct stakeholders. This level of bias will impact on how the findings of the study should be interpreted.

Organisation of the budgeting information and changes in the structure of the Agency's research units during the period restricted evaluation's ability to assess efficiency of the Agency.

## 2 Eurofound Work Programme 2009-2012 Period

### 2.1 Work Programme cycle, design process and priority setting

The Agency “European Foundation for Improvement of Working and Living Conditions” (Eurofound) organises its activities in four-year Work Programme cycles. This evaluation concerns the activities within the Work Programme ‘Europe at work: Better life and opportunities for all<sup>14</sup>’ which ran between 2009 and 2012, with some activities under the Work Programme finishing in 2013-2014.

The strategic direction setting of the programme began in 2007-2008 period by involvement of the Governing Board and its smaller Executive Bureau. The more formal Work Programme cycle was accompanied by an ex-ante assessment undertaken in 2008 and followed the ex-ante evaluation guidelines of the European Commission<sup>15</sup>. It was an internal exercise with methodological assistance and peer review provided by an external contractor. The objectives of this study were to contribute to the quality of the 2009–2012 programme, and to assist in the establishment of the monitoring and evaluation framework.

The Work Programme design process involved participation of all relevant social policy actors in the Board. There was also a wider consultation that took place during the period leading into the finalisation of the Work Programme which involved stakeholder organisations outside the Governing Board, for example organisations such as the European Association of Craft, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (UEAPME). Further iterations of consultations of the Work Programme took place with other European agencies (CEDEFOP, EU OSHA, ETF) with whom Eurofound had put in place cooperation agreements prior to 2009 in order to exchange information on strategic direction in research activities. A full list of stakeholder organisations consulted during the programme development process is included in the 2008 ex-ante evaluation report. The number of consultations concluded in a long list of priorities that had to be reduced through a process of prioritising and ultimately approval by the Governing Board. As a result of these negotiations and different views and priorities of the three groups represented on the Governing Board, the four year Work Programme had relatively loosely set priorities and themes to be covered were broad and acceptable by all of the groups as a balanced compromise.

The four year Work Programme was complemented by annual Work Programme documents that provide more specific detail on the planned activities and budget for the upcoming year. These go through a similar process of wider consultation and approval by the Governing Board. Consultations with Eurofound staff highlighted that involvement of Eurofound research staff in Work Programme design was channelled through heads of research units<sup>16</sup>. Workshops with members of the Governing Board indicated that the role of the Governing Board in this process was strengthened throughout the period, especially in 2011 onwards, and resulted in a greater ownership of the programme by the Governing Board members. This had a direct effect on the perception of relevance of the programme by the key stakeholders represented on the Governing Board – a feature explored in greater detail in section 3 of this report. The actual process of selection and approval of proposed projects for the upcoming year tended to be a relatively lengthy exercise. There are three categories of proposed projects. The first one represents proposals of low level of controversy or not warranting significantly different points of views from the various Governing Board groups. An example of proposal was the project on young people not in employment

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/htmlfiles/ef0906.htm>

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/htmlfiles/ef0909.htm>

<sup>16</sup> In the earlier years of the four year Work Programmes there was direct involvement of all research staff in drawing ideas for new projects, through internal events. These events involved organisation-wide brainstorming sessions and prizes for most innovative research ideas, 13-054738-01 | Version 1 | Internal / Client Use Only | This work was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the international quality standard for Market Research, ISO 20252:2012, and with the Ipsos MORI Terms and Conditions which can be found at <http://www.ipsos-mori.com/terms>. © Ipsos MORI 2014.

education or training (NEETs) (see case study in annex G) which was approved quickly and with not much variation to the proposed original specification apart from adding one objective to be more policy-focused. The second group of proposals are those that represented conflicting views between or within the Governing Board groups, such as for example the 'Income after retirement' project (see case study in annex G). In the project selection of these projects, there were much more extensive discussion and deliberation prior to the approval and exact wording of the scope was discussed extensively. These discussions tended to produce projects which were perhaps less ambitious but resulted in research which was widely accepted and could be referred to by policymakers at the European and national levels as the true state of play in the subject area. The third category were proposals of work related to the large surveys which are due to their size and associated costs always thoroughly discussed prior to the approval of scope and objectives but also during their dedicated advisory committee meetings. There seems to be a pattern that the more established surveys, (such as the European Working Conditions Survey, EWCS) run by the Agency, have a well-defined scope and the balance between data collection for production for exploration of trends and new topical questions is struck more easily. On the other hand, the newer surveys, such as the second wave of the European Company Survey (ECS), attempted to cover a broad range of topics which resulted in methodological challenges and could be one of the factors contributing towards its relatively low impact. The Work Programme cycle and iterations of more specific planning on an annual basis are perceived by Governing Board members and wider stakeholders alike, as a feature that reinforces strategic direction while allowing for a welcome degree of flexibility to adhere to emerging topics.

*“The flexibility in the four-year work programme allowed the foundation to respond to changes unforeseen at the beginning of the work programme.”*

*Member of the Employer Governing Board Group*

Some stakeholders have indicated that annual revision of new activities is still relatively inflexible as it can take up to one and a half years from when the need is identified to the project being started. The development of the four year Work Programme on the other hand is a long process that in this case started 2 years before its approval and the draft version was prepared already in mid-2008 – at the time when the economic crisis in Europe was becoming apparent but its real extent could not be predicted.

The following sections will detail the Work Programme logic for the four year period in scope of this evaluation, interactions between the individual inputs, activities, leading to outputs, outcomes leading to policy impacts relating to the strategic objectives set out for the four years.



## 2.2 Programme Logic

### 2.2.1 Overview of logic model

Eurofound specified two strategic objectives for the four year period whereas the annual Work Programmes in 2010-12 outlined specific objectives feeding into the strategic objectives. The two levels of the Agency's objectives are presented in Figure 3 below.

**Figure 3: Eurofound 2009-2012 Programme objectives**

		2009	2010	2011	2012
<b>Objectives</b>	Two specific strategic objectives	Be a reliable source of high quality data, information and analysis, identify emerging issues for research and debate			
		Strengthen the tripartite character and stakeholder relationships of Eurofound's activities			
	Objectives feeding into overarching strategic objectives above	n/s	Improve research and output quality	multi-disciplinary teams working with strengthened collaboration	Completion of work in the three areas of research focus*
		n/s	Identify, develop and understand consumer target groups	Communication activities at Member State level	Focus of new research projects on a limited number of priority topics
		n/s	Expand impact and influence on real decision makers	Maximum usage of increased human resources in research	Effective use of human capital
		n/s	Increase visibility and improve the image of Eurofound	Excellence in operations	Excellence in operations
		n/s	Identify and expand Eurofound's competitive advantage	n/s	Increased, targeted dissemination of results at the end of the four-year programme cycle

n/s – not specified

\* (1) employment growth and demand and supply of labour in changing labour markets; (2) more and better jobs and higher productivity through partnership; and (3) promotion of social inclusion and sustainable social protection

Source: 2009-2012 multiannual Work Programme and annual Work Programmes 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012

Though we acknowledge the complexities and the developments of the more specific objectives feeding into overarching strategic objectives over the course of the four year period in scope of the evaluation, the main logic of the programme relates to the two strategic objectives. The two strategic objectives were to be a reliable source of high quality data, information and analysis; and to strengthen the tripartite character of the stakeholder relationship.

The more specific objectives were slightly less coherent over the years and in 2009, they were in fact absent. Over the subsequent 3 years these objectives fell mainly into two broad categories: Effectiveness (achieving desired outcomes by higher quality and better collaboration) and Efficiency (achieving outputs with the resources). The evidence suggested that none of this had a detrimental effect on the Agency.

Effectiveness (achieving desired outcomes by higher quality and better collaboration):

- Effective use of human capital
- Completion of work in the three areas of research focus
- Identify, develop and understand target groups
- Communication activities at Member State level
- Focus of new research projects on a limited number of priority topics
- Improve research and output quality
- Multi-disciplinary teams working with strengthened collaboration
- Expand impact and influence on real decision makers
- Increase visibility and improve the image of Eurofound
- Identify and expand Eurofound's competitive advantage
- Increased, targeted dissemination of results at the end of the four-year programme cycle

Efficiency (achieving outputs with the resources)

- Maximum usage of increased human resources in research
- Excellence in operations

These specific objectives are implicitly covered within the linkages of the logic model and some even had specific activities attached to them which had an effect on specific evaluation questions and hence are explored elsewhere in this report. An example of this is the 'excellence in operations' and 'effective use of human capital' that are both covered under the chapter relating to 'operational framework'. There were many specific activities that were documented and reviewed within this evaluation such as the communication strategy and the document outlining relevance to national stakeholders.

The logic model overleaf is a result of a wide document review building on the work undertaken within the ex-ante and mid-term evaluations of the 2009-2012 Work Programme. It integrates all comments and observations highlighted by the Governing Board members, familiarisation consultations with Eurofound staff, the discussion with the evaluation steering committee and a number of iterations with the Eurofound evaluation function. In several points of re-constructing the logic model, there had to be choices made on the way that individual components are presented. The final version of the logic model presents the form that deemed most fit for purpose of the evaluation and highlights the interdependencies between the various stages of the activities leading to realisation of impact. Each element of the logic model chain is discussed below:

- **Inputs:** The model overleaf highlights the logical interpretation of the relationships between the various actors providing inputs either in form of human or financial resources. Notably there are three groups of providers of such input: (1) internal Eurofound Staff, (2) members of the Governing Board who dedicate their time to agenda setting and governance activities and (3) organisations outside the governance structures of the Agency such as networks of correspondents, organisations involved in the consultations of the Work Programmes, or otherwise participating or contributing to Eurofound's activities.
- **Activities:** Each of these groups of actors plays a lesser or a greater role in the planning and execution of the Agency's activities that have been distinguished based on the main research units and their size. We have

considered a categorisation based on the research and debate pillars<sup>17</sup> but for consistency with the remainder of the study, the evaluation team used this split.

- There was a reorganisation of the Eurofound research units during 2011 and in order to be consistent we have decided to undertake the analysis within the evaluation where possible based on the current structure in which there are three thematic research units: Employment and Change (EMPC), Working Conditions and Industrial Relations (WCIR), Living Conditions and Quality of Life (LCQL). The Monitoring and Survey Unit (MSU), which ceased to exist on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2010, was replaced by the Surveys & Trends Unit (STU) and the Observatories Unit (OBSU), both of which ceased to exist at the end of 2011. The responsibilities of these units were to some degree (contract management) taken over by the Operation Support Unit (OSU). In the following chapters we refer to the three research units and category other which consists of activities related to the Network of European Observatories and the Information Centre which sat under the MSU. These changes resulted in challenges in assessing how effectively resources were allocated in reality at different times.

The activities within the Work Programme were organised under three research themes: Employment growth and demand and supply of labour in changing labour markets; More and better jobs and higher productivity through partnership; and Promotion of social inclusion and sustainable social protection.

The core research activities link to the objective of provision of reliable information which was in numerous instances enriched by input from and/or collaboration with other research organisations and to a lesser degree a formal collaboration with other EU decentralised agencies. During the 2009-2012 period there were three main modes of research delivery: (1) Network of European Observatories (NEO) producing comparative analytical reports, representativeness studies, annual review of developments, annual updates, fact sheets, dictionary updates, monthly bulletins, ERM quarterly and annual reports, (2) Surveys (ECWS, ECS, EQLS) and geographical interface for survey data and (3) Research studies.

All types of research activities were complemented by a range of communication and liaison activities detailed in a great extent in a number of internal documents. Eurofound over the period developed a comprehensive communication strategy differentiating between different target audiences for specific outputs. The Brussels Liaison Office strengthened its internal capacity to cope with its growing responsibilities of both spotting 'hot' topics ("Hotspots") and tracking EU impacts in form of recording occurrences in which an EU policy document quoted Eurofound's research. The databases of the same names also recorded events, meetings or direct contact between Eurofound staff and policymakers, predominantly on EU level which is the Agency's priority.

Specific communication activities listed in the annual Work Programmes were undertaken by the internal Information and Communication Unit. These include publishing and distribution of reports, web-based publishing and distribution, organisation and promotion of research-related events, media communication (expanding network of European media contacts) and other visualisation and presentation activities. Separate stakeholder outreach (promotional campaigns, personal contacts, national outreach centres, and targeted communication campaigns) is organised by staff at Information and Communication Unit in collaboration with the Brussels Liaison Office.

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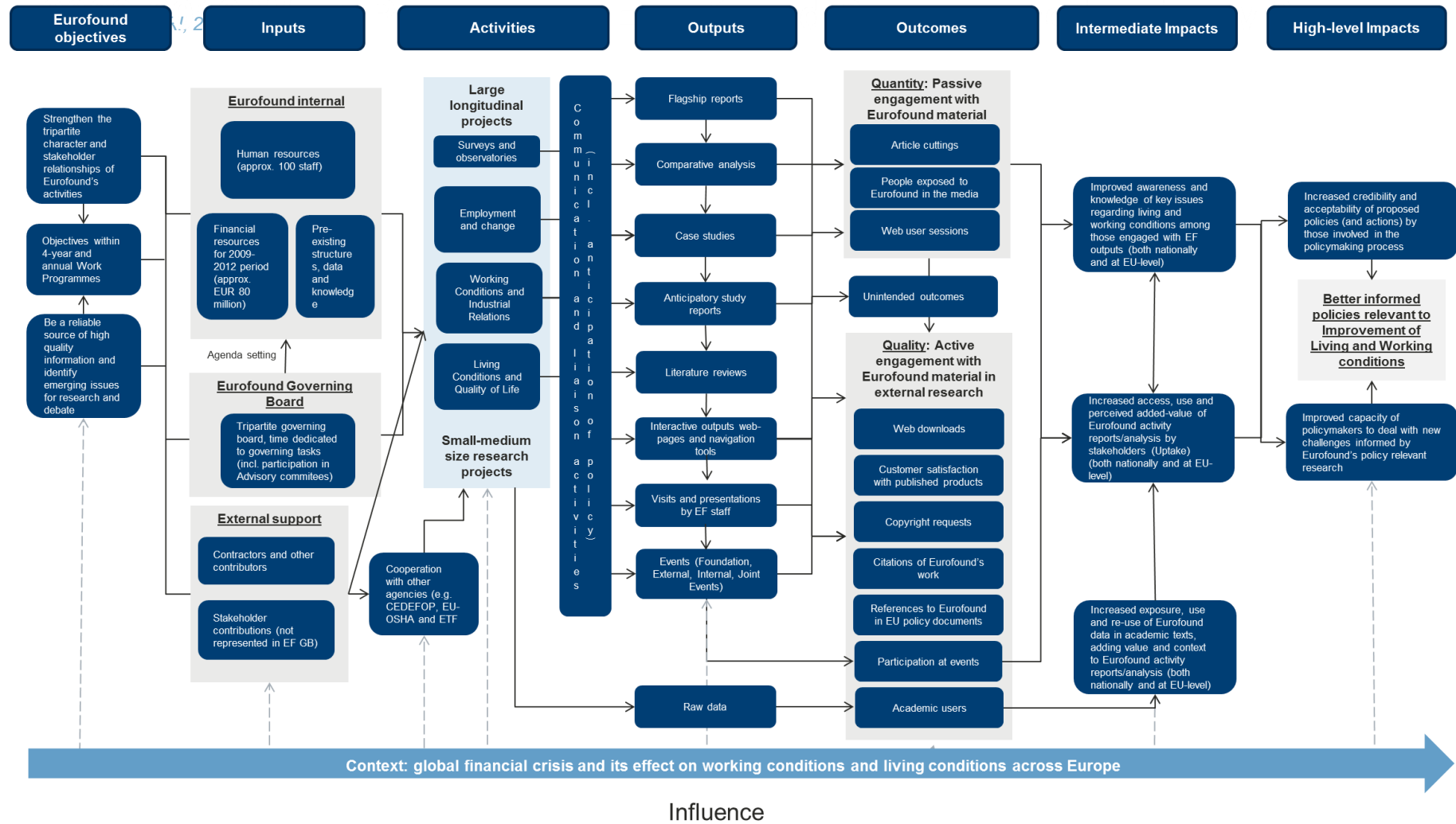
<sup>17</sup> Research (large surveys and related analytical studies) and debate (foundation seminar series) pillars with the stakeholder enquiry service resembling characteristics of both pillars. The foundation seminar series activities are seen as directly addressing the objective to strengthen the tripartite nature of the Agency.

- **Results:** Direct results of these activities are outputs with which their users can interact passively or actively. An example of passive engagement with Eurofound produced material is receipt of Eurofound's report whereas an example of an active engagement is a discussion with a Eurofound researcher. The logic model illustrates that one type of output can result in either active or passive engagement and that there is a hierarchy of interaction with research outputs experienced by users. For example a download of a paper by a policymaker does not mean that they have read the publication and that the policy that they work on will be somehow informed by the comparative study prepared by Eurofound researchers. The more active the engagement, the more likely is the transfer of knowledge and perceived added value of Eurofound's research. The majority of outcomes of this nature are however much more difficult to monitor than report downloads, attendees at events and quotation in policy documents. One specific channel of informing policy is via an academic institution which uses raw data and/or other Eurofound outputs to produce new knowledge. We have come across such instances mainly on national levels where in one example a team at a Polish university prepared a national study for the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy in preparation of a new national programme of support of workers in retirement age<sup>18</sup>. All of the outputs that are used, actively or passively to some degree raise awareness of the reached target audiences and some of these translate into better informed policies relating to improvement of living and working conditions of European citizens. All KPIs monitored within Eurofound's EPMS and the specific EU Impact Tracking database have been re-analysed and will be reported on in the following sections.

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<sup>18</sup> Eurofound attempts to record such instances in a national impact tracking database which is however administered in a less organised manner than the EU impact tracking database

Figure 4: Eurofound multiannual Work Programme logic model

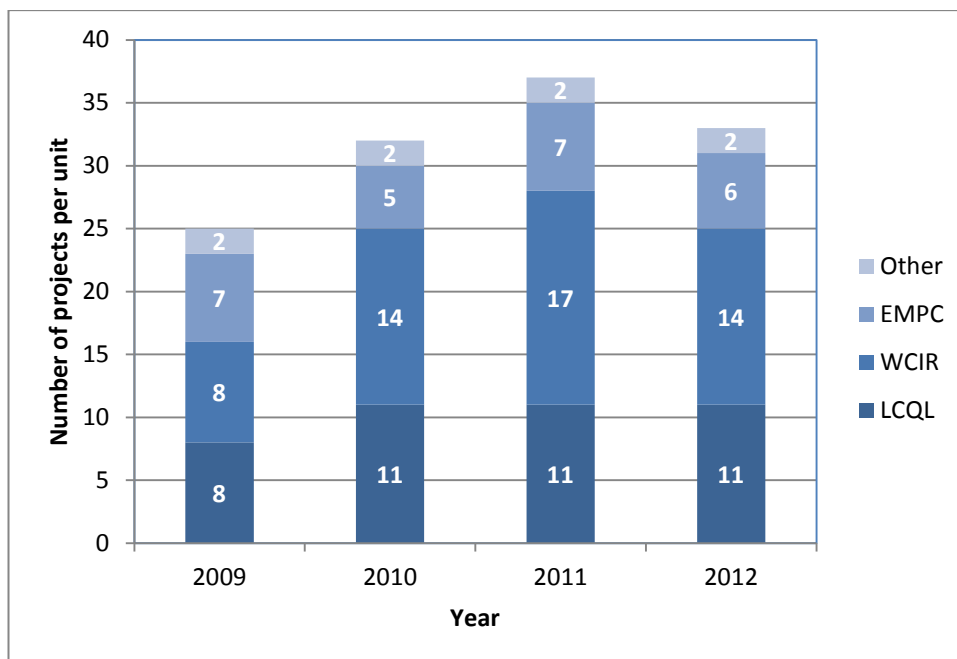


### 2.2.2 Composition of projects – Eurofound activities 2009-2012

Information relating to the number and budget of projects undertaken each year during the 2009-2012 Work Programme period was supplied to the evaluation team by the Eurofound's Budget Officer. These documents, showing the actual budget spent compared to the budget forecast, include a breakdown of the budget spent per project. The projects were organised under the three main research units, LCQL, WCIR, EMPC, as well as "other", which contains the NEO and the Information Centre and I&C<sup>19</sup>. This section investigates the number of projects conducted per unit as well as the actual budget spent per unit over the 2009-2012 Work Programme.

The budget information indicated that the overall number of projects conducted over the period of the 2009-2012 Work Programme varied between 28 and 40 projects per year<sup>20</sup>. The driver behind the higher volume of projects was mainly due to the increase of the number of projects delivered in the WCIR unit, while the number of projects in the other units remained at a similar level during the course of the Work Programme. This development can be explained by the organisational changes that took place in 2011 and WCIR taking on projects that previously sat in a different area.

