



Decision No 74 of the Management Board of the European Foundation for the improvement of living and working conditions (Eurofound) on the adoption of the Eurofound's Strategy for cooperation with external partners

THE MANAGEMENT BOARD OF THE EUROPEAN FOUNDATION FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF LIVING AND WORKING CONDITIONS (hereinafter referred to as 'Eurofound' or 'the Agency'),

Having regard to Regulation (EU) 2019/127 of 16 January 2019 establishing a European Foundation for the improvement of living and working conditions (Eurofound) and repealing Council Regulation (EEC) No 1365/75¹ (hereinafter referred to as 'Eurofound Founding Regulation'), and in particular Articles 2 § 3, 5(1) point (q), 11 § 5 and 30 § 3,

Whereas

(1) Cooperation with external partners – EU institutions and EU bodies; EU agencies, international organisations and third countries; national actors; research and academic institutions, NGOs and think tanks – has proved to be a vital component of implementing Eurofound's tasks, as defined under its Founding Regulation.

(2) Eurofound seeks to explore, develop and optimise this cooperation with external partners - at international, EU and national level - in order to maximise its research capability and enhance its dissemination capacity to better serve the needs of its stakeholders.

(3) Taking stock of a long and successful experience of cooperating with external partners, as well as the fulfilling requirements set in Eurofound Founding Regulation, it is important to streamline the process of establishing and maintaining such cooperations on a continuous basis.

(4) This strategy outlines the vision, principles, and strategic objectives, presenting different forms of cooperation and their defining criteria, using an approach that focuses on the added value of each form of partnership in an equal manner. The document also discusses the expected results in terms of complementarity, greater impact and visibility for the Agency's work, as well as the internal organisation to coordinate the cooperation with external partners.

(5) A draft version of the Strategy was discussed during the Executive Board Meeting, which took place on 28 and 29 September 2023, having been well received by its members.

HAS ADOPTED THIS DECISION:

Article 1 – Adoption

1. The Strategy for cooperation with external partners, as annexed to this Decision (Annex I), is hereby adopted.

¹ OJ L 30, 31.1.2019, p. 74–89.



2. The Executive Director of Eurofound may, in line with Article 11, paragraph 5, subpoint p) of Eurofound's Founding Regulation, where relevant, cooperate with other Union agencies and conclude cooperation agreements with them.

Article 2 – Entry into force

The present Decision shall enter into force on the day following that of its adoption by the Management Board. It shall be published on Eurofound's website.

Done in Dublin, on 17 November 2023

For the Management Board

The Chairperson



Eurofound Strategy for cooperation with external partners

Vision, principles and strategic objectives

According to its mandate, Eurofound's founding objective is *'to provide the Commission, other Union institutions, bodies and agencies, the Member States and the social partners with support for the purpose of shaping and implementing policies concerning the improvement of living and working conditions, devising employment policies, and promoting the dialogue between management and labour. To that end, Eurofound shall enhance and disseminate knowledge, provide evidence and services for the purpose of policy making, including research-based conclusions, and shall facilitate knowledge sharing among and between Union and national actors.'*

In this context, Eurofound seeks to explore, develop and optimise cooperation with external partners at international, EU and national level, in order to maximise its research capability and enhance its dissemination capacity to better serve the needs of the above defined groups.

Such partnerships shall be based on shared objectives and mutual respect, common or complementary areas of expertise, adequate commitment of resources from all participating parties and shared intellectual property rights on the final products. Cooperation with external partners will focus on areas where there is clear potential for greater synergies and for generating more encompassing