**Figure 5: Number of projects conducted per unit and year<sup>21</sup>**



Source: Budget information 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, Eurofound

The research budget, excluding spend on I&C, remained around €5m per year over the Work Programme period with the exception of a dip in 2010 due to the 5th EWCS being over €700k cheaper than budgeted for (with a similar amount over budget spent on the 5th EWCS in 2009). It is possible that there is a slight downward trend in the amount spent in these areas, but the analysis would have to be extended to consider previous programming periods in order to draw any real conclusions and the information for the previous period was not organised in the same format. The EMPC unit spend in 2012 was very low, due to an increase in spending in the WCIR unit,

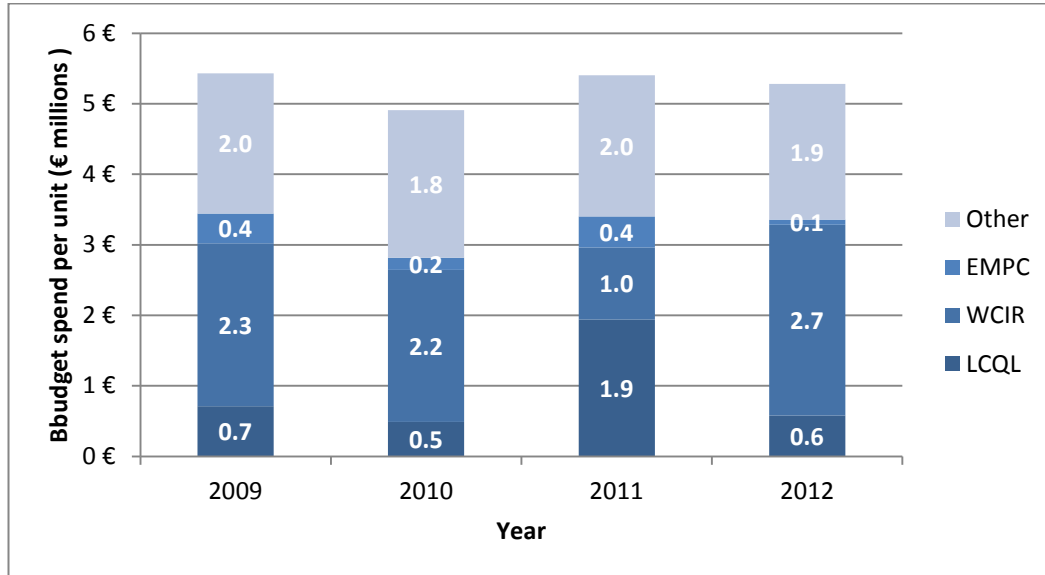
<sup>19</sup> The I&C data is presented as part of the budget spend but not when referring to individual projects as these are not directly related to the research outputs of Eurofound.

<sup>20</sup> This calculation includes only entries which has a project number attached to it, including Advisory committees and workshops, but excludes "Others" such as meetings and MOUs.

<sup>21</sup> I&C has been excluded from this table as the data in the budget information documents doesn't allow to easily relate these activities to individual projects.

especially on the 3rd ECS<sup>22</sup>. This related mainly to the stage of project delivery as a number of the projects in 2012 were activities relating to finalising the projects from 2011.

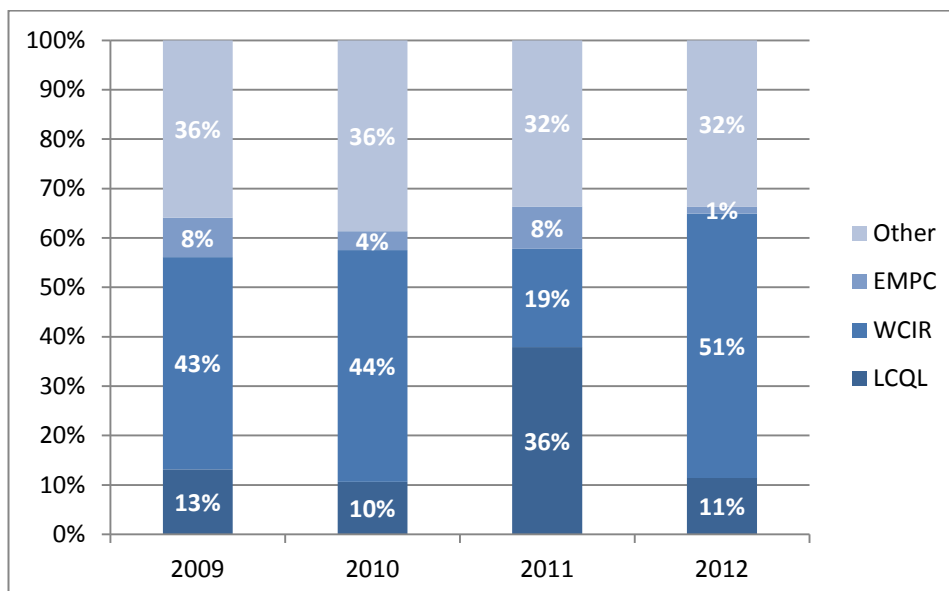
**Figure 6: Actual budget spend per unit and year**



Source: Budget information 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, Eurofound

Looking at the percentage of total budget spent per unit over the course of the Work Programme reveals highlights that the 'Other' activities remain fairly constant over the individual years of the Work Programme. The biggest variance is seen in the WCIR and LCQL units, mainly due to the fact that the 3<sup>rd</sup> EQLS was conducted in 2011, sitting in the LCQL unit, shifting budget from the WCIR unit<sup>23</sup>.

**Figure 7: Percentage actual spend per unit and year**



Source: Budget information 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, Eurofound

<sup>22</sup> This calculation includes any budget spent in these units, including "Others" without a project number attached to it, such as spending on meetings, MOUs and workshops.

<sup>23</sup> Ditto

The average spend per project within the units, apart from "Other" due to the impact of the NEO, and I&C which has a relatively fixed budget, varied greatly. The main reason for this was the large surveys and their respective analysis conducted in different units in different years: The following are the largest survey projects with their budgets:

- 2009 – 5th EWCS in WCIR, €1.5m
- 2010 – 5th EWCS in WCIR, €1.4m
- 2011 – 3rd EQLS in LCQL, €1.5m
- 2012 – 3rd ECS in WCIR, €2.2m

The large surveys increased the average spend per project for each of the units which deliver them. "Other" has been excluded in the table below as the result would be too skewed. The "Other" category only contains two projects; the Information Centre, which is relatively small, one the NEO, which is one of the biggest projects Eurofound does annually. I&C has also been excluded from this table as the data in the budget information documents doesn't allow to easily relate these activities to individual projects.

**Figure 8: Average spend per project and year**

	2009	2010	2011	2012
<b>LCQL</b>	€82,031	€44,187	€176,525	€52,545
<b>WCIR</b>	€276,912	€152,819	€60,058	€180,472
<b>EMPC</b>	€54,082	€34,724	€62,621	€11,651
<b>Average</b>	<b>€137,675</b>	<b>€77,243</b>	<b>€99,735</b>	<b>€81,556</b>

Source: Budget information 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, Eurofound



The table below presents the two largest studies per year for 2009-2012 period. During some of the years the budgets of the two largest projects equated to as much as 81% of the total research budget.

Figure 9: Percentage of budget of the two largest studies per year

Year	2 biggest projects per year	Title	Total cost (€m)	Of the overall Agency yearly budget (€m)	Of the overall Agency research budget of that year (€m)
2009	Other	Network of European Observatories (NEO)	1.9	9%	20.1
	WCIR	5th European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS)	1.5	7%	
2010	Other	Network of European Observatories (NEO)	2.0	10%	20.6
	WCIR	5th European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS)	1.4	7%	
2011	LCQL	3rd European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS)	2.5	12%	20.6
	Other	Network of European Observatories (NEO)	1.9	9%	
2012	WCIR	3rd European Company Survey (ECS)	2.2	11%	20.5
	Other	Network of European Observatories (NEO)	1.8	9%	

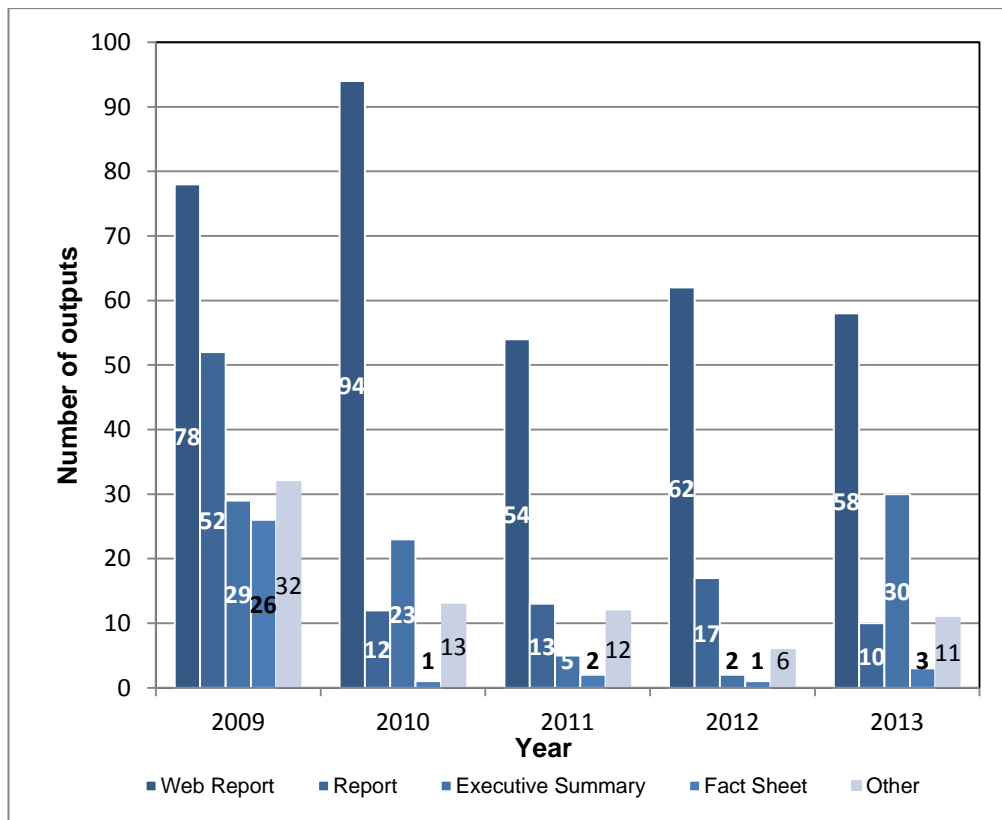
Source: Budget information 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, Eurofound

### 2.2.3 Outputs – Eurofound publications and events

#### Publications

Annual activity reports published by Eurofound contained annexes of publications and organised events for each year. The most populous type of publication throughout the period was web reports representing between 36% and 70% of the annual total and averaging at 54% for the whole period. The activity reports indicate that there is only very limited number of Journal articles published by Eurofound which is expected as there are very little incentives for a non-academic institution to publish in this type of medium and publishing academic journals was not the Agency's objective. There was a steady decline in the number of publications throughout the 2009-2011 period which is in line with the push for less but more substantial and impactful outputs. By 2012 the number of reports being published stabilised which indicates that the 90-110 publications a year is a much more optimum number with the relatively steady budget that the Agency received throughout the programming period. This is further confirmed with the results presented for the year 2013, where the number of the publications produced was relatively consistent with the previous two years. The web reports, in particular, remained around the 55 mark- similar to 2012 and 2011.

Figure 10: Total number of outputs produced by type, 2009-2013

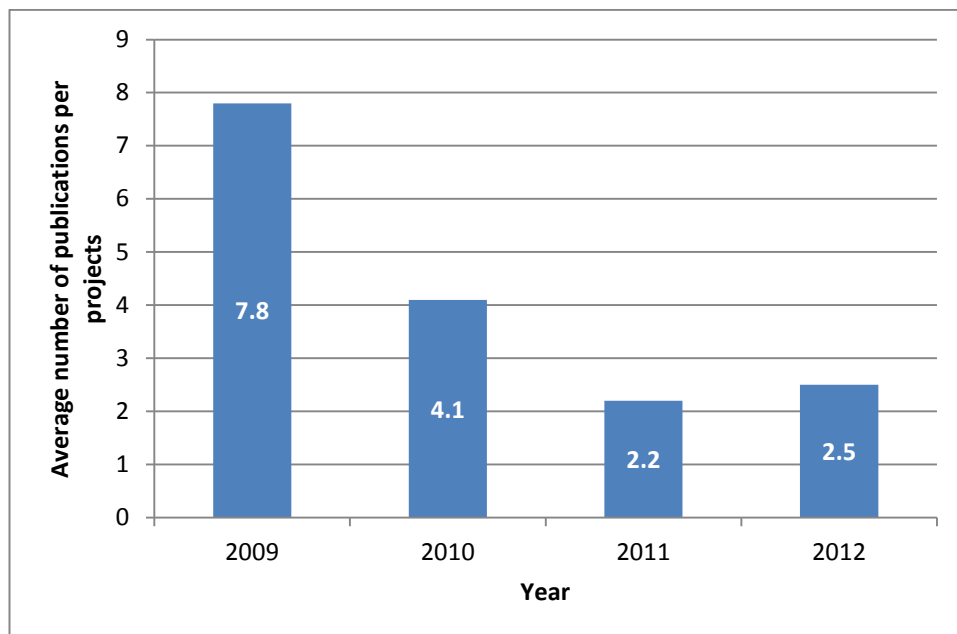


Source: The Annual Activity report of Authorising Officer for the years 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, Eurofound

Figure 11 overleaf indicates that the Agency was successful in reducing the number of publications per project per year during the period of the Work Programme. This strategy was put in place to improve quality and user satisfaction of the users. The user satisfaction survey exercises sponsored by the I&C unit were only executed in years 2011, 2012 and 2013 and therefore it was not possible to confirm the immediate effect of the main reduction in 2010. Staff interviews indicated that at the beginning of the 2009 period there was a perception that the number of publications had been higher than optimal and that this had an effect on quality.

From the existing user satisfaction exercises it can be nevertheless concluded that the satisfaction with publications was at a high level in 2011, in particular, 80% of respondents reported that they were very satisfied or satisfied with Eurofound News. More than 70% of respondents reported satisfaction with the Information Sheets (72.8%), the Executive Summaries of research (72.7%), Research reports (71.5%) and Foundation Findings (70.8%). However, large groups of respondents expressed neutral opinions regarding the EurLife database, the Resource packs, the 2009 Yearbook and the Case Studies<sup>24</sup>. With the exception of the Case Studies, these publications were also the least frequently used. In 2012, there was a tendency for respondents to be more satisfied – this was particularly the case for the Overview report on the EQLS the ECS overview report and the Survey Mapping Tool. In all of these cases satisfaction rates were in excess of 70% in 2012. This trend continued in 2013 when 88% of respondents were satisfied with Eurofound publications. Therefore the data indicates that there were observed high satisfaction levels in the period after the reductions in publications were conducted. It is impossible to attribute causality of reduction in number of publications to this positive development as there is no available data on user satisfaction prior to 2011.

<sup>24</sup> Although it should be noted here that the Resource Packs and the Yearbook were in their first years of publication and as such might be less well-known to Eurofound users than the other publications.

**Figure 11: Average number of publications per project and year**

Source: *The Annual Activity report of Authorising Officer for the years 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, Eurofound*

## Events

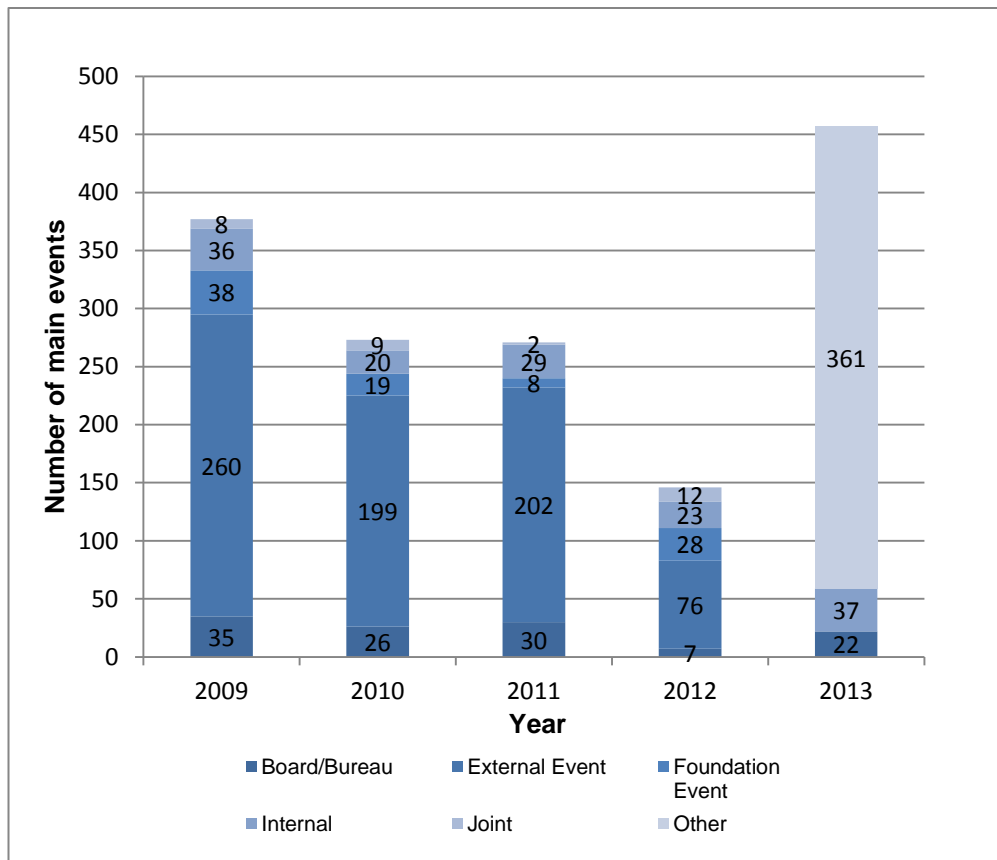
Analysis of the events organised by the Agency during the period indicate that external events were the most common type of event accounting for more than two thirds of all events organised in this time period<sup>25</sup>. The activity reports also contained information on non-research events such as the two Governing Board meetings per year.

The number of events organised by Eurofound, similarly to the publications, followed a decreasing trend during the 2009-2012 period. Significant decreases were recorded in 2010 and 2012 while the number of events remained relatively stable in 2011<sup>26</sup>. Extending the analysis by 2013 shows that there has been a significant increase in the combination of External, Joint and Foundation events. As the events were not presented by type, we are unable to see which of these events has driven this increase.

<sup>25</sup> we were unable to make this assessment for 2013 as the information was presented for the combination of external events, foundation own event, joint event

<sup>26</sup> It should be noted that the methodology for measuring events changed during this period, which may account for some of this decrease.

Figure 12: Number of main events conducted by type, during the period 2009-2013



Source: The Annual Activity report of Authorising Officer for the years 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013 Eurofound  
 \*Other for the year 2013 includes: external events, foundation own event, joint event

### 2.3 Summary

The 2009-2012 Work Programme period was the first time the Agency's programming cycle began with preparation which started more than one and a half year prior to its approval by the Governing Board. It encompassed a wide consultation that was inclusive internally and externally and resulted in high level strategic priorities to guide the Agency during the period. Specific objectives were set in individual years and related especially to improvements in effectiveness and quality of achieving impact and efficiency in its working. These objectives were not included in the first year of the multiannual Work Programme and slightly lower coherence but this did not appear to have a detrimental effect on working on the Agency. Annual Work Programme development followed a similar but less extensive process.

The Agency's activities had a clear logic and worked towards achieving positive outcomes. There were organisational changes in 2011 which made the analysis of the activities and budgets a less straightforward exercise and the organisational review has highlighted some of the shortcomings in the way that the changes were communicated to staff. On the other hand there were major improvements that took place during the time period beneficial to the way the research results are communicated and the way that the Agency sets itself up for contributing towards identified policy developments. The Agency during the period successfully achieved its strategies to reduce the number of publications per project and increased the in-house research capabilities while achieving high user satisfaction in the last two years of the four year Work Programme.

### 3 Eurofound's mission

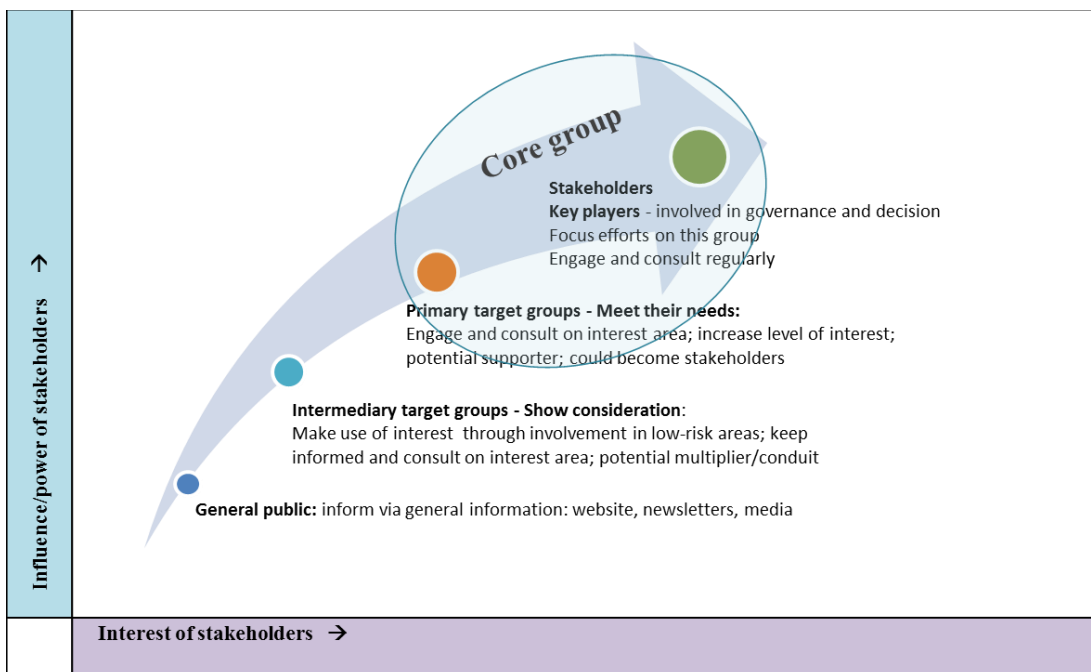
The first two questions under Eurofound's mission relate directly to the relevance of the Agency towards its stakeholders. The first question that the evaluation explores is the extent to which Eurofound's activities are in line with the needs of socio-economic policy-makers and stakeholders? The second question relates much more to addressing the rationale for existence of a specific decentralised European Agency whose role is to provide knowledge in the area of social and work-related policies. The report goes on to address the unique added value and the questions relating to the Agency's effectiveness in achieving its main objective of contributing towards relevant socio-economic policy developments.

#### 3.1 To what extent are Eurofound's 'intervention logic', activities and choices grounded in its mandate, and in line with the needs of socio-economic policy-makers and stakeholders?

There are a number of structures and processes built into the functioning of the Agency that warrant high level of alignment of Eurofound's activities to the needs of socio-economic policy-makers and stakeholders. Prior to their closer exploration it is important to define the groups of stakeholders that Eurofound recognises as key stakeholders.

Eurofound staff have a comprehensive understanding of the various groups of Agency's stakeholders, distinguishing between four stakeholder categories that move along the influence/power continuum from those with the least direct influence on policy developments to those heavily involved in drafting new policies on EU and national levels. They range from general public/information users, through to intermediary target groups and primary target groups to key stakeholders. The core group of interest to Eurofound are the latter two stakeholder groups. The relationship between these target groups and their core targeting by the Agency is presented in the figure below.

**Figure 13: Eurofound stakeholder mapping**



Source: Stakeholder mapping prepared by Eurofound, 2014

The core group specified above includes the types of stakeholders listed in the table below.

**Figure 14: Details of core stakeholder groups, 2009 -2012**

Stakeholders <sup>27</sup>	Primary target groups <sup>28</sup>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Governing Board (Employers, Governments and representatives of the EC)</li> <li>Bureau</li> <li>Advisory Committees (Employers, Governments and representatives of the EC)</li> <li>Bureau</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>European Commission (DGs other than DG EMPL)</li> <li>European Parliament (other than committees 'accredited stakeholders')</li> <li>Council (EMCO, SPC, EPSCO)</li> <li>EESC</li> <li>CoR</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Workers,</li> <li>Workers,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EU social partners</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EC DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National governments</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EP Employment and Social Affairs Committee</li> <li>EP Budget and Budget Control Committees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National social partners</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Council Budget Committee</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sister EU Agencies</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EU and national social partners</li> </ul>	

Source: Stakeholder mapping prepared by Eurofound, 2014

Section 2.1 already described the process of Work Programme design, agenda and priority setting which actively involved stakeholders. Furthermore, the advisory committee membership has tripartite character. These committees oversee and provide a strategic steer to individual projects by which they ensure direct relevance to these groups. The primary target groups are engaged in wider consultations of the new topic areas for future programmes, either directly or via an intermediary which 'sits' on the Governing Board. These built in structures and processes were often referred to by stakeholders and primary target groups as key to ensuring high relevance to their respective needs.

*"Eurofound's activities in the period were aligned with our needs despite not being represented at the Governing Board directly... This relates especially to Agency's work around restructuring and EIRO".*

*Employer organisation representative*

At the evaluation workshops in June 2014, all three groups of Eurofound's Governing Board, who are the key stakeholders for the Agency, expressed their high level of satisfaction with the alignment of Eurofound's mandate and activities to their needs.

*"The tripartite nature of the Governing Board and the process of developing and approving the four year and annual work programmes ensure a good alignment to the needs of socio-economic policy-makers and stakeholders."*

*Member of the Employers Board Group*

In addition to the employers, workers, and national governments, the European Commission's<sup>29</sup> involvement is seen by this group to further improve the relevance of the Work Programme. There was a general consent that

<sup>27</sup> Term accredited stakeholders was used in the Stakeholder mapping prepared by Eurofound. This group of stakeholders were defined as those with most influence AND with most interest in the Agency

<sup>28</sup> Relevant decision-makers at EU and (where appropriate) national level

<sup>29</sup> A number of relevant DG's participate in Governing Board and Advisory Committee meetings (e.g. DG Employment and Social Affairs, DG Research and Innovation)

some projects are more aligned with needs of one of the groups than others and therefore by nature none of the groups can be fully satisfied but it is acknowledged that this is an acceptable consequence of a tripartite system. It was regarded that all projects were, however, undertaken professionally and to the highest quality. Some more specific remarks in relation to the extent to which Eurofound's activities are in line with stakeholder needs from the workshop included:

- **Employers** highlighted that for targeting specific stakeholders the publications need to be user-friendly and in language and form understood by the target audience. Often this means simplification of messages that the research conveys.
- **Government** representatives indicated a high level of alignment with needs signified by the fact that a number of Governing Board members use Eurofound research in advising the ministers at national levels.
- **Workers** highlighted that the factual research produced by Eurofound perhaps aligns better to their needs than evaluative projects – since providing a judgement potentially politicises the issue.
- **Governing Board members** during the workshop highlighted specific topics in which there was exceptionally high alignment with their needs especially due to good timing with policy developments at national level. They also identified certain gaps in their expectations and what the Agency had delivered during the 2009-2012 period, mainly in relation to recognition of national differences in interpretation of different concepts. They considered that these nuances were not always well documented by Eurofound's researchers.

The evaluation explored the alignment of Eurofound's activities and the needs of wider stakeholder groups through interviews and an evaluation component of the user survey. The survey results suggest that current users of Eurofound outputs to a large extent used the outputs also in 2009-2012 period (86% of respondents) and of those who did not use these outputs during that period, more than a half would have found it relevant to their work. This indicates that Eurofound's work is to a large extent aligned to needs of primary target groups and 'stakeholders' (core users group) and even newly acquired users would have found the Agency's work of high relevance. Exploring differences between those directly involved in policymaking process and more distant users indicated a slightly higher share of the former group were likely to find the publications and activities relevant, however the differences between groups were not statistically significant<sup>30</sup>.

All interviews with stakeholders and primary target users alike indicated a high alignment of needs and Eurofound's activities. In quite a few cases the interviewees also indicated which types of activities made the Agency's work most relevant and some were able to give an indication on the evolution of the perceived relevance over the period. Generally the most highlighted activities were those related to large surveys and comparative reports (especially worker organisations).

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<sup>30</sup> The test applied was the Chi-square test for association, which usefully tests for any group level differences by comparing expected and actual frequency counts for each possible answer. The Chi-square test is a widely accepted statistical method for assessing two groups that yield two independent samples of nominal data. The statistical test for significance of differences between groups was run at a confidence level of 95% and are only referred to in instances where the response rate to the question was high enough to allow us to present meaningful results.

### Quotes from interviews

*“Eurofound’s work is closely aligned to our needs, especially in the area of Industrial Relations and it undertakes more ambitious projects than research institutes which tends to have more focused research agenda”.*

*Workers organisation representative*

*“European Working Conditions Survey data and undeclared work related research is well aligned to our needs”.*

*Employer organisation representative*

*“Eurofound’s work was of high relevance and right ambitions, especially in Industrial Relations (EMCC)”.*

*Member State representative*

*“Eurofound’s activities are well aligned to our needs thanks to representation on the Governing Board and directorate level meetings”.*

*EC representative*

A number of European Commission representatives indicated that there has been an improvement in relevance of the Agency’s work during the period which is in line with the other evidence of strengthening the links and a number of visits by the director to the European Commission. Other stakeholders highlighted a few points for improvements such as greater need for contextualisation and need for promotion of work towards the European Parliament and its committees.

In a very small number of cases interviewees expressed that Eurofound’s activities did not align in full with their needs. Similarly the Governing Board members’ identified that the main reason behind any marginal misalignment was the requirement for consensus between the tripartite groups and the cost and quality implications of exploring too many specific research questions.

The set of activities that Eurofound plans for the coming year is a form of a compromise. Some organisations deal with such specific needs by undertaking or commissioning such research on their own or via an intermediary (research) organisation. Generally, however, all evidence pointed towards a high extent of alignment with needs and a satisfaction among those consulted during the Work Programme development that a very inclusive and consultative process has been in place throughout the 2009-2012 period. Relevant stakeholders from the European Commission stated that there has been an improvement in the relevance of outputs for the organisation. Some other organisations in the key stakeholder group, for example the European Parliament, could have been considered more closely especially in the early years of the 2009-2012 period.

### 3.2 Why does Eurofound do what Eurofound does?

The second evaluation question focused on exploring the rationale for Eurofound’s activities. The original mandate of the Agency dates back to 1975 when the Agency was established by Council Regulation (EEC) No. 1365/75: *“To contribute to the planning and establishment of better living and working conditions through action designed to increase and disseminate knowledge likely to assist this development”*. The ex-ante evaluation of 2008 confirmed the continued relevance of this mandate by conducting a problem analysis but recognised that the



Agency has over the 30 years built up a substantial body of scientific and independent knowledge and data in the field of living and working conditions in Europe. The most recent ex-ante evaluation undertaken in 2012 went further and stated that the articulation in the ‘mission and vision’ part of the new 2013-2016 multiannual 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. From this assessment it can be concluded that throughout the period 2009-2012 Eurofound did what it did because it had proven to be a unique information provider in its field of operation, and the only research body:

- Covering all EU Member States and beyond;
- Collecting relevant, consistent, comparative quantitative and qualitative data in the fields of observation of working conditions, quality of life, and industrial relations;
- Collecting qualitative data through its established observatories; and
- Providing an unbiased, tripartite perspective on relevant developments.

This was in line with the perception of most consulted within the evaluation exercise as many of these attributes were re-stated by them with the reference to the original mandate adding the need to recognise changing context and definitions of policies relating to living and working conditions.

*“Eurofound possesses expertise and runs a network of correspondents on Industrial Relations which in combination with its tripartite nature result in production of balanced, unbiased and evidence-based data.”*

*EC representative*

These policies, as well as the standards of both working and living in Europe, have changed significantly over the years and therefore provision of such information had to adapt accordingly. Consulted stakeholders see the main rationale of having a tripartite Agency providing information on living and working conditions mainly as a source of relevant unbiased information that is useful for policymakers on European and national levels, especially because of its comparative nature. The Agency does what it does because there is no other organisation in position to provide this information.

One such specific output are In relation to comparative studies, the national ministries do not invest in commissioning them and the transaction costs of forming collaborations without the Agency structure would be likely more costly and produce less robust and recognised results. The other valuable feature rationalising Eurofound’s role is the knowledge and the ability to interpret data as opposed to just production of statistics (which is the role of the Eurostat). In comparison to Eurofound, the main mission of the OECD is much broader – to promote policies that will improve the economic and social well-being of people around the world – and as such the annual budget of OECD is € 357m (more than 17 times that of Eurofound) and the organisation employs 2,500 people (more than 25 times that of Eurofound). OECD’s mission goes beyond living and working conditions and as such it is not appropriate to compare the organisations as a whole with each other.

*“Eurofound’s research is critical in new member states in some of which national research is virtually non-existent.”*

*Member State representative*

A specific observation from a member state level interviews is that those civil servants representing member states with established national research base in topics relating to living and working conditions will see Eurofound’s role as providing complementary information contextualising the comparative picture. By contrast those in newer member states where such research may not exist, it is seen as the only source of such information.

### 3.3 What is the unique added value of Eurofound?

The question of “what is the unique added value of Eurofound” was posed to Eurofound staff, members of the Governing Board at the workshop and a voting session and in interviews with external stakeholders and users.

The interpretations of what is the single most valuable characteristic of the Agency varied across groups of respondents and even within them. Every consultee had a strong view that the Agency has a role in informing and contributing towards better evidence-based policymaking in areas relevant to living and working conditions. In fact 82% of the user survey respondents most distant from the Eurofound’s internal circle of people involved in its governance – the users who were not part of the Governing Board – specified that the Agency was to some/large extent valuable to them during the 2009-2012 period. The specific added value cited by consultees is detailed subsequently.

A majority of those consulted tend to see Eurofound as an organisation offering unique, objective (politically neutral) and high-quality information on EU-wide topics. Some interviewees felt very strongly about voicing their opinion about the effects that Eurofound’s inability to produce the outputs would have on their work.

*“Without Eurofound’s contribution the policy debates would not be based on sound evidence.”*

*Workers organisation representative*

*“Research would have to be done on national level and then the data would have to be collated.”*

*European Commission advisory committee representative*

This view is further substantiated in the text box below highlighting the rationale behind dedicating the representativeness studies to Eurofound.

#### Case study evidence: Representativeness Study on the Audiovisual Sector

The representativeness studies have been requested from Eurofound by the EC as the Agency has a tripartite structure, which directly involves the relevant actors and thus guarantees the quality and the acceptance of the studies at European and national level. Furthermore, Eurofound has a network of EIRO correspondents across Europe to draw upon to conduct these studies, contributing to increased efficiency. The EC requested Eurofound to conduct six representativeness studies, on sectoral level, a year.

The User Satisfaction survey showed that the majority of those aware of Eurofound value the European coverage (38% said this), highlighted by those most familiar with the organisation mentioning specifically activities such as such as EIRO and EMCC.

Three in ten (29%) respondents of the User Satisfaction survey stated that reliable trend data was the most valued aspect of Eurofound, and stakeholders consulted added that the robustness and flexibility of the organisation in relation to these surveys was the main added value of Eurofound. The three large surveys that Eurofound runs are seen as the core of Eurofound’s work. Fewer respondents highlighted the robust methodologies as the most important characteristic. This trend in order of importance was the same for both the users close to policy developments as well as other Eurofound output users (academics and other research roles).

While Eurostat and EU SILC (EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions) were mentioned as alternative sources of information, stakeholders added that Eurofound's ability to accommodate ad-hoc requests or additions to study design gave them a sense of ownership over the produced research, lacking in the outputs of the other organisations. The flexibility offered by Eurofound in terms of analysis and question development was felt by stakeholders to be a unique service which few other organisations operating in the area are able to offer. Yet another service frequently highlighted by stakeholders was Eurofound's proactive approach to come and speak at events.

*“Eurofound staff came to present at our event – on request – and gave quality presentations.”*

*EU Employers organisation representative*

The tripartite character of the organisation was frequently mentioned by interviewed stakeholders as offering European added value. Stakeholders reported that the influence and implicit sign-off of the three interests offered legitimacy to the outputs. By its very nature the research has buy-in from the three stakeholders, meaning that it can serve the interests of national governments, employers and trade unions in an almost equal manner.

When asked whether there were any similar research outputs produced by other organisations, those respondents who felt that they could comment stated that other organisations such as Eurostat for example produce statistics on employment but not on such specific issues and that Eurofound was felt to add more interpretation and contextual information to the data which was seen as its distinctive feature of European added value. A specific view from within the European Commission on representativeness studies was that if Eurofound did not do them, there would be a need to undertake them on a national level and then the Commission would be required to collate this incomplete and inconsistent data. The most general view shared by the stakeholders was that without Eurofound there would not be debate relying on sound evidence.

### 3.4 To what extent do Eurofound's activities and outputs contribute to relevant socio-economic policy developments?

The first source of evidence used to assess the extent to which Eurofound's activities contribute to relevant policy developments was the EU Impact Tracking database. It is administered by Eurofound's Brussels Liaison Office and it provides a wealth of information on quotations of Eurofound's work in EU policy documents spanning the period, including 2013 and 2014<sup>31</sup>, in which the publications were being referred to. In reviewing the EU Impact Tracking we consulted the EU Impact Tracking reports relating to the 2009-2012 Work Programme period, as well as the Eurofound EU Impact Database. In general, the EU Impact Tracking offers a good overview of the first order outcomes of Eurofound's activities on EU level policy.

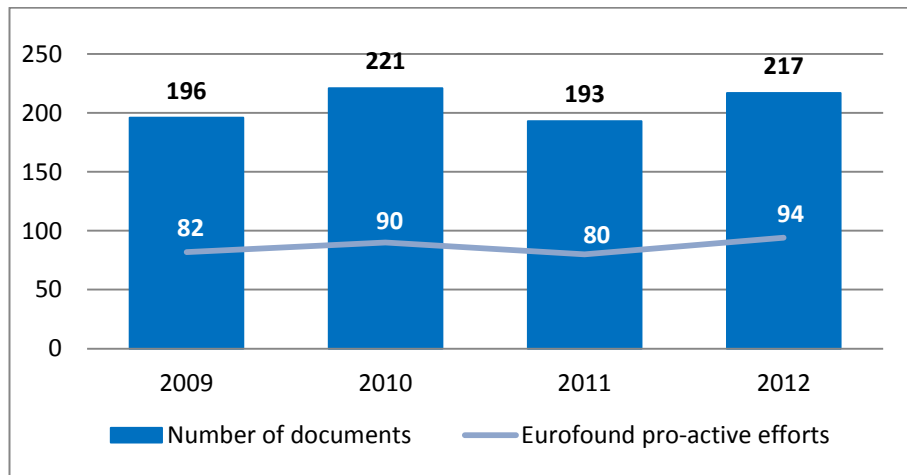
The EU Impact tracking database<sup>32</sup> lists the number of EU policy documents referencing Eurofound outputs, events or reports. It uses keywords to try to qualify the thematic focus of the EU policy documents referring to Eurofound and refers to all Eurofound publications quoted.

<sup>31</sup> It is also of importance to note that the EU Impact process did not start in 2009 but several years ago and data and analysis are available for previous years

<sup>32</sup> Some of the references in the Impact Tracking reference outputs before the start of the 2009-2012 Work Programme based on the information in column G “Eurofound Publication Titles”. For those that do not reference a specific title the information in column F has been consulted, “Description of Policy Document or Reference Quotations Details”, to see when the output was from. Those outputs that were found to be before 2009 have been excluded from the database in order to do the analysis. In total, 101 EU policy documents were excluded. Some policy documents refer to several Eurofound publications, and these have been counted once for each document referenced conducted during the 2009-2012 Work Programme. Since some outputs of projects may have been delayed until after the completion of the Work Programme, references to publications in 2012 and 2014 have also been included.

The database was shared with the evaluation team in June 2014 and contained 1,067 individual EU policy documents referencing Eurofound’s research from 2009 until 2014. The information provided very useful indications on the extent to which Eurofound’s activities have contributed to policy documents. The table below presents the number of EU policy documents quoting Eurofound research overall as well as the Eurofound’s proactive efforts concerted by the BLO or the researchers involved.

**Figure 15: Number of EU Policy Documents quoting Eurofound in 2009-2012 Work Programme period**



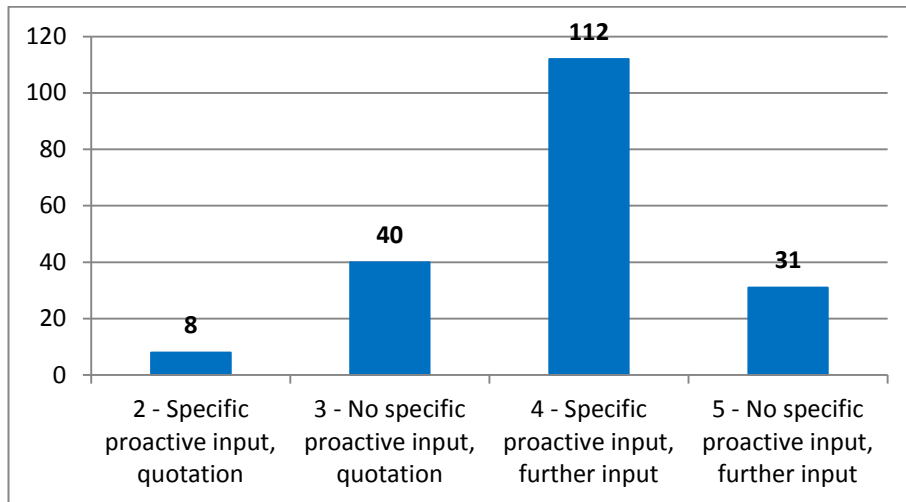
Source: 2009-2012 Impact Tracking Reports, Eurofound

The number of proactive efforts have also been stable throughout the period. There is some evidence that more proactive efforts lead to a higher number of references, as the peaks of the proactive efforts of 90 and 94 in 2010 and 2012 coincide with the peaks in the number of references during the period of the Work Programme (221 and 217 respectively).

This theory is further substantiated by the “Key Policy Papers” indicated in the EU Impact Tracking database<sup>33</sup>; a majority have involved specific proactive input. Further analysis on the Impact Database, shown in Figure 16 below, indicates that the vast majority of documents, 112 (59%), were given the impact grade 4. This impact grade is associated with specific proactive input, with input including expertise taken on board, a request or recommendation for more research, or policy recommendations.

<sup>33</sup> Key policy papers are identified by a so called P qualifier (introduced in 2007 in the Eurofound Impact Tracking reports), defined as policy papers of major importance for the EU policy process/debates or which made considerable, comprehensive use of Eurofound data. From the data we found 170 references to such projects in total during the 2009-2012 WP period (not counting any projects or programmes referenced which were completed in years outside of the 2009-2012 WP period). It is worth mentioning that this “P-value” indicator has been replaced since 2013 by a more accurate, traceable and objective indicator: the KPI9 - Key EU policy documents referring to Eurofound (refer to the EPMS manual for more information).

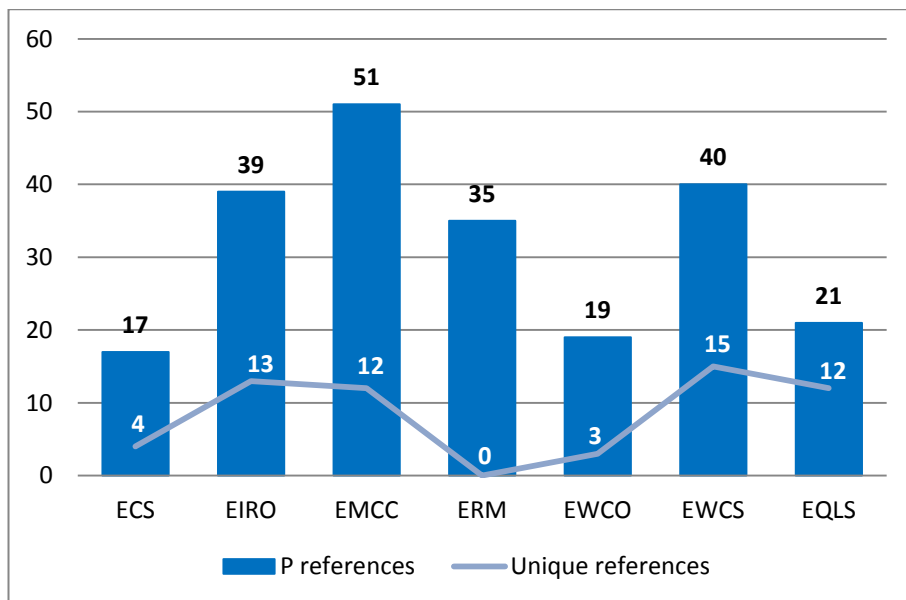
**Figure 16: Total number of EU policy documents quoting Eurofound by impact grade in 2009-2012 Work Programme period**



Source: Ipsos MORI analysis, Eurofound EU Impact Tracking Database

Monitoring data that most closely resembles a proxy for measuring impact on policy level is indicated by the P-value. Figure 17 below presents the number of these documents at the level of project/project areas. According to this analysis the most quoted in EU level key policy documents are EMCC (51 policy documents), followed by EWCS (40 references), EIRO (39 references), ERM (35 references), ECS (17 references), EWCO (19 references) and EQLS (21 references).

**Figure 17: Number of key EU Policy Documents quoting Eurofound by specific project in 2009-2012 Work Programme period**



Source: Ipsos MORI analysis, Eurofound EU Impact Tracking Database

The EU Impact Tracking database does not map the policy developments to individual projects on the level at which they are planned and presented in the annexes of the annual Work Programmes and therefore it is not possible to easily link attribution of outcomes to the smaller projects. Although the thematic focus is appropriate on the level of producing horizontal outputs, monitoring of outcomes would be best attributable to a unit of cost which would enable a cost effectiveness calculation. The more granular the level will be, the better one will be able to find projects/activities with high level of outcomes that were relatively modest in terms of cost (high relative added value) and projects that were costly but in turn did not achieve the expected level of outcome (low relative

added value). If the level of monitoring outcomes is not always linked to planned individual projects, making it impossible to attribute overall cost, determining the strategic value of this information for focusing on high added value activities will be limited (or impossible).

The organisational review of Eurofound completed in 2014<sup>34</sup> discussed the effectiveness of the Eurofound thematic structure compared to a project based structure. One of the main benefits mentioned by staff was the fact that working under themes enables people to develop specialisms. In the organisational restructuring of 2011 staff was given the opportunity to indicate a preference where they wanted to sit within the new structure, something which was viewed very favourable by staff, despite some of them noting that the ambiguity of the new unit structures made it difficult to make an informed choice. A more project based structure was discussed among staff that highlighted that this would enable a more effective distribution of resources across the organisation.

It is acknowledged that the decision to change the level of information that is monitored in the EU Impact Tracking would have significant implications on time and resources consumed by this task. Furthermore, there has been shift in Eurofound's publications towards horizontal issues that build on more than one project which makes it difficult to track attribution to one single project. Likewise one policy document may refer to a number of Eurofound publications and listing projects based on which they were produced may not be a straightforward exercise. There are on-going efforts for enhancement to the follow-up of the impact of publications and therefore it might be worthwhile exploring possibility to aggregate outcomes for a number of projects and compare them to aggregate costs associated. A similar exercise was performed within project evaluations of large surveys but such efforts might be also viable on smaller projects.

Further investigation into keywords related to the EU level key policy documents warrants results presented in Figure 18. It highlights "working conditions" as the keyword most frequently used by Eurofound to qualify the thematic focus of the EU level key policy documents, followed by Recession, NEET, economic crisis and quality of life.

The database was also useful for providing input towards the long list of projects for the case studies. These were supplemented by searches in the database for references relating to the projects and the titles of publications produced within the projects. A reference was counted once for each specific EU policy document referencing a project title.

Several keywords were searched for each project. These can be found in the table below. This was because of different spellings of certain outputs, as well as different documents referring to the same overall project. If a keyword was found it was cross-referenced with the relevant titles from the project in question, also found in the table below, in order to make sure that the reference was for the correct title referring to the correct project. Figure 18 presents the results of this exercise.

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<sup>34</sup> Ipsos MORI (2014), "Organisational Developments in Eurofound"

Figure 18: Number of key-word references in EU level Key Policy Documents, 2009-2012

Project	Number of references	Keywords searched <sup>35</sup>	Documents referenced
Youth employment	71	"Young people and NEETS", "Youth Guarantee", "Young people not in employment, education or training", "Effectiveness of policy measures to increase the employment participation of young people",	Young people and NEETs in Europe: First findings (a resume) (2011); Youth Guarantee: Experiences from Finland and Sweden (2012); NEETs Young people not in employment, education or training: Characteristics, costs and policy responses in Europe (2012); Executive Summary: NEETs Young people not in employment, education or training: Characteristics, costs and policy responses in Europe (2012); Effectiveness of policy measures to increase the employment participation of young people (2012); Executive Summary: Effectiveness of policy measures to increase the employment participation of young people (2012)
5th EWCS	85	"5th EWCS", "Fifth European Working Conditions Survey", "5th European Working Conditions Survey", "Trends in job quality in Europe", "Sustainable work and the ageing workforce", "fifth EWCS"	Fifth European Working Conditions Survey - Overview report (2012); Executive Summary: Fifth European Working Conditions Survey - Overview report (2012); Changes over time - First findings from the Fifth European Working Conditions Survey: Résumé (2010); Trends in job quality in Europe (2012); Sustainable work and the ageing workforce (2012); Policy lessons from the fifth EWCS: The pursuit of more and better jobs (2014)
Representativeness Study on the Audio-visual sector	0	"Audiovisual", "Audio-visual", "Representativeness of the European social partner organisations"	Representativeness of the European social partner organisations: Audiovisual sector (2013)
2nd ECS	30	"2nd ECS", "ECS", "European Company Survey", "Flexibility profiles of EU companies", "Part-time work in Europe", "Management practices and sustainable organisational performance", "Performance-related pay and employment relations in European companies"	2nd ECS: First findings (2009); 2nd ECS - Overview report (2010); Flexibility profiles of EU companies (2010); Part-time work in Europe (2011); Management practices and sustainable organisational performance: an analysis of the European Company Survey 2009 (2011); Performance-related pay and employment relations in European companies (2011)
EIRO CAR Posting Workers	6	"Posted workers in the European Union", "Posting workers", Posting of workers"	Posted workers in the European Union (2010)
Income retirement after	3	"Income from work after retirement"	Income from work after retirement in the EU (2012)

Source: Ipsos MORI analysis, Eurofound Impact Tracking Database

Of course the data presented in this report constitute only one part of the 'whole picture' when trying to assess the 'impact' or 'added-value' of Eurofound to the EU policy debate. In 2011 and 2012 the EU Impact reports listed the single most quoted publications which are listed in Figure 19. It is evident that some of these are linked to particular themes such as the youth and youth guarantee or the EWCS.

<sup>35</sup> This refers to the keywords searched for in the EU Impact Tracking database to link a reference to a Eurofound publication.

**Figure 19: The Eurofound publications most cited in EU level key policy documents” – 2011-2012**

	2011	2012	Total
<b>Resume Young people and NEETs in Europe: first findings</b>		18	38
<b>NEETS: Characteristics, costs and policy responses in Europe</b>		6	
<b>Youth guarantee: Experiences from Finland and Sweden</b>		7	
<b>Helping young workers during the crisis, EIRO CAR</b>		7	46
<b>Overview Report: 5th European Working Conditions Survey</b>		11	
<b>Changes over time – First findings from 5th European Working Conditions Survey</b>	9	8	5
<b>Overview report 4th European Working Conditions Survey</b>	9		
<b>ERM report: Restructuring in recession</b>	5		5
<b>Tackling the recession: Employment-related public initiatives in the EU Member States and Norway</b>	5		5
<b>Shifts in the job structure in Europe during the Great Recession</b>	5	6	11
<b>Working poor in Europe, EWCO CAR</b>	5		5
<b>Employee involvement in companies under the European Company Statute</b>	5		5
<b>Working Conditions of an ageing workforce</b>	5		5

Source: Ipsos MORI analysis, Eurofound EU Impact Tracking Database

In the evaluation component of the 2014 User Satisfaction Survey, almost two-thirds of respondents (65%) said that Eurofound contributed to socio-economic policy development at least to some extent, with 15% saying “to a large extent”. Interestingly, respondents from new EU member states (80%) were more likely to state that Eurofound’s activities and publications contributed to at least some extent to policy developments than their counterparts from old EU member states (61%). Those who are directly involved in policymaking did not have a different view to those involved in research. However, when survey respondents were asked to highlight a specific impact on policy, most stakeholders were unable or reluctant to point out any specific developments as a direct result of Eurofound publications or communications. The evaluation team posed the same question to the members of the Governing Board and the voting results compared to the broader user base indicated no statistically significant differences – 69% of board members indicated that at least to some extent Eurofound contributed to socio-economic policy development.

This finding was further confirmed by stakeholder interviews (both undertaken by the evaluation team and user interviews undertaken within the user satisfaction work). In these interviews, almost all consulted unanimously highlighted that the Eurofound research was useful for them as background or contextual information or that it is some indirect way contributing towards improved policies in their respective area of work.

*“Eurofound research is useful as background information for better informed policies – for example when drafting proposals for new programmes or initiatives. Specific examples include the National Social Inclusion strategy and revisiting Labour Code.”*

*Member State representative*

However, only less than a third of the interviewees were able to identify a specific policy development and link it to work of the Agency and many of them highlighted the well-known example of the NEETs project influencing the development of the Youth Guarantee schemes. This information has fed directly towards production of the long list of potential case studies that was presented to the evaluation steering group.



The interviews explored the reasons behind the difficulty identifying the direct impact of Eurofound research on policy. It was emphasised by the policymakers that publication of a report by an analytical function of a department does not equal policy development and provision of information alone cannot change policy. It was iterated by many that the process of the policy-making both on EU and national levels is complex and there are many factors influencing the form and content of new policies. There are users of Eurofound research who work in a policy area in which there has been no policy development for three or four years but they highlighted that when the next discussion about an EU-wide policy development takes place, the debates would be influenced by the existing Eurofound research. This future-oriented contribution of Eurofound research links directly to the Founding Regulation.

*“Knowledge of Eurofound in wage-setting systems is useful to policymakers (for example referred to in EPSCO presentation 2012). In minimum wage, there might be an EU policy development and then Eurofound will have a strong input.”*

*EC representative*

The majority of interviewees stated that Eurofound’s research outputs inform the policy developments and provide evidence behind what, until then, are only beliefs and expectations. Even from the position in a national ministry or one of the DGs in the European Commission it is not possible to judge whether Eurofound’s outputs have led to any policy changes directly, and it is not reasonable to judge a research-producing organisation on their impact on policy alone. As it has been acknowledged above, the policy-making process is very long and evidence from the Impact tracking data, survey and interviews points out that Eurofound research feeds into policy documents and policy debate. It is fair to say that occasions in which research of one institution has resulted in a new policy development are not the norm but rather a rare occurrence and even when the direct link is established, like in the example of the NEETs project, there were a number of factors and steps taken in the process that made this direct link possible. The case study in detail explains the various activities surrounding this development, many of which were out of the control of Eurofound and highly dependent on correct timing of these efforts. Therefore the relatively modest share of people being able to indicate direct examples of contribution are not necessarily an indication of a low impact but of the nature of achieving the policy impact through research itself. Exploration of the level of contribution of Eurofound research to individual policy developments identified the high value that policymakers give to the availability of background and contextual information which was linked in many cases to the most valuable characteristics of the Agency explored in the previous section.

### **3.5 By which means? [Contribution to impact assessments, preparation of new proposals, quotation by official reports, quotation in scientific papers, etc. ?]**

Similarly to the previous evaluation question, the exact means of contribution was explored in the evaluation component of the user survey, the Governing Board voting session, and stakeholder and user interviews. It is worth referring to the fact that the EU Impact Tracking database distinguishes between proactive efforts of Eurofound in feeding into policy developments and those which had little or no Eurofound activity in promoting the findings. Proactive efforts by Eurofound staff result in higher awareness and enhanced interaction of policymakers with new knowledge produced by the Agency’s staff. The improvements in dissemination of results to European policymakers, as well as proactive approach of Eurofound staff in presenting and organising events in individual member states, has been highlighted in the previous chapters as well as in some of the case studies. The latter is mainly concerned with regards to national level communication.

**Case study evidence: EIRO CAR Posted Workers**

Eurofound recently organised an event on request by one of the Baltic countries. In this instance Eurofound organised speakers and presentations to be held in the country arranging presenters from 6 EU countries. Such events and proactive behaviour are one of the activities that boost Eurofound's ability to contribute to policy developments.

In the user survey, when asked which Eurofound activities contributed to policy developments, three in five (60%) said through preparation of policy proposals, just below half (47%) said through contributions to policy impact assessments, and a sizeable minority mentioned through citations in official reports (38%) or in scientific papers (27%). These views were shared among those from old and new member states and those directly involved in policymaking as well as those whose primary role was in research. As those who indicated 'other' specified informing the policy developments, the evaluation team decided to include it as an option during the voting session with the Governing Board. This resulted in 72% of Governing Board members indicating that 'Informing policy debate by providing background and contextual knowledge' was the most important means by which Eurofound contributed to relevant socio- economic policy development.

This strong indication of the importance that is given to research provision as background and contextual knowledge was further emphasized in the interviews. Interviewees on EU level tended to highlight the importance of the 'birds eye' view and true representation of what is happening in Europe with relation to specific topics but in a number of cases they pointed out specific use of individual reports for their analytical functions. One very specific example is the aforementioned representativeness studies which are seen by the Commission to have an important role in ensuring the legitimacy of EU Sectoral Social Dialogue. Other reports and data were highlighted by the analysis unit of the DG Employment and their direct feed towards the Commission's own publications. National level the use and contribution to policy developments originated mainly from the comparative studies which indicate early policy developments and 'policy laggards' which then can use the examples from most developed countries in that particular policy area. Another means of contribution to policy development on a national level is detailed in one of the case studies on Income after retirement.

**Case study evidence: Income after retirement**

The Polish representative of the government group on Eurofound governing board specified that there was an initiative on the national level which was informed by the project findings. Since 2008 Poland has a programme in place supporting occupational activity of people aged 50+. The programme is called 'Generations' Solidarity: Actions for Increasing Occupational Activity of People Aged 50+', and was developed within the social dialogue institutions. So far it has been implemented through legislation, most importantly with regard to the pension system, and specifically raising and equalising the statutory retirement age for men and women and restricting access to early retirement schemes. Very few actions revolve around improving the quality of work of older workers. The Eurofound project provided useful confirmation of the extent of the problem in a number of countries and gives a basis for introduction of second phase of the programme. This phase of the implementation will consist of the drafting of an implementation document that will contain a systematic and detailed set of legislative and extra-legislative measures together with entities responsible for carrying out these tasks.

Further to the differences in use at a national and European level, the way that Eurofound research outputs (of all types) is consumed by the key stakeholders differs across their role and seniority as well as the type of

organisation they work for. Those close to the Agency, who are in frequent contact not only with their publications but also at presentations made by Eurofound staff, were more able and willing to highlight specific policy developments that have been influenced by Eurofound's work. These stakeholders also stressed their opinion that much of this influential work relates to their specific need and would not often be formally recognised by means of quotation.

*“Often when policy decisions are influenced by Eurofound research but this is not formally recognised by means of quotation, especially when a research piece influences policymakers' thinking.”*

*EC representative*

At the high policymaker level, Eurofound research is useful for steering the debate and generally influencing the policy agenda. In these cases there were pointers towards specific reports that 'kept the policy debate alive' at times when no other organisation provided information about a societal issue. Such examples include Eurofound's work around 'green jobs' and early iterations of the European Restructuring Monitor (ERM). By this type of stakeholder, Eurofound's publications are viewed as intellectual reading that present the real picture of developments in the specific research area in Europe or a number of European countries. Therefore there is an underlying argument that through this means Eurofound influences European policies in a less 'tractable' way. At the lower seniority policymaker level the stakeholders were able to point at specific examples of their department's own analytical work that made use of Eurofound's findings, feeding in bottom-up to the policy debates. Our findings from these types of interviews confirm and are in line with, the comprehensive and systematically collected information in the EU Impact Tracking database.

### 3.6 Summary

Eurofound's original mission to respond to the need for reliable, impartial, evidence-based research and analysis on issues of key socio-economic policy remains as relevant today as it was in 1970s. Everything else has changed: the living and working standards, the societal problems relating to living and working conditions themselves and the policies that are in place to address them. Eurofound has throughout the period made extensive efforts to ensure that it stays relevant and listens to its key stakeholders and primary target groups which are well defined and link to the original communications strategy from 2006.

The Agency is seen to provide a unique added value for its key stakeholders who see its main strength in the provision of European coverage, reliable trend data that can be trusted as it has been produced by an organisation with a tripartite governance structure.

All consulted parties; some closer to the Agency's governance structures and some as irregular users, have seen value in Eurofound's research. A vast majority of those who are close to the policymaking process indicated that the data and information that the Agency produces is invaluable background and contextual information while some of them were also able to indicate specific examples of how this information fed into the policy development process. This process, both on EU and national levels is complex and long term and in order for it to be informed by evidence produced by Eurofound there needs to be a number of factors met and the timing of the research and the political agenda need to be aligned. This limitation has been explored to a great depth in interviews and case studies that indicate the variety of means through which Eurofound feeds into the policymaking process but the actual attribution of a causal link is very difficult to prove once the events behind the drafting and approval of a particular policy are untangled. The bottom line is that while in most cases the direct causal link is not possible to pinpoint, the policymakers agree that without Eurofound's contribution the policy debates would not be based on solid findings based on near-academic rigour.

## 4 Programme Focus

Programme focus related questions concerned directly to the effectiveness and coherence of the Agency over the 2009-2012 period. The key questions that this chapter addresses are therefore to what extent Eurofound's outputs reflect priorities of its stakeholders, and any gaps in the priorities that were identified but not covered. It further details the extent to which the Agency was responsive and how different methods, communication and processes for matching areas of expertise to the needs of its stakeholders resulted in achieving its objectives.

### 4.1 To what extent do Eurofound's activities / outputs reflect the priorities of the EU socio-economic policy makers, and EU social partners?

Activities and outputs of Eurofound are directly linked to the needs and priorities of EU socio-economic policy makers and social partners. The extensive consultation process and wide representation of key stakeholders in governance of the Agency translates into projects that address their needs. Despite this general consent with the reflection of Eurofound's activities in priorities of policymakers, there were some groups that indicated that their priorities were not reflected in Eurofound's research to the full extent. This was however nearly at all times acknowledged as the feature resulting from the Agency's tripartite nature and budget constraints.

*"Eurofound is an ambitious, reputable organisation but is limited in how many themes it can address having to operate with a given budget".*

*Other EU level organisation representative*

One indication worth mentioning is that the priority of the European Commission is to have six representativeness studies undertaken every year, a priority that was not met by Eurofound activities during the programming period. EU socio-economic policymakers and EU social partners that have been consulted within this study understand the main constraints within which the Agency operates and that it is for example not best placed to produce very quick studies or present 'news type' information. It is valued and its activities reflect priorities of organisations that require high quality factual information and context in policies relating to living and working conditions.

Views and priorities of different groups of policymakers and social partners differ, and each of the groups will to some extent attempt to maximise their priority research (for example workers organisations tend to prioritise research on industrial relations). All of the groups accept time and budget constraints and the structures are seen to result in a good balance of activities adhering to these various views.

*"Workers group would always want to maximise research on IR but time and budget constraints are well accepted."*

*EU Workers organisation representative*

### 4.2 Flexibility and responsiveness to change: How responsive has Eurofound been to unforeseen changes arising notably from the economic and financial crisis during the programming period?

As explained in chapter 2, flexibility was built into the 4-year Work Programme but at the time of its development, there was no indication on how significant the economic crisis would be for developments on European society.

Notwithstanding the limitations resulting from the heavy procedures in the Work Programme design and approval process described in chapter 2, its strategic level meant Eurofound retained enough flexibility to be able to adapt

to the challenges faced by Europe posed by the economic crisis, while still maintaining and building on its long term remit of the longitudinal research projects and surveys. The evaluation component of the user survey showed that three-fifths of respondents believe Eurofound was 'Very' or 'Fairly' responsive to changes arising from the financial crisis, with two-fifths of whom were able to give a specific example of responsiveness. Only one in nine respondents to the question said they thought the organisation was 'Not very responsive' (11%); two percent were able to give specific examples of this development. In fact, looking at differences between EU15 and new member states we saw that the new member states were more likely to indicate that Eurofound was fairly or very responsive (88%) than their counterparts from old EU member states (53.5%). Also, those closer to the policymaking process (53.2%) were slightly less likely to indicate that the Agency was responsive than more research-focused respondents (64.8%). These differences were also statistically significant.

The employer groups consulted during the workshops highlighted that this, along with the adaptations made in the annual Work Programmes to account for the financial crisis, allowed the Agency to respond to economic changes unforeseen at the development of the Work Programme. Eurofound in 2009 faced the challenge whether to 'switch focus' on potentially temporary economic development too early or not. Some stakeholders believed high quality research requires planning and that Eurofound's large surveys are not a research instrument to monitor such changes.

*"It is best not to be too quick in changing focus of large surveys which would prevent usefulness for trend".*

*EU Workers organisation representative*

Others noted that Eurofound has responded to crisis by introduction of several topical projects in 2009 and 2010 and changes in methodologies to provide insight to the extent of societal and economic changes that were taking place.

*"Eurofound made some early attempts to capture the impact of the economic crisis and they did so well"*

*EC representative*

Consultations within the evaluation indicated that there were discussions during the development of the 2009 annual Work Programme in which the directorate specified the need to respond to the economic crisis. The Governing Board was reluctant to move in this direction until there was more certainty over the duration of the crisis and its effects, therefore there were no specific projects relating to crisis until the following year. Despite this delayed response, there were specific actions that were undertaken within the existing projects in the first two years of the period in question and specific projects in the subsequent years which looked at the effects of the economic crisis on areas relevant to Eurofound.

Examples of such actions demonstrating responsiveness include:

- In design of the European Quality of Life Survey in 2008 there was a conscious decision to include questions about access to and quality of health services, care services and child services to proactively illustrate insights into societal changes that related to economic crisis.
- European Jobs Monitor had an amended methodology to measure the effect of the economic crisis on jobs and to analyse structural shifts on employment in Europe

- European Restructuring Monitor<sup>36</sup> was a unique tool providing information on the extent of the problems that European companies were facing during the early crisis by innovative media monitoring methodology
- Stakeholder Enquiry Service instigated by a group of member resulted in a report on this issue in 6 months after submitting the request. 18 months later, in 2012, an amending legislation was passed by the Irish parliament that included measures influenced by the rich detail supplied by the comparative study of legal provisions in 7 countries.
- 2009 add-on to the Eurobarometer survey - EQL questions to capture early effect of the recession. The main report of the 2011 survey specifically makes comparison with 2007 to examine 'impacts of the crisis'
- Dedicated smaller projects responding directly to the economic recession included Born global: The potential of job creation in newly established international businesses, Youth employment: Challenges and solutions for higher participation of young people in the labour market, Impact of the crisis on access to healthcare services, Flexicurity in Times of Crisis, IR in EU and other global economies 2011: the role of social partners in tackling the crisis, Social dialogue in times of global economic crisis, The economic crisis and evolution of work and employment, The impact of the crisis on industrial relations and working conditions.

#### Case study evidence: Responding to economic crisis

The 2<sup>nd</sup> ECS included adaptation of the focus and introduction of specific crisis-related questions into the questionnaire design and analysis. The objective was to assess reduction in jobs and the impact of competition on the organisation.

Considering the annual planning cycle and approval by a tripartite board, Eurofound demonstrated flexibility during the crisis and made early attempts to capture the impact of the crisis. A majority of stakeholders were pleased with the appropriateness and level of the analysis of the recession. The employers group at the workshop highlighted the Foundation Seminar Series of 2009 as an example of a highly responsive instrument used by Eurofound as a response to the crisis. Its success is demonstrated by having been carried over to the current Work Programme. Other stakeholders consulted highlighted the work on wage adjustments by firms across Europe as very interesting and timely.

*“Eurofound showed flexibility during the crisis. There was a lot of analysis on its impact, especially on the labour market. For example, the paper of wage adjustments by firms across Europe was very interesting and useful.”*

*EC representative*

Eurofound users who answered the evaluation component in the survey indicated the policies that were most influenced by the Agency's research highlighted the following developments (in the order of frequency):

- Policy developments relating to working conditions
- Policy developments relating to Flexicurity
- Europe 2020

<sup>36</sup> European Restructuring Monitor (ERM) is a tool monitoring the employment impact of large-scale restructuring events in the 27 EU Member States plus Norway. The ERM offers a searchable database of restructuring events based on announcements in national media sources and is synthesised on quarterly and annual basis.

- Health and Safety policy
- Mobility policy
- Policy developments relating to industrial relations
- Policy developments relating to living standards
- Policies relating to social inclusion
- Policies relating to youth unemployment
- Policies relating to Ageing workers
- Policies relating to Austerity and economic crisis
- Background information for Presidency conferences
- Changes in the collective bargaining policy
- Commission's 'Beyond GDP' initiative
- Policies relating to labour outputs
- Presentation of the SIP package in early 2013
- Strategic policy documents
- Job quality and Horizon 2020
- Policy developments relating to restructuring
- New policy proposals

### 4.3 Gaps / priorities not covered

The four-year Work Programme and the annual Work Programmes were organised within the three research themes: The work Employment growth and demand and supply of labour in changing labour markets; More and better jobs and higher productivity through partnership; and Promotion of social inclusion and sustainable social protection. The Eurofound Governing Board members decide on the portfolio of projects and therefore seek to ensure high level of coverage of priorities of socio-economic policymakers and social partners. A subset of these members is also involved in a close scrutiny by the Advisory Committees to ensure that planned activities are effectively executed.

There was nevertheless a certain level of re-focusing of the projects once Eurofound made a conscious decision to respond to the crisis and as a result there may have been some topics selected in 2007-8 that were not fully implemented or received the emphasis they should have. It was seen as a structural consequence of the emergence of economic crisis and its timing. This was seen by certain internal stakeholders as the explanation why the annual programmes could be viewed as series of projects rather than a coherent Work Programme. The exact list of projects that was affected by this refusal could not be established by systematic review of monitoring data.

In terms of gaps in research, there was some concern from new Governing Board members about the way that data produced within some projects was interpreted. They recognised that there are national differences in the way that different ideas and concepts (e.g. trade unions) are understood, and were not sure whether Eurofound outputs necessarily captured/communicated these nuances. However, they were confident that when using the outputs in their own country that they would keep their local context in mind and the comparative nature of the outputs was seen as a key strength (and one that is improving).

Another identified area of potential gaps was on the border with remit with the European Agency for Occupational Safety and Health (EU-OSHA) as both agencies were trying to avoid overlap. General views of the stakeholders, both on the Governing Board and not, was that the overlap with other EU agencies, including EU OSHA, CEDEFOP or FRA, is on the one hand inevitable and on the other hand so small that it is not a problem. There has been very little evidence of collaboration beyond consultation of each other's Work Programmes at the directorate level to avoid such overlap and the internal document on collaboration with other agencies outlines efforts to do so relates to the 2013-2016 programme. Internal consultations with Eurofound staff however indicated that throughout this period there has been communication between agencies and an agreement of an annual action plan for collaboration.

Stakeholders have indicated ad hoc examples in which Eurofound fed to research or other organisations but there was very little evidence of collaborative projects in formal sense. This has improved in the current programme.

### 4.4 How does the Work Programme preparation (consultation of stakeholders, process etc.) ensure that Eurofound activities/outputs reflect the priorities of the EU socio-economic policy makers and EU social partners?

As described in Chapter 2, the Eurofound's own Work Programme cycle is an effective and mature process that began over a year prior to final discussions and approval of the draft programme by the Agency's Governing Board. The 2009-2012 Work Programme was the first Work Programme to benefit from an ex-ante evaluation and included a much wider consultation than the previous developments of multiannual Work Programmes. Analyses of the breadth of consultations were limited by non-exhaustive records of consultees and their input to the Work Programme development and the prioritising of research themes was said to be done by aligning them to stakeholders' future needs but the actual process was not well recorded. From the stakeholder consultations we



can nevertheless conclude that the stakeholders felt that they were consulted and that their priorities have been reflected in the Work Programme. Some of them were able to point specifically towards projects that addressed their direct needs. Such projects included the Stakeholder enquiry service projects as well as those which were standalone.

It was also the first programme to benefit from collaborative agreements with the other EU agencies and involvement in discussion of their respective four year and annual Work Programmes. The consultations at the time involved external stakeholders and the beginning of the period also included internal brainstorming events on Agency-wide level and symbolic prizes given for the best research idea – one of which was won by the lead researcher behind the most successful NEETs project.

## 4.5 To what extent did Eurofound fulfil the expectations set out in the programming?

### 4.5.1 Matching the areas of expertise with the challenges, orientation and topics that were selected and implemented (were there gaps, did they meet the needs of those Eurofound wanted to serve)

The Governing Board and the Advisory Committees pay close attention to ensuring that all approved projects are executed and highlight any problems in execution once encountered. The evaluation team attempted to compare the approved research projects to the list of executed projects from the project management system that was in use until 2012 but since discontinued. As the project management system was discontinued, the results of this exercise should be interpreted with caution but the information indicates that 23% of planned research projects from the annual Work Programmes over the 2009-2012 period were not recorded in the project management system. The results of the analysis are presented in Figure 20.

**Figure 20: Comparison of planned projects and project management system Projex for period 2009-2012 by thematic area**

Thematic area	No. of planned projects in Projex	No. of planned projects NOT in Projex	Share of planned projects not in Projex
Employment growth; & demand & supply of labour in changing labour markets	26	3	10%
More & better jobs; & higher productivity through partnership	30	10	25%
Promotion of social inclusion & sustainable social protection	30	8	21%
Surveys & observatories	23	12	34%

Source: Ipsos MORI analysis, Eurofound annual Work Programmes and extract of Projex

The evaluation team has gone to some length in chapter 3.1 to address the alignment of Eurofound's activities with needs of their stakeholders and wider user groups. At the evaluation workshops with the Governing Board, the participants highlighted good fit of themes selected and the areas of expertise developed over the years of undertaking research and leading the way on many topics uniquely addressed by Eurofound. Some stakeholders indicated that there may have been topics which were withheld from the agenda or postponed as a result of dispute over the project focus between groups of the Governing Board but none could point at specific research areas.

### 4.5.2 Methods (methodology, quality assurance, etc)

In the first decades of Eurofound's existence it outsourced most of its research, focusing the organisation on the definition of projects, publication and promotion of results. In recent years the organisation shifted focus and increased its research capacity to conduct much research in-house. The core activities of the organisation are based on sound research methods which provide a suitable foundation for comparative analysis and time series in order to identify developing trends both in time and geographical locations. Eurofound states in the four year Work Programme 2009-2012 that the organisation is committed to the quality of its research, and one of the research questions relates to what extent the organisation fulfilled the expectations in this.

Eurofound employed three main types of research instruments; Observatories, Surveys, and Case studies. Eurofound undertook an internal review of methodologies<sup>37</sup> which provides more detail on the types of specific methodologies applied by each research unit. In the case studies the evaluation team investigated their appropriateness and highlighted lessons learnt with respect to their execution. In addition to these specific findings, the Agency employed standard project management quality assurance practices in which each research project was overseen by a head of one of the research units at the time (note the changes described in section 2.2). EIRO was one of the three instruments within the Network of European Observatories (NEO). EIRO comparative analytical reports are found to provide unique source of information across all EU member states, and the only other way for a European institution to collect the information would be to try to collate the data from individual ministries in member states and interpret the data. The case study evidence highlighted that their main limitation during the time period was variation in quality of inputs that individual country correspondents produced for the Eurofound researchers and problems with adhering to deadlines. These findings are substantiated by those in the evaluation of NEO in 2013 which amongst other conclusions found that quality of some correspondents has been seen critically amongst Governing Board members and that timeliness and operational efficiency were an issue.

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37 Application of Research Methodologies in Eurofound, Final Report 2011

### Case study evidence: Lessons learnt

Both **ECS** and **EWCS** had independent assessments of their data that indicated their high quality and praised the processes that were in place to highlight any problems in data collection. The quality assessment in the case of ECS however identified room for improvement in respect to further increasing the response rate. Recommendations included:

- Use of multi-mode data collection method (Besides telephone interviews consider also on-site face-to-face interviews or the possibility of establishing a web-based questionnaire).
- Identification of other sources of response errors (e.g. length of the questionnaire, common characteristics of non-respondents, etc.).
- Take into consideration cost and time (i.e. fieldwork duration) constraints in deciding on the actions to be taken in future rounds of the survey in order to improve response rates.

Despite the positive quality assessments, there were nevertheless problems, especially in fieldwork of the case studied 5<sup>th</sup> **EWCS**. These started in the piloting of primary research when the team realised that several questions did not apply to some countries and the slippage in timelines snowballed into a six months delay of submission of the overview report. The delay in the delivery of this flagship report resulted in necessary changes to the planned events and had negative implications for the already set up dissemination activities. **EWCS** has also a large number of interviewees reject their work on the survey due to high complexity of the questionnaires.

The case study of the very successful project on **NEETs** detailed how the conscious decision by the lead researcher to recruit a number of academic experts to an academic advisory boards led to improvement and strengthening of the methodology in order to gain credibility in disseminating and justifying its results. As a result the methods were referred to by the researchers and policymakers as ‘bulletproof’ and ones that the policymakers could rely on.

The evaluation component in the user satisfaction survey indicates that 80% of respondents who felt they could make an assessment believed that the level of rigour is “about right” to be confident in the data. Respondents from new EU member states (72%) more frequently stated that Eurofound’s research applied the right amount of variety of research methods in comparison to their counterparts from EU15 (56.1%). These differences were however not statistically significant. There were no statistically significant differences between respondents that fell into the category ‘Policy Makers’ and those in the category ‘Other users’.

The stakeholder/user consultations highlight that stakeholders do care about the methodologies used by Eurofound, and that they are seen as robust. Trust is put in the research methods of Eurofound and the transparency of the technical reports in presenting the methodology or the research. The research of Eurofound is seen as robust and at an academic level and while stakeholders said that might they would not always agree with the analysis of the Eurofound reports they were confident that the analysis was based on sound and reliable data employing quality methods. Some policymakers noted that they do not want Eurofound’s research to be of academic nature as then it would be less responsive and its added value is not perceived as high. On the other hand the few interviewees who were in an academic role during the 2009-2012 period trusted the employed methods and widely cited Eurofound’s work in their academic papers. Though academics are not the prime stakeholder group of the Agency, it is an indication of the strength of the methods they employ in their research.

There were a number of external stakeholders who noted that the tone and language of Eurofound publications needs to be set right for the target audience and that the methods behind the key messages needs to be appended to these reports for transparency of approach.

#### 4.5.3 Communication strategy (target groups (people), products, placement)

In answering the question of how the communication strategy helped to deliver the Work Programme we looked at the processes that were in place during the time period and made an assessment in relation to recent improvements, especially in light of recommendations from previous evaluative studies undertaken for the Agency.

During the 2009-2012 Work Programme, the Agency had in place the Information and Communication Strategy that was updated in 2006. Throughout the period it was recognised that communication was one of the Agency's key roles. It was set up to target those who develop and influence European social policy these groups included policy makers in public authorities, the social partners at EU and national levels, representative organisations of civil society, but to some extent also the business community and the general public. Reaching these groups has been a crucial element of the Agency's information and communication strategy. Important vehicles for this were the Agency websites, its press activities, and in the first two years also visits to Member States via the 'road shows'<sup>38</sup> and the use of communication outreach services. Communication activities have undergone a number of improvements throughout the period, notably in the areas of the packaging of the knowledge and information to be disseminated.

The publications programme was streamlined in 2009, producing more targeted publications of a higher quality which has been explored in Chapter 2. The period was also marked by an introduction of the user satisfaction surveys and close monitoring of downloads, towards the end of the period also close monitoring of downloads of the priority publications in their initial periods after launch. There was also a greater attention paid to adopting a policy-oriented approach and strengthening of the functions of the Brussels Liaison Office with more importance on identification of policy hotspots and the Agency organised high-level debates such as the Foundation Forum. There were a number of notable improvements relating to communications that took place and were explored in detail in case studies.

#### Case study evidence: Examples of communications improvements

- Improvements to the online mapping tool (visual representation of the results by geography) launched alongside First Findings of each wave of the three large surveys (EQLS, ECS & EWCS) which was widely highlighted as a very useful tool by a number of stakeholders.
- Introduction of a new form of dissemination to accompany the first findings report of the EWCS - a video news release, with thematic interviews and a descriptive animation. In parallel to the production process, there was an intensification and formalisation of the collaboration with DG COMM and the Audiovisual Services of the European Commission, to ensure a wider distribution of Eurofound's video work. There were other improvements in communicating research findings from the 5th EWCS such as new design of the report.

EPMS indicators related to the effectiveness of communicating research results are presented in Figure 21. These confirm the improvements that have taken place over the period in terms of fulfilling the expectations set out in the programming

<sup>38</sup> These activities have been discontinued based on Governing Board decision that they were not an effective communication instrument.  
13-054738-01 | Version 1 | Internal / Client Use Only | This work was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the international quality standard for Market Research, ISO 20252:2012, and with the Ipsos MORI Terms and Conditions which can be found at <http://www.ipsos-mori.com/terms>. © Ipsos MORI 2014.

**Figure 21: EPMS indicators relating to effectiveness of communication**

EPMS indicator	2009	2010	2011	2012
<b>Eurofound's visibility on the internet: # of users</b>	1,666,924	1,804,835 (target 1,800,000)	2,021,691 (target 1,900,000)	2,078,035
<b>Customer satisfaction with Eurofound's output</b>	4 out of 5 (high satisfaction) <sup>39</sup>	n/a	3.5	4.11 <sup>40</sup>
<b># of professional articles in which Eurofound and/or its work were cited over a 2 year period</b>	700	820	873	1004
<b># of different journals in which citations appear</b>	29	28	27	35

Source: EPMS, Eurofound

#### 4.5.4 In terms of filling knowledge gaps and synergies, to what extent does Eurofound's research take account of and builds on previous / existing research?

We have considered Eurofound's ability to fill knowledge gaps and synergies by reviewing the extent to which they build on existing academic work, the work of other Agencies and international organisations.

##### *Building on existing academic research*

The evaluation component within the user satisfaction survey asked the users to assess whether Eurofound's research in the period 2009-2012 took into account existing research. Nearly a third of respondents could not make this assessment but of those who had answered, all thought that it at least to a small extent built on existing research. In fact 94% of those who could make the assessment indicated that Eurofound do to at least some extent took into account existing research.

Respondents from new EU member states were slightly more likely to state that Eurofound's research at least some extent took into account existing research, in comparison to their counterparts from EU15. Similarly 'Other' users were more likely to make this indication than those closer to the policy making process.

Interviews with Eurofound staff and external stakeholders indicate that there were numerous occasions in which Eurofound staff exchanged ideas, worked on and provided input to academics, often those engaged in research within the 7<sup>th</sup> European Framework Programme in the theme Social Sciences and Humanities. This was evident from analysis of users of raw data from the Eurofound surveys which is available via the UK Data Service. Case studies of the ECS and EWCS show there is a growing trend in use of raw data from both of these data sources and that the main user type was academics.

##### *Building on research from, and working with, other Agencies*

Level of collaboration with other agencies was seen by members of the Governing Board as well as Eurofound staff to be lower than optimal with some agencies in relation to the emphasis outlined in the 2009-2012 Work Programme. There were very few members of Governing Board sat on the board during the period and felt they

<sup>39</sup> Data for this measure were obtained for the first time in 2009. A quantitative 'customer satisfaction index' was constructed, based on an external contract to gauge qualitative customer satisfaction through a series of focus groups consisting of a range of representatives from different target groups, and interviews. The questions covered in these focus groups and interviews and the responses of participants were mapped, weighted and assessed to construct a single satisfaction rate on a scale from 1 to 5.

<sup>40</sup> The baseline value from the combined years 2009 and 2011 is 3.75 out of 5. The overall USI for 2012 is 4.11, which is *higher* than the results achieved in 2009 and 2011. However, it should be noted that the questions and the criteria used to score them differ somewhat from year to year. In addition, the 2012 Index was calculated with reference to the *NEO Observatory outputs*, whereas in previous years a different focus was of interest.

could comment (n=7-15). This is the order in which the respondents found collaboration appropriate: ILO (1), EU OSHA (2), CEDEFOP (3), ETF (4), OECD (5).

As there were relatively high rates of Governing Board members who could not assess the level of collaboration, these findings should therefore only be taken as indicative. In the stakeholder interviews we have covered the extent of collaboration with these organisations to a certain extent and the findings were in line with the above, suggesting that Eurofound had a good working relationship with EU OSHA and the ILO but there were no formal collaborative projects, mainly due to administrative barriers of joint tendering. Collaborations with other organisations were nevertheless apparent in the case studies that outlined good collaborative arrangements and execution of projects where one research team from an Agency provided input to a research team from another Agency. One such example was the common sampling strategy of the second European Company Survey and EU OSHA's Enterprise survey on new and emerging risks (ESENER) survey. One notable example is also Eurofound's invitation to add a module of EQLS questions to the Eurobarometer surveys on Poverty to explore early effect of the recession.

There are also new developments in the form of newly introduced studies that have a potential complementary or supplementary role to Eurofound's activities. One such development is the introduction of the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) by the OECD.

#### *Collaboration amongst research units within Eurofound*

Interviews with external stakeholders indicate that there are overarching themes that relate to core research areas while more topical issues look in more depth into specific research questions. Nevertheless to these stakeholders it did not seem apparent that there is a good transfer of knowledge between the research units and that research on, for example, quality of life could benefit from building on existing research from working conditions and industrial relations.

These observations could relate to issues from the previous period identified within the organisational review of Eurofound completed in 2014<sup>41</sup>. The review raised the worry among staff that the new thematically structured units would result in a "silo"-mentality with little coordination between units. The Research Coordination Board was established, attended by the three heads of research, the coordinator and the head of I&C in order to reduce overlap and facilitate cooperation. The consultation showed that the staff considered it to be working well, helping to facilitate decision making in a more integrated way across units. However, there is a danger that an over emphasis on coordination measures can in fact contribute to the 'silos'-mentality as they by their very existence imply a separation<sup>42</sup>. With more effective internal communication, aligned with new project management tools designed to consider resourcing from an 'organisation perspective' the perception of units operating in "silos" could be lessened.

According to the user survey, all respondents who felt they could make the assessment said that Eurofound took into account existing research at least to some extent. Stakeholders were generally positive about Eurofound in this respect, but answers differed according to the level of expertise of the stakeholder and access to other, such as national, sources of data.

## 4.6 Summary

Eurofound's programme focus to a large extent reflected priorities of EU socio-economic policymakers and EU social partners, especially taking into account the differences between these various groups. Some of the groups,

<sup>41</sup> Ipsos MORI (2014), "Organisational Developments in Eurofound: First Analysis"

<sup>42</sup> Denise, L. (1999) Collaboration vs C-Three. The Rensselaerville Institute

in particular the workers, indicated that they would have preferred the balance of activities to focus on one of the three research areas<sup>43</sup> more than others, but there was a general sense of satisfaction with the focus of the 4 year and annual Work Programmes due to the high level of involvement of all groups in the theme and project selection processes. The workers group by nature tends to be most interested in research on industrial relations related topics whereas the government representatives are most interested in findings relating to effectiveness of policies in improvement of living and working conditions.

Evidence from both staff and stakeholder interviews indicated that the wide audience involved in the Work Programme design however resulted in a marginally slower response to the economic crisis, especially if measured by introduction of specific topical projects. The general focus of the programme allowed flexibility in the annual Work Programmes to respond to topical issues but the rigidity in the system was seen to not allow for this to an optimal level. Some efforts on existing project levels were made in the first year of the Work Programme but specific projects targeted on the effect of crisis on living and working conditions were not set up as quickly as they could have. There is not too much flexibility built in beyond the annual Work Programme development and the very limited budget for the stakeholder enquiry service. There are inherent risks in both extremes – having in place a system dedicating too much of the budget to ‘arising topics’ or being too rigid. The challenge is to increase the flexibility within the existing official processes for Work Programme development and approval which enhance trust in research specified in the tripartite setting.

The evaluation did not identify any specific themes that were planned to be covered but were not executed. Research methods implemented during the Work Programme period have undergone several internal evaluations and quality assessments which were broadly in line with findings from the case studies undertaken within the evaluation. Main outstanding issue appears to be the varying quality and timeliness of intermediate outputs produced by some observatories.

Involvement of academics on advisory committees of challenging projects or even ad hoc meetings with a group of academic experts in some projects on initiative of the research managers were seen to help Agency gain credibility in disseminating and justifying its results. The largest projects also benefited from reviews of data quality assessments which deepen the trust in the data that the Agency produces. Case studies of projects conducted as part of the evaluation as well as users of the EIRO reports with national member state knowledge indicated variable quality and reliability of data produced by some national correspondents. The main challenge is that often the research manager does not have the member state level knowledge to spot any omissions. Therefore it is not easy to cure this issue simply by giving the research managers opportunity to exercise more contracting power.

Communication is perceived by the Agency as a core activity and improvements in both identifying opportunities and feeding into policy debates has enabled the Agency to further meet the objectives specified in the Work Programme. Collaboration with other organisations is viewed as one of the objectives that was met only on an informal level, for example, there were discussions with other EU agencies and there was a number of developments that exemplify the ability of agencies to collaborate on work packages of individual projects and feed to and build on research of others. There is nevertheless room for improvement in terms of formal collaborations and working with the OECD.

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<sup>43</sup> The three research areas are: Employment growth and demand and supply of labour in changing labour markets, More and better jobs and higher productivity through partnership, Promotion of social inclusion and sustainable social protection

## 5 Operational framework

The questions under Operational Framework mainly aim to investigate the efficiency of the Agency in producing outputs, the timeliness of these outputs and to what extent organisational structures and processes support the implementation of the Work Programme and the achievement of its objectives.

### 5.1 To what extent has Eurofound efficiently deployed its resources (human and financial) to achieve the objectives in the 2009-2012 programme?

The first evaluation question in this chapter has two extra subheadings investigating project-level efficiency and effectiveness and effectiveness in procurement process.

#### 5.1.1 Efficient deployment of human and financial resources

The EPMS provides a number of metrics which were monitored and allow for a certain level of assessment to be made as to how efficiently the Agency used its resources during the period in question. All relevant EPMS indicators<sup>44</sup> and their evolution over the four year period are presented in the table below. Later in this chapter we briefly address the possibilities of a cost effectiveness calculation of the activities undertaken during the period 2009-2012, based on interviews with Eurofound staff and internal documents detailing the activity based budgeting.

**Figure 22: EPMS indicators relating to efficiency**

EPMS indicator	2009	2010	2011	2012
% (cumulative) of budget implementation/planned	100%	98%	99%	97.5%
% (cumulative) of budget utilisation in title 3: comparison of ProjEX Procurement plan with Commitment plan.	75%	82%	103% (target 100%)	103% (target 98%)
Carry forward (EUR)	299,918	116,414	163,297	133,229
Days training delivered per staff member	0.9	5.1	8.4	7.95
Staff positions on staff table filled (% of total)	78%	90%	96%	97%
% Headcount in Core Activities	69%	65%	70%	69%

Source: EPMS reports 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, Eurofound

Efficient deployment of resources and good budget management was defined as a key performance indicator throughout the period and underlined the importance of achieving a 100% budget implementation rate. This rate was achieved in 2009 in full and in the three consecutive years this rate did not drop by more than 2.5% under the budget for the given year. The lower rates of budget implementation were mainly due to funds from assigned revenue not committed in the year; but as they were assigned revenue they were carried forward for commitment in the following year.

The carry forward is a good indicator of adherence to project payment schedules as well as speedy payment execution, and shows a positive trend throughout the period. In 2011 carry forward increased by 40% and exceeded the target for that year which subsequently reduced to a more acceptable level.

<sup>44</sup> The EPMS during the period had an indicator on 'number of milestones met' (according to ProjEX) which was notoriously volatile and the low performance in reported indicator caused Eurofound to change the EPMS methodology, making comparisons inappropriate. Eurofound recognised that this indicator was not a reliable enough measure of Eurofound's performance.



In order for Eurofound to achieve its objectives, it required a good balance of delivery between research, information and communication and administration activities. In 2009-2010 period the EPMS reports did not outline this assessment and indication of the desired balance between them. In 2011 and 2012 EPMS reports the target for the balance has been set at a ratio of 59:23:18 (Research:I&C:Admin). In 2011 Eurofound's budget distribution was only slightly off this target with higher than targeted share of budget allocated to information and communication (by 2%) and administration (by 1%). In 2012 the balance was more 'research focused', with the I&C receiving more than the targeted share of the budget for the administration function was reduced.

The percentage of staff posts filled has improved significantly over the period and the specific staff policy plan, the underlying strategy in 2010 to strengthen the core activities (Research and I&C), resulted in this recruitment of additional research managers and research officers, improving the share of positions filled as well as the balance between core and administrative activities with respect to staff numbers.

External stakeholders, while not having knowledge of the internal management systems of Eurofound, may nevertheless have valid opinions on their perceptions of whether Eurofound is deploying its resources efficiently. In the User Satisfaction Survey respondents who said Eurofound's activities and outputs only contributed to a small extent or did not contribute at all to relevant socio-economic policy developments were asked why they thought this was the case. A few respondents mentioned economic/financial constraints as a reason why Eurofound fails to contribute to relevant socio-economic policy developments to a greater extent, potentially indicating the perception that the organisation is too stretched, trying to do too many things with limited means. Respondents also mentioned Eurofound not having wide enough recognition indicating that more resources should be spent on dissemination activities, and that the tripartite nature of the organisation leads to neutral publications without policy recommendations. However, the proportion of people asked this question was very low and only 60% gave an answer. Any responses must therefore be treated as indicative only.

Indeed, the fact that so few respondents gave an answer to this question is an indication of the generally positive views external stakeholders have of the internal processes of Eurofound. This was confirmed by the consultations with external stakeholders.

*"In light of limited resources, the quality currently delivered by Eurofound is really high".*

*Member State representative*

The opinions of the Employers and Government Governing Board groups was that the monitoring systems in place ensure that the planned activities are undertaken and that Eurofound's structures such as the Governing Board ensure that Agency's activities are well aligned with its objectives.

Evidence of efficient use of human and financial resources from case studies is presented in the text box overleaf.

**Case study evidence: Effective use of resources**

- Each of the case studied projects had a dedicated project manager and a project director (usually a head of research unit). The advisory committees provided additional oversight to ensure efficient use of resources and timely delivery of outputs.
- In several case studies there was an analytical component of synthesising information from a variety of evidence sources which required intense periods of work. Involving a cross-unit team in the project and forward planning enabled more efficient use of human resources (see case study on **Income after retirement**).
- Highly developed procurement practices considering both quality and price ensured the efficient use of resources in projects which comprised a contracted out element of work (see case studies on **EWCS** or **ECS** for example).
- When dealing with delays, the project teams often demonstrated efficient use of resources. In the case of **EWCS** project, for example, the research team utilised resource with the necessary language skills to produce the first findings in order to avoid delay in publishing results.
- Formerly mentioned variability in quality of content produced by the EIRO correspondents resulted in more work for the research manager in form of checking the content and number of iterations between the contributors and the Eurofound staff (see case study on **Posted Workers**).
- **NEETs** project highlighted the usefulness of having key project milestones in order to deploy efficient resources to meet these.

**5.1.2 Cost efficiency calculation**

It is not possible to provide specific figures as to the cost efficiency of individual projects / activities for the 2009-2012 programming period. During this time period the Agency used a project management system, ProjeX, in conjunction with activity based budgeting, a process of allocation of actual expenditures or a forecasted budget into Eurofound's activities. The definition of activities for the purpose of the activity based budgeting is presented in table below.

**Figure 23: Activity definitions for activity based budgeting****A. Research**

1. Observatories & Surveys represented by Survey & Trends Unit (STU) and Observatories Unit (OSBU)
2. Employment & Competitiveness which is represented by the E&C unit
3. Industrial Relations & Workplace Development which is represented by the IR&WD unit
4. Living Conditions & Quality of Life (LCQL) which is represented by the LCQL unit

**B. Dissemination**

5. Information & Communication which is represented by the Information & Communication (I&C) unit

**C. Administrative Support**

6. Administration & Support which is represented by Administration & Finance Unit, ICT and HR and partly Directorate and OSU (the other part is allocated to the operational activities).

*Source: Internal note on activity based budgeting, Eurofound*

Total cost was not captured in full as a substantial share of the total project budget was used on information and communication activities which are core activities related to Agency's mandate. There were three attempts to calculate cost efficiency on a project level within project level evaluations but such ad hoc exercises are of limited

value on their own. There are also inherent problems with estimating the value of outcomes which are in Eurofound's case changes in relevant policies affecting living and working conditions.

More importantly, during the period, the activity based budgeting meant that the Eurofound heads of research specified the budget based on the estimated number of man days required for the project execution distinguishing between levels of seniority. There was however no timesheet system to track how much time each research staff member spent on individual projects. Timesheets have only been piloted this year on five projects and therefore closer monitoring of overruns based on days spent versus days budgeted will become a new measure that can in the future point towards efficiency in execution of research activities that Eurofound undertakes to achieve its objectives.

A final challenge in understanding the total cost of specific projects relates to the allocation of communications costs which will again be possible to some extent by use of timesheets on a project level. These are not currently allocated to projects in a systematic way; they are not treated as part of the project but instead as part of the core function of the organisation. The text box below details the requirements for calculating project level cost efficiency.

### **Cost-efficiency**

A cost-efficiency calculation – relating the cost of individual research projects to their immediate outputs and outcomes – may be feasible though there would be a number of challenges that would need to be addressed:

- **Costs** – the costs of individual research projects will include (1) any time spent by Eurofound staff in delivering the project, (2) overheads supporting the delivery of the project, and (3) any external costs incurred. Use of timesheets will help provide a measure of the time associated with individual projects, which can then be valued at the salary cost associated with the individuals concerned. Time spent could also potentially be used to apportion overheads to a project. It is anticipated that attribution of external costs incurred would be relatively unproblematic.
- **Outputs** – a core difficulty will be in defining an appropriate measure that captures the objectives of Eurofound activities. While a range of metrics could possibly be defined (such as number of research reports, or number of events), projects funded by Eurofound are too diverse to adopt a singular measure of the outputs concerned. For example, many projects of different intensities and qualities might be expected to lead to the production of a single research report, rendering measures based on the cost per research publication meaningless. Normalising such measures (such as cost per page produced) would clearly be highly problematic.

The ambition should be to try to go beyond a simple cost efficiency calculation towards cost effectiveness or even a full cost benefit analysis. The approach to how this could be done and what barriers need to be overcome are in the textbox below.

### Cost-effectiveness

- It may be more appropriate to measure cost-effectiveness in terms of a range metrics describing the outcomes involved. A composite measure might be constructed, capturing a range of measures including overall consumption of the research report, alongside views on its quality and influence (measures that might apply across all Eurofound's activities). To implement such a measure, Eurofound would have to utilise user satisfaction surveys to find out on publication level how many users have read the publication and the influence that it has had on them in line with the project's objectives. There may be substantial institutional constraints in adopting such an approach owing to existing surveys undertaken with the stakeholder groups of interest. However, it is not inconceivable that such an approach could be implemented on a case-by-case basis for particularly significant or costly research projects (which, over time, would produce benchmarks against which the VFM associated with future publications could be judged).

### Cost-Benefit Analysis

- The application of cost-benefit analysis techniques to assess the value for money associated with Eurofound's activities would require both an assessment of the costs involved in the delivery of individual projects, and their net social welfare benefits (appropriately monetised). It is anticipated that the main effects of Eurofound's activities will be indirect: the production of research reports may influence Member States to implement regulation and other legislation more effectively than they otherwise would have done. Such an assessment would require both a precise assessment of the influence of research activity over the course regulatory or legislative change, as well as estimates of the net present value associated with the regulation or legislation in both its counterfactual form and the form it was implemented. As the characteristics of these policies cannot be readily quantified, and there is no realistic counterfactual group of territories that could be realistically constructed, the difficulties involved with such an assessment are likely intractable.

#### 5.1.3 Procurement

As regards Eurofound's procurement processes set out in the Financial Regulation comply with the relevant provisions of the general Financial Regulation and Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 2342/2002 shall apply subject to paragraphs 4 to 7 of Article 74 of the EUROFOUND'S FINANCIAL REGULATION. In addition to the legal basis, Eurofound approved a Procurement Manual in May 2011 to ensure consistency in procurement procedures. The basic rule underlying public procurement is to ensure competition between economic operators. Eurofound strives to attempt to secure the best price and quality while ensuring transparency in procedures and that all economic operators are placed on an equal footing. Publishing this manual aimed to make the process more transparent and to provide project teams with comprehensive yet easy to use guidelines to public procurement procedures in Eurofound.

Eurofound recently introduced further clarity into this process in January 2013 when it officially adopted a default quality / price ration of 50 / 50 for procurement of research contracts. There has since this adoption a debate within the Agency whether to adapt this ratio to 60 / 40, which would be of less concern if the tenders for research services include an indicative budget in the tender specification. When a budget estimate is given, price proposals tend to all come in around the value of the estimate and, as a consequence, price competition will be less strong and therefore competition on quality becomes more relevant. Eurofound also recognises that, while the Agency aims to have one policy to fit all research procurement, there may be reasons for exceptions in some

cases. The process always ends with the director awarding the contract. There is a need to have more intelligent and complex measures for assessing tenders and in terms of long term contract to introduce feedback forms that would allow the organisation to learn from positive and negative experiences. The same should be the case for contracts within network of national correspondents which have been identified as an area that needs improvement due to varying quality of inputs for research managers.

## 5.2 To what extent are Eurofound's outputs delivered timely for decisions by stakeholders?

Eurofound used ProjeX to measure the percentage of milestones met (internal and external deadlines including reporting deadlines). This measure was looking at percentage of milestones met on month by month basis, but can be used to generate an annual average and be compared across the four years of the Work Programme. It should be noted that a slightly different measure was used in 2012, potentially making this year less comparable to the others<sup>45</sup>. The measure was seen to be unreliable and volatile and was found to give a proxy for how much leeway the research leader built into the design of the project rather than efficient delivery. Therefore the text and the table below shall be interpreted with this health warning in mind.

Data presented in Figure 24 would suggest that the teams responsible for delivery were either (1) missing targets, (2) overly optimistic at planning or (3) inefficient in managing projects. Either way, better project management or quicker implementation of the new project management system should benefit programme delivery. Otherwise, this can have implications on meeting deadlines relating to policy hotspots and causes further challenges to tail-end activities of a project life cycle, especially those related to dissemination of results and other communication activities.

When delays in projects occurred, Eurofound researchers were able to respond proactively and mitigate negative implications. Examples from the case studies are included in the textbox overleaf.

Figure 24: Percentage of milestones met per month (EPMS indicator 9a)

Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Avg.	Target
2009		25%	0%	50%	25%	6%	67%	33%	7%	19%	8%	4%	22%	90%
2010	35%	32%	25%	47%	24%	28%	61%	57%	25%	11%	16%	9%	31%	N/A
2011	13%	5%	27%	14%	13%	15%	15%	19%	8%	18%	10%	0%	13%	N/A
2012	50%	4%	17%	8%	18%	23%	17%	67%	53%	46%	52%	50%	34%	30%

Source: Internal note on activity based budgeting, Eurofound

<sup>45</sup> Eurofound noted in the 2012 EPMS report that the ProjeX measure of the % of milestones met is not a reliable measure of Eurofound's performance, and that it should only be used in conjunction with other variables in exploring timeliness.

### Case study evidence: Dealing with project delays

- **NEETs** project experienced a 2 months delay in the delivery due to internal capacity problems. Eurofound staff dealt with this delay by close cooperation with policymakers who were expecting the results and provision of draft findings to the relevant unit of DG Employment. This proactive engagement with users meant that at its launch, the report was already destined to be quoted in the upcoming proposal for what was about to become the Youth Guarantee programme. Similarly, the project team produced an unplanned output in a form of a short thematic report was requested by the European Parliament for their thematic committee. Therefore it can be concluded that in this case the delay had no effect on the achieved level of impact.
- The execution of the 5th **EWCS** was connected to a number of delays which originated in issues arising during the piloting of the questionnaire and then transposed into delivery of the First Findings report. Eurofound project team however managed to distribute workload relating to the translation of the First Findings Resumé to members of the project team to incorporate the required languages in which these reports are published in.

Timeliness was viewed by some stakeholders as a problem. One of those who viewed it this way mentioned the EIRO CAR studies. The delays in these studies were mainly attributed to relying on the network of correspondents whom do not always deliver by deadlines. Their input was also seen to differ in quality, in approach and in dedication to the different projects. Another example of untimely delivery are representativeness studies (case study on representativeness study in audiovisual sector). Eurofound is mandated by the European Commission to conduct six representativeness studies a year, but so far has not being able to deliver this. The Representativeness study on the shipbuilding industry was mentioned as an example where the output was delayed and the stakeholder consulted was unsure whether it was ever published.

*“Timeliness is a challenge, especially in relation to representativeness studies. To cover relevant sectors, there would be a need to produce them faster.”*

*EU Employers representative*

The majority of stakeholders did not see timeliness as an issue but some stated that they were not aware of the exact date of planned publication and therefore they would not be aware of the delay if it occurred. This is confirmed by findings from the user Satisfaction Survey which showed that nearly a half of respondents could not assess how frequently Eurofound’s outputs were delivered in time for policymakers to make better informed decisions. Of those who were able to assess this, 66% of them indicated that the delivery of outputs was always or mostly always in time while a third indicated that it was sometimes the case and only one respondent said that Eurofound never deliver their outputs on time. This is nevertheless a strong indication for space for improvement. Respondents from new EU member states (44%) more frequently stated that Eurofound’s outputs were mostly delivered on time for policymakers to make better informed decisions than their counterparts from old EU member states (26.3%). There were no statistically significant differences between respondents that fell into the category ‘Policy Makers’ and those in the category ‘Other users’.

How timeliness is viewed depends to a great extent to how Eurofound output is used by the stakeholders. Those who used Eurofound data mainly for their longitudinal studies saw the timeliness either as adequate or had no opinion on the matter as Eurofound outputs in this respect have a long ‘shelf-life’.

*“Information on labour market reforms and industrial relations observatory needs to be up-to-date if it is to be used to support new reforms and legislations.”*

*EC representative*

This was pointed out despite the procedures in place for monitoring and responding to policy hotspots. Stakeholders using trend data from the large Eurofound surveys as their main source of Eurofound publication, such as the Quality of Life survey or the Working Conditions survey, did not mention timeliness as a problem. Rather, they thought that Eurofound’s reports met their deadlines and that the organisation showed responsiveness in terms of being able to drip feed some results prior to publication for their use. A specific example was the publication of ‘Changes Over Time – First findings from the 5th European Working Conditions Survey’ prior to the publication of the full survey.

However, some stakeholders, mainly those who are not frequent users of the longitudinal Eurofound data, did cite timeliness as a problem when using Eurofound research. Others raised the point that Eurofound outputs were sometimes less relevant to the policy-making process due to the research lacking clear application to their work. These stakeholders would be infrequent users from European institutions other than DG Employment. There is a balance to be had between following the research process as set out in the Work Programme and producing relevant data and being too led by the political agenda. A balance that is not always completely aligned and easy to strike. Eurofound has had a category of ‘priority publications’ for which the deadlines were attempted to keep to more strictly but even these appeared to be delivered with delays.

The organisational review of Eurofound completed in 2014<sup>46</sup> revealed that the project management procedures in the organisation could be improved upon. Staff believed that this especially could be improved at the planning stage of the project. In planning the workload staff felt that sometimes project plans were fragmented over too many staff members for a small number of days. Smaller project teams with days allocated for staff would allow them to buy into the research and make a more meaningful contribution.

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<sup>46</sup> Ipsos MORI (2014), “Organisational Developments in Eurofound: First Analysis”

### Case study evidence: Representativeness Studies - timeliness

While the representativeness study on the audio-visual sector, included in the report as a case study in Annex G, was largely a successful project with an engaged project team, the wider research conducted as part of the ex-post evaluation revealed certain issues with the representativeness studies throughout the 2009-2012 period in general, especially regarding timeliness.

Eurofound are mandated to conduct six representativeness studies per year by the EC. The impetus of these studies arises from the need of the European Commission to identify the representative European Social Partner (ESP) organisations that must be consulted under the provisions of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) and that may initiate social dialogue at European level. Eurofound has, since taking over the mandate from Université Catholique de Louvain in 2006, not managed to conduct the mandated number of representativeness studies. Eurofound have, to date, completed 36 studies since 2006, with an average of just over 4 studies per year.

The EC has noted that conducting four representativeness studies a year will result in some studies being outdated by the time they are to be used (10 years old by the time for renewal).

There are a number of factors affecting Eurofound's ability to not produce 6 representativeness studies per year. These can be summarised as:

- A relatively limited direct impact on policy resulting in lower motivation from Eurofound researchers as perceived by the European Commission. This issue is seen to result in giving lower priority to the representativeness studies over the standard research projects. This perception is based on evident delays in communication and delivery of outputs. The impact of these studies is low, which may contribute to the lack of motivation among those working on them.
- Conscious decision by Eurofound not to overload the EIRO representatives with tasks relating to representativeness studies, especially in light of them delivering other studies for the Agency. These exercises involve mainly complex data collection tasks and as such they are time consuming but require little analysis and may therefore seem less "exciting" than other studies.
- Variability in commitment and quality of outputs from the EIRO representatives, which sometimes leads to delays and poorer data collection in certain countries. Ultimately, this can lead to the ESPs mistrusting the data and not all the relevant organisations being included in the social dialogue at European level.
- Other factors, not in control of the Agency, such as late input from the European Commission and limitations in capacity to execute all planned research projects along the representativeness studies.

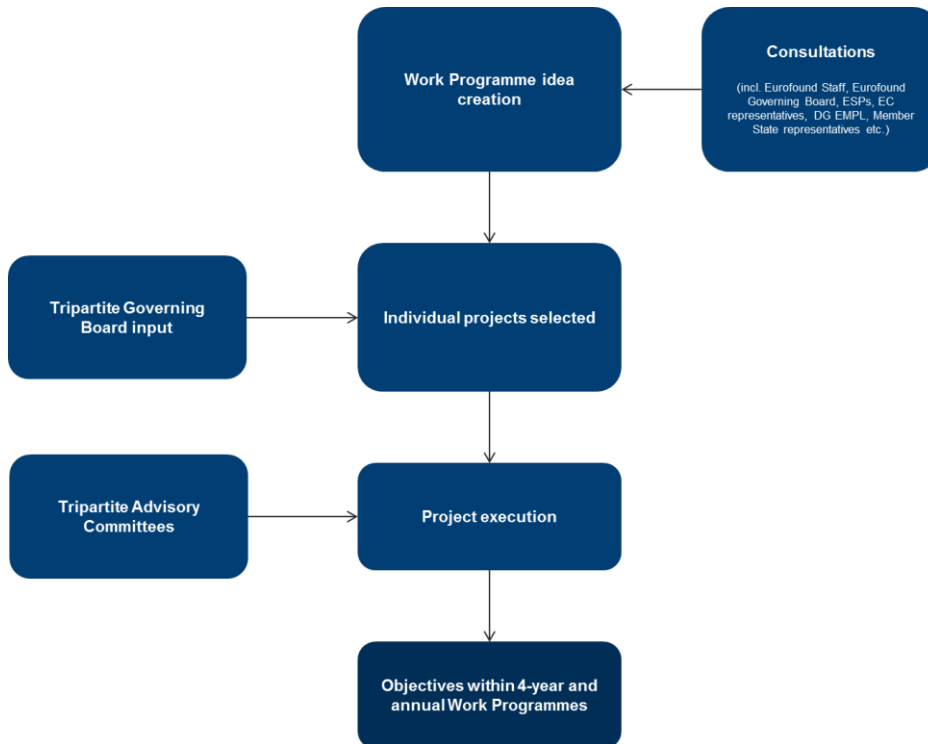
### 5.3 To what extent do Eurofound's structures and processes support the implementation of the [2009-2012] programme and the achievement of its objectives? (The Governing Board structures, Advisory Committees Work Programme decision-making processes)

The subject of this question is discussed in chapter 2 where we concluded that Eurofound Governing Board and relevant advisory committees engage in close scrutiny of projects to ensure their execution and correct interpretation of specified objectives. Furthermore the chapter explored the wide consultation that took place in



preparation of the 2009-2012 Work Programme and the achievements of its objectives. Involvement of these structures in the project life cycle process is illustrated in Figure overleaf.

**Figure 25: Project life cycle and involvement of Governing Board and Advisory Committees**



Eurofound's structures such as the Governing Board ensure that Agency's activities are well aligned with its objectives. The Governing Board has over the years exercised its powers and its members have a strong feeling of responsibility for assuring that the Agency achieves its objectives. There were instances in the past when particular activities were discontinued based on the Governing Board's decision, one such example was given about in country 'road shows' which were undertaken in the early years of the four year Work Programme. In addition to the formal role, members of the Governing Board serve as the Agency's ambassadors in their home countries and in many cases distribute the Agency's research outputs within their organisations and beyond. This role held by individual Governing Board members appears to be one of the decisive factors in achieving direct policy impact and should be therefore highlighted to them as of high importance.

There appears to be a varied level of commitment across the members. This was evident at the Governing Board meeting in October 2014 when nearly a half of the members were not present at the main discussion of the Work Programme for 2015. It should be however noted that the current structure of the Governing Board is rather extensive with representatives from each of the 28 member states and the European Commission. The Governing Board meets at least once a year to debate and adopt the work programme and annual Budget. A sub-set of Board members, known as the Bureau, meets more regularly (about 6 times a year) to facilitate the work of the Board. Bureau a more reactive structure that can meet and make decisions more quickly than the full board in instances that do not require full board discussion and approval.

Similarly the advisory committees have a tripartite nature but they fulfil a supervisory role during the execution of projects, by which they improve the relevance of content at various stages of individual projects. Interaction of the three represented groups results in a demonstration of shared commitment to the research. General opinion is that optional inclusion of academics on the advisory committees is an effective setup as it only limits involvement

of academics to the projects which require such input. There was a limited number of stakeholders who voiced that inclusion of (independent) experts is not comprehensive enough and that a higher inclusion of such experts might positively impact on quality of Eurofound projects. Usefulness of the contribution by advisory committees is illustrated in the box below.

#### Case study evidence: Structures and processes supporting achievement of objectives

- Every research project had a designated advisory committee and was approved by the Governing Board. Some projects did not have academics on the advisory committees, such as the **NEETS** project case study. This project on the other hand highlighted how a proactive effort from the researcher to set up a group of academics to question the approach and provide feedback to strengthen the methodology to monetise costs of inaction relating to a societal problem.
- **Income after retirement** case study emphasised how the Living Conditions Advisory Committee proved invaluable by commenting on draft outputs and scrutinising the research content. This particular project was seen to have received more attention from the advisory committee due to concerns from Workers' representatives about the policy recommendations that the study have will provided.
- The **EWCS** and **ECS** case studies highlighted the reduction in number of advisory committees during 2010. One of the implications was that EWCS reports to Industrial Relations Advisory Committee as opposed to its own advisory committee. Despite these changes, there was a general opinion that the tripartite representation at the advisory committees strengthened over the period and that as a result these structures were better placed to support the effectiveness of the Agency in delivery of its objectives. These larger projects benefited from specific annual progress reports being presented to the advisory committee members.
- Advisory committees tend to have little input into design and delivery of the **representativeness studies** due to their highly standardised nature.

There has been a standard process of developing a Communications plan for the year by the Head of the Information and Communication and its approval at the management advisory committee (MAC) meeting. This process ensured that communication objectives were included in the design of all research projects. The organisational review of Eurofound published in 2014<sup>47</sup> highlighted that the MAC process could benefit from transparency and broader communication of decisions taken at these meetings with other Agency staff. Nevertheless since the last update of the Communication Strategy document in 2013, there has been an additional step added to the process in which the communications plan is discussed with the heads of the three research units. The organisational review published in 2014 pointed out that the collaboration between research and I&C could be improved throughout the research process to develop lasting collaborative relationships which could improve the effectiveness of the organisation in disseminating findings.

## 5.4 Summary

Eurofound's operational framework is well setup for production and delivery of new relevant information to its main target groups. There were however a number of characteristics of the monitoring system and lack of some features of it which prevented the evaluation team assessing the efficiency at any granular level. The top-line indicators suggest that the Agency ran close to its target budget and reduced carry-overs on an annual basis. The only indicators of timely delivery suggest that the Agency under-performed on this measure, the same

<sup>47</sup> Ipsos MORI (2014), "Organisational Developments in Eurofound: First Analysis"

indication arose from the case studies in which more than a half had experienced some sort of a delay during its delivery.

Our primary research however suggests that users did not find major issues with the timeliness of deliver of research outputs as Eurofound was always forthcoming and attempted to deal with early requests for draft reports of information and the trend data with a longer shelf-life is not as time dependant as some of the shorter on-demand requests. It was mainly the infrequent users of Eurofound outputs and those looking for up to date information on new developments who indicated this issue. The new project management system in place should warrant better quality data for delays in delivery and an assessment whether this shortcoming has been cured in the current period. With the move towards forward planning and identification of policy hotspots, delivery towards deadlines is even-more-so important. The Agency should recognise the need to meet the requirement to produce 6 representativeness studies a year and attempt to resolve the methodological challenges to deliver them in shorter space of time with the same or lower resources. The Eurofound researchers need to recognise the uniqueness and importance of these studies and the ideal positioning of the Agency to being able to undertake them. It would be beneficial to motivate the involved researchers by encouraging them to use innovative methodologies.

In order to implement cost-efficiency/cost-effectiveness into the assessment and decision-making processes when making choices about strategic direction of the types of projects to focus on, Eurofound would require implementation of a more project-focused monitoring system. Such system would require attribution of time and cost from both research and communication functions and a strong measurement of outcomes linked to individual publications linked to projects. This is however in opposition to the thematic-view approach that the organisation decided to choose after its reorganisation in 2011, especially in light of producing horizontal type publications utilising research from a number of projects which make it nearly impossible to attribute outcomes from such publication to the costs associated to their production.

The Governing Board has a role in taking decisions on financial and budgetary matters grounded in Eurofound's financial regulation but also a wider role in dissemination of research outputs within their organisations. Engagement of the Governing Board members varies and the Agency shall ensure fuller engagement by all members. The subset of the board that meets much more regularly is well placed to take more responsive decisions that do not require approval of the full board. The tripartite advisory committees are seen to have a specific added value in ensuring ownership and approval of the research undertaken by the Agency.

## 6 Conclusions and Recommendations

This evaluation aimed to gather reliable evidence about Eurofound's performance during the completed programme period 2009-2012, as well as to provide input to improve Eurofound's capacity to implement its current four year programme. This chapter summarises and brings together the findings from individual chapters which resulted in the set of recommendations included at the end of the Chapter.

### **Eurofound's Mission**

Eurofound staff have developed a comprehensive understanding of the needs of the various stakeholder and user groups that the Agency targets. Stakeholders can be split into four distinct user categories moving along the influence/power continuum from those with the least direct influence on policy developments to those heavily involved in drafting new policies on EU and national levels. This strategic knowledge held by Eurofound staff, in combination with the early determination of the high level priorities and a process of extensive internal and external consultation resulted in a high alignment of the Work Programme with the needs of the Agency's stakeholders.

Involvement of employers, workers, national governments, and the European Commission ensures the relevance of the Work Programme to these groups of stakeholders. Indirectly represented organisations were satisfied with Agency's activities being aligned to their needs. There was a general consensus among the consulted stakeholders that some projects were more aligned with the needs of one of the groups than others and therefore by nature none of the groups could be fully satisfied and that compromise was necessary. Stakeholders who could comment on this issue acknowledged that this is an acceptable consequence of a tripartite system and commented that all projects were, however, undertaken professionally and to the highest quality.

Some specific remarks on the alignment with stakeholder needs were voiced by members of the tripartite groups during the stakeholder workshops. For example, the Government representatives indicated a high level of alignment with needs signified by the fact that a number of Governing Board members use Eurofound's research in advising Ministers at national levels and the workers highlighted that the factual research produced by Eurofound perhaps aligns better to their needs than evaluative projects – since providing a judgement potentially politicises the issue.

### **Why does Eurofound do what Eurofound does?**

Eurofound's mission and rationale for existence is deeply grounded in its original mandate of 1975. This relevance was confirmed in the ex-ante evaluation of 2008 by conducting a problem analysis. The exercise recognised that the Agency has built up a substantial body of knowledge in the field of living and working conditions in Europe. The most recent ex-ante evaluation, undertaken in 2012, went further by stating that the current mission 'to provide knowledge to assist in the development of social and work-related policies' effectively became the new reference point to interpret Eurofound's mandate. From this assessment it can be concluded that throughout the period 2009-2012 Eurofound did what it did because it had proven to be a unique information provider in its field of operation.

Eurofound has throughout the period in question made extensive efforts to ensure that it remains relevant and listens to its key stakeholders and primary target groups which are well defined and link to the original communications strategy from 2006. There were strategic changes made to the way in which the Agency chose to deliver and communicate the results from its work over this work programming period. Of particular note this included: reducing the number of publications per project (from 7.8 in 2009 to 2.5 in 2012), restructuring the

research units, and increasing the in-house research capabilities so that more of the project delivery could be in-sourced. In-sourcing of research was considered by Governing Board representatives and Eurofound staff to have positive effects on Eurofound's ability to deliver high quality research. In the final two years of the Work Programme the Agency received increases in the user satisfaction ratings which would, despite slight changes in the methodology of user satisfaction surveys<sup>48</sup>, indicate that these changes may have had a positive impact in this regard.

### What is the unique added value of Eurofound?

The Agency is seen to provide a unique added value for its key stakeholders who see its main strength in the provision of European coverage, and reliability of trend data. As such it is seen as a trusted source with a tripartite governance structure. All consulted parties; some closer to the Agency's governance structures and some as irregular users, have seen value in Eurofound's research.

### To what extent do Eurofound's activities and outputs contribute to relevant socio-economic policy developments? By which means?

A vast majority of those who are close to the policymaking process<sup>49</sup> indicated that the data and information that the Agency produces is invaluable background and contextual information, while some of them were also able to point out specific examples of how this information fed into the policy development process. For example, one member state representative stated that Eurofound research was useful as background information for better informed policies when drafting proposals for new programmes or initiatives. It was highlighted by policymakers themselves that this process is long and complex and in order for the policies to be informed by evidence – produced by Eurofound – a number of factors need to be present. The most important factor is the alignment of the timing of the relevant research outputs and the political agenda, the latter outside the control of the Agency. This limitation has been explored to a great depth in interviews and case studies that indicate the variety of means through which Eurofound feeds into the policymaking process but the actual attribution of a causal link is very difficult to prove as events behind the drafting and approval of a particular policy are challenging to unpick. Evidence of what makes a project have a direct policy impact gathered from the case studies is summarised in the Text box at the end of this Chapter.

## Programme Focus

### To what extent do Eurofound's activities / outputs reflect the priorities of the EU socio-economic policy makers, and EU social partners?

Eurofound's programme focus during this period reflected the priorities of EU socio-economic policymakers and EU social partners to a large extent, especially taking into account the differences between these various groups. Some of the groups, in particular the workers, indicated that they would have preferred the balance of activities to focus on one of the three research areas<sup>50</sup> more than others, but there was a general sense of satisfaction with the focus of the 4 year and annual Work Programmes due to the high level of involvement of all groups in the theme and project selection processes. The workers group by nature tends to be most interested in research on

<sup>48</sup> In 2013 the online questionnaire underwent a restructure of the format and content revision in order to increase low response rate, introducing questions about the overall usage of Eurofound publications (rather than just frequency of usage), preferred format of publications, publications of principle importance, and information providers most often used.

<sup>49</sup> Those that have a directly impact on policy development, i.e. respondents with the following roles: Advising on policy, Shaping policy and Advocacy and lobbying

<sup>50</sup> The three research areas are: Employment growth and demand and supply of labour in changing labour markets, More and better jobs and higher productivity through partnership, Promotion of social inclusion and sustainable social protection

industrial relations related topics whereas the government representatives are most interested in findings relating to effectiveness of policies in improvement of living and working conditions.

### Flexibility and responsiveness to change: How responsive has Eurofound been to unforeseen changes arising notably from the economic and financial crisis during the programming period?

Evidence from both staff and stakeholder interviews indicated that the wide audience involved in the Work Programme design however resulted in a marginally slower response to the economic crisis, especially if measured by introduction of specific topical projects. The general focus of the programme allowed flexibility in the annual Work Programmes to respond to topical issues but the rigidity in the system (structures involving 78 Governing Board members from all EU member states) was seen to not allow for this to an optimal level. Some efforts on existing project levels were made in the first year of the Work Programme (for example the European Jobs Monitor had an amended methodology to measure the effect of crisis on jobs and to analyse structural shifts on employment in Europe) but specific projects targeted at the effect of crisis on living and working conditions were not set up as quickly as they could have been. There is not too much flexibility built in beyond the annual Work Programme development and a limited budget for the stakeholder enquiry service. There are clearly inherent risks in both extremes – having in place a system dedicating too much of the budget to ‘arising topics’ or being too rigid. The challenge is to increase the flexibility within the existing official processes for Work Programme development and approval which enhance trust in research specified in the tripartite setting.

A review of Annual Work Programmes developed over the period validated that the majority of specific research projects to be delivered had clear objectives aligned with the logic towards achieving positive outcomes on policy. Evidence from this review, project case studies undertaken by the evaluation team, and feedback from Eurofound staff suggested that projects considered contentious by the tripartite groups of the Governing Board, such as income after retirement or the posted workers (see case studies), ended up with considerably less clear objectives and scope or were rejected despite having high policy relevance (automatic stabilisers). On the other hand those projects which were not considered to be as contentious, for example NEETs project (see case studies) had a more clearly specified objectives and scope.

### Gaps / priorities not covered / Matching the areas of expertise with the challenges, orientation and topics that were selected and implemented

The tripartite Governing Board selection and approval processes seek to ensure a high level of coverage of priorities for socio-economic policymakers and social partners. There was nevertheless a certain level of re-focusing of the projects once Eurofound made a conscious decision to respond to the financial economic crisis. As a result there may have been some topics selected in 2007-8 that were not fully implemented or did not receive the emphasis they were originally planned to. Another identified area of potential gaps was on the bordering remit with the European Agency for Occupational Safety and Health (EU-OSHA). Both agencies attempt to avoid overlap and as a result the themes relevant to both may have been left in ‘no-man’s-land’. General views of the stakeholders, both on the Governing Board and not, was that the overlap with other EU agencies, including EU OSHA, CEDEFOP or FRA, is on the one hand inevitable and on the other hand so small that it is not a problem.

The Agency had in place collaborative agreements with all EU ‘sister’ agencies but the formal collaboration rarely extended beyond informing each other’s Work Programme during the development and planning stages. There was however a substantial collaboration of an informal nature and some evidence of more formal collaboration such as procurement of sampling of the second ECS in collaboration with EU OSHA. The main barrier to formal collaboration on research projects were administrative complexities involved in joint commissioning. It is important that collaborative projects are introduced only in areas where necessary rather than for the sake of collaboration. Members of the Governing Board perceived that the level of collaboration with the ILO was the most appropriate whilst the links with the OECD were seen as those which required improvement. This perception might be

influenced by the specific reference to improve collaboration with international organisations in the 2009-2012 four year Work Programme.

The internal oversight procedures ensured that all approved projects are executed and highlight any problems in execution once encountered. Data stored in the project management system does not allow assessment of which projects did not result in outputs.

How does the Work Programme preparation (consultation of stakeholders, process etc.) ensure that Eurofound activities/outputs reflect the priorities of the EU socio-economic policy makers and EU social partners?

Work Programme development cycle is an effective and mature process that began over a year prior to final discussions and approval of the draft programme by the Agency's Governing Board. Stakeholders felt that they were consulted and that their priorities have been reflected in the Work Programme. Individual stakeholders could point at specific projects that addressed their direct needs. Some of them were able to point specifically towards projects that addressed their direct needs. The government representatives highlighted the Stakeholder enquiry service projects and a representative of the European structures the project on 'Green Jobs'.

It was also the first work programme to benefit from collaborative agreements with the other EU agencies and involvement in discussion of their respective four year and annual Work Programmes. The consultations at the time involved external stakeholders and the beginning of the period also included internal brainstorming events on Agency-wide level and symbolic prizes given for the best research idea – one of which was won by the lead researcher behind the most successful NEETs project.

Methods (methodology, quality assurance, etc)

Eurofound applied a suit of tried and tested methods during the four year Work Programme and continued in the recent trend towards increasing its in-house research capacity. These in combination with employing standard project management quality assurance practices resulted in high quality outputs receiving relatively high levels of user satisfaction. The core activities of the organisation were based on sound research methods which provide a suitable foundation for comparative analysis and time series in order to identify developing trends both in time and geographical locations. Case studies of projects conducted as part of the evaluation as well as users of the EIRO reports with national member state knowledge indicated variable quality and reliability of data produced by some national correspondents. The main challenge is that often the research manager does not have the member state level knowledge to spot any omissions. Therefore it is not easy to cure this issue simply by giving the research managers opportunity to exercise more contracting power.

Communication strategy (target groups (people), products, placement)

The 2009-2012 Work Programme delivered its outputs to the users via established channels specified in the Information and Communication Strategy that was updated in 2006. Throughout the period it was recognised that communication was one of the Agency's key roles. Communication activities have undergone a number of improvements throughout the period, notably in the areas of the packaging of the knowledge and information to be disseminated. In addition to these there were improvements in processes such as the introduction of user satisfaction surveys and close monitoring of downloads of the priority publications in their initial periods after launch.

## Operational Framework

To what extent has Eurofound efficiently deployed its resources (human and financial) to achieve the objectives in the 2009-2012 programme?

The Agency has been operating for 40 years and therefore it is unsurprising that its operational framework is well setup for production and delivery of new relevant information to its main target groups. There were however a number of characteristics of the monitoring system which prevented the evaluation team from assessing the efficiency of Eurofound at more granular level. Most importantly, the Agency's costs were monitored at the level where projects only consisted of research activities (internal and contracted out) and communications and information as standalone activities. The topline indicators suggest that the Agency ran close to its target budget and with an acceptable level of carry-overs which were reduced over the period, whilst it efficiently increased its internal research capabilities.

In order to implement cost-efficiency/cost-effectiveness into the assessment and decision-making processes Eurofound would be required to implement a more project-focused monitoring system. Such a monitoring system would require attribution of time from both research and communication functions and a strong measurement of outcomes linked to individual publications that can be linked to projects and their costs. There is however a tension between such an approach and the Agency's corporate decision at the time of the 2009-2012 programme to take a thematic-view approach, in light of producing horizontal type publications utilising research from a number of projects which make it nearly impossible to attribute outcomes from such publications to the costs associated to their production. A cost-benefit analysis would require both a precise assessment of the influence of research activity over the course regulatory or legislative change, as well as estimates of the net present value associated with the regulation or legislation in both its counterfactual form and the form it was implemented. As the characteristics of these policies cannot be readily quantified, and there is no realistic counterfactual group of territories that could be realistically constructed, the difficulties involved with such an assessment are intractable

#### To what extent are Eurofound's outputs delivered timely for decisions by stakeholders?

There was evidence from the monitoring information collected by Eurofound and from the case study work that there were a number of project delays experienced over the period. In most cases these delays were not significant and Eurofound staff demonstrated proactive behaviour to solve these challenges. For the majority of users consulted as part of this evaluation these delays were either not noticed or not considered a significant issue<sup>51</sup> (possibly due to the shelf-life of some of the research outputs). There were however a small number of occasions where delays were considered problematic for the users, for example the representativeness studies which are conducted by Eurofound on behalf of the Commission. These delays were due to a number of reasons, including balancing these complex studies alongside other research projects utilising the same capacities – both internally and within the EIRO network; as well as factors not within the control of the Agency such as delayed input from the EC. The new project management system put in place in the current Work Programme period should warrant better quality data for delays in delivery and an assessment of whether this shortcoming has been resolved in the current period. With the move towards forward planning and identification of policy hotspots, delivery towards deadlines is of increasing importance.

#### To what extent do Eurofound's structures and processes support the implementation of the [2009-2012] programme and the achievement of its objectives?

Eurofound's structures such as the Governing Board were established to ensure that Agency's activities are well aligned with its objectives. In practice the Governing Board has over the years exercised its powers and its members have a strong feeling of responsibility for assuring that the Agency achieves its objectives. In addition to the formal role, members of the Governing Board are expected to serve as the Agency's ambassadors in their home countries and in many cases distribute the Agency's research outputs within their organisations and beyond. There appears to be a varied level of commitment across the members in fulfilling their intended roles and case study evidence indicates that stakeholder support from the Governing Board members and their levels involvement are one of the key factors for Eurofound's work realising direct policy impact at national levels.

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<sup>51</sup> Though 2011 user satisfaction identified a need for schedule' type alerting system regarding research publications



Advisory committees are a crucial component of the internal structure and were considered to have improved in their workings during the period as significant efforts were made to organise them better. Involvement of academics on these committees for challenging projects or even ad hoc setup of meetings with groups of academic experts helped the Agency to gain credibility in disseminating and justifying its results. The largest projects also benefited from data quality assessments which deepened the trust in the data that the Agency produces according to user feedback collected as part of the project-level case studies.

**Factors increasing likelihood of achieving direct policy impact:****INCEPTION**

- Having a high ambition and a strong interest in the research topic by the researcher. Support from the Head of Unit and internal organisation buy-in in the project.
- A clear definition of the objectives and scope of the proposed project requiring little or no further validation after approval by the Governing Board. If further validation (e.g. inception workshops with the Advisory Committees) is needed, it should be done as soon as possible to avoid delays from early on.
- Projects with a focus on a pressing societal issues tend to have a higher probability to generate direct impact, especially when research is needed in order to establish (or confirm) terminology and define indicators.
- A novel research question or method of approaching an existing research question (addressing a research gap).
- Setup of the right size project team based on required competencies and abilities to execute the tasks.

**EXECUTION**

- (for projects requiring external contractor) Selection of an external contractor knowledgeable in the topic area, with proven track record and ability to deliver on time.
- Effective and early communication within project team and with external experts involved in the project early on in the process in order to flag any expected issues.
- Effective collaboration with advisory committees to receive advice which in turn results in policy-relevant research outputs.
- Using academics to challenge methods at the interim stage of the project to ensure its rigour and obtain ideas on strengthening the approach and gaining credibility.
- Using innovative research methodologies, drawing on a number of sources and involving national level case studies.
- In large complex projects with a large contracted-out component, having the quality of data assessed by an external contractor led to actions improving the dataset.
- Having a dedicated team which remains largely the same for the duration of the project will reduce any delays resulting from the need to train new team members.
- In cases of cross-unit project teams good communication and regular meetings are key for effective execution of the project.

**DISSEMINATION AND IMPACT**

- A highly engaged group of stakeholders and their intensive involvement in consultation and review process ensures high relevance and accessibility of findings. This is especially the case for GB.
- A definitive number (such as a high cost of inaction) as a main finding provides easier presentation of results and is more attractive as a media headline.
- Alignment of research to upcoming policy needs (policy hotspots process).
- Pro-active cross-team coordination and concerted efforts by the directorate, BLO, I&C and research team in dissemination activities.
- Organising pre-publication events that provide early feedback for the draft versions of the report – useful for improving the tone of messages and securing audience buy-in.
- Having a strategic communication plan for a research project (developed in collaboration of the research and communications teams), linking to policymakers' needs extending beyond the end date of the project.

## Recommendations

The European Foundation's four year Work Programmes have been externally evaluated since 2001. The recommendations have rarely been significant in terms of the level of change which has been suggested<sup>52</sup>. At the point of the 2009-2012 Work Programme's implementation the organisation could be considered well versed in operating within a tripartite structure, delivering to its stakeholders, and is known well within the policy environment. As such it is perhaps not surprising that the conclusions drawn from this evaluation process indicate that Eurofound's delivery of the Work Programme broadly met what was expected by its stakeholders; addressed its mandate to a significant extent and that the internal structures were appropriate to supporting its activity under the programme. In many cases areas identified for improvement by this evaluation (as per the Agency's performance during the 2009-2012 period) are already being proactively acted on by the Agency. There are only five recommendations which are not at this point of time acted upon already. This is a modest number in comparison to other evaluations and it signifies the high level of performance to which the Agency has been working in the recent years. Recommendations in this section arose from the evaluation findings and were discussed at an evaluation steering committee meeting to ensure their relevance and ability to be taken forward as actions<sup>53</sup>. That being said they are presented in a form of actionable options rather than prescribed way forward.

The specific recommendations for improvement on which Eurofound are already acting, but still warrant noting, include:

- **Implementation of an activity based budgeting** approach is included in the Agencies' roadmap<sup>54</sup> requirements. This involves development of systems which will allow for full project costs to be analysed. This will enable some level of efficiency assessment to take place. It is however important to ensure attribution of research and communication activities to individual projects which result in outputs. The Agency is currently working on these improvements.
- **Introduction of project management training and a project management system** to ensure consistency of project management delivery within the Agency. Performance during the 2009-2012 period indicated that there was a need to focus more on enabling actual use, and promoting project management excellence (triangle of time, quality, and project / resource management). This included encouraging collaborations between units, keeping the project teams to a reasonable size and holding regular meetings of the whole teams so everyone is aware of the timelines. This is in line with the growing emphasis on quality over quantity and the European Commission's roadmap for reducing Agency staff by 5-10% by 2020. The Agency is currently working on improvements in this area.
- **A rolling action plan to improve the process and meet yearly production of 6 representativeness studies** has been put in place and progress should be reviewed. While it is accepted that representativeness studies are within Eurofound's broader remit, the approach to these studies should be explored re: the possibilities to

<sup>52</sup> External evaluation of Eurofound (2001) organised recommendations on Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Impact, Governance and Internal organisation and recommended for example establishment of closer links working with the European Commission and clarification of roles with the Bilbao Agency; Ex post evaluation of the 2001-2004 Work Programme recommended specific operational level recommendations such as systematic collection of feedback from stakeholders, regularly monitoring unit costs of projects and improving evaluation planning of the agency; Ex-post Evaluation of Eurofound – Four Year Work Programme 2005-08 proposed incremental improvements in EPMS, more targeted dissemination and highlighted the necessity to streamline/improve governance aspects; Ex ante evaluation of the 2009-2012 programme proposed a short set of recommendations in Internal and external risks areas, some of which included ensuring flexibility and responsiveness to execute and meet changing needs and ensuring implementation of formal cooperation and partnership development strategy as part of annual work programmes

<sup>53</sup> There was a longer list of recommendations presented at the interim meeting some of which were discussed and not formally included in the final report. For example one such proposition was to dedicate a share of the budget to emerging topics.

<sup>54</sup> [http://europa.eu/agencies/documents/2012-12-18\\_roadmap\\_on\\_the\\_follow\\_up\\_to\\_the\\_common\\_approach\\_on\\_eu\\_decentralised\\_agencies\\_en.pdf](http://europa.eu/agencies/documents/2012-12-18_roadmap_on_the_follow_up_to_the_common_approach_on_eu_decentralised_agencies_en.pdf)

extend their usefulness beyond single user. The specificity of the well-defined product might not allow such efforts to be successfully implemented.

- **In-sourcing research staff and reduction in quantity but increase in quality were** seen as successful strategies implemented during the period and should be maintained over the next programming period.

There are a number of strategic recommendations which should be considered by Eurofound and on which the Agency has not currently been focusing, these include:

1. **Consider potential options for optimising the level and quality of input from the Governing Board.** In particular it is suggested that actions are taken to:
  - a) *Maximise engagement of the Governing Board members represented at the key meetings* and not just the pre-meeting plenary. Systems and procedures both laid out in the founding regulation and additional efforts from Eurofound are thorough (e.g. meeting dates agreed one year in advance and substitutes are available for each representative). However motivation and incentives for Governing Board members shall be reconsidered especially taking into consideration upcoming changes resulting from the update of the founding regulation (one meeting a year) and the roadmap for decentralised EU agencies.
  - b) *Further incentivise / encourage Governing Board members to engage on national levels* in supporting dissemination of relevant studies to national actors. Case study evidence highlights that this kind of support is key for achieving further impact but it is not happening consistently.
  - c) *Introduce an approach that can ensure that irrespective of Governing Board discussions that the scope and objectives of projects are limited to what is practically feasible and relevant against the Agency's mission in the EU policy context.* A solution could be the Director, in his current powers, to have the space to discuss with the Governing Board in order to find operational solutions in a context of mutual trust. It could also be the inclusion of Academic Experts to comment on the project scope for projects which are identified as being particularly challenging (see also recommendation 2). Another approach would be to define objective judgment criteria for what is an acceptable scope and objective for a generic project and publishing the GB decisions.
2. **Consideration should be given as to how the Agency can build in approaches at key stages in the delivery of the projects to benefit from academic expert involvement.** Evidence of the use of academic expert involvement from the case studies and also from stakeholder feedback suggested that it can have significant benefits in enhancing both the quality of output but also its perception. It was suggested that academic involvement may be useful in particular to independently assess whether a project scope is reasonable within a timeframe, budget and methodology perspective (especially for those projects which are considered controversial in nature). Furthermore involvement of academic experts can benefit Eurofound in terms of further dissemination and wide awareness of the research produced by the Agency.

This recommendation requires careful consideration and exploration of options by which the decision will be made to include an academic panel or not. Lessons are available from the decision to discontinue the existence of the academic board in 2004. It is especially challenging to introduce such an instrument as the current Work Programme planning stage runs to a tight agenda.

3. **Action should be taken to reduce the variability of output generated by national correspondents as this has potential to impact negatively on the quality of the Agency's outputs.** Options for doing so should be considered by the Agency.
4. **Identify areas where formal collaborations and working with the OECD and other international organisations** could take place in the framework of the arrangements in place between the Agency and the

Commission with regard to the management of international relations. If working with ILO was particularly seen as appropriate during the time period, it may be relevant to transfer this to working with other organisations.

5. Identify areas for collaboration with sister agencies, in particular EU OSHA, not only to avoid overlap but also to avoid creating a gap on the bordering remits. This concern was shared by many Governing Board members and internal stakeholders. The main instruments for communication with sister agencies are directorate level conversations during Work Programme development defined in the collaboration agreements.

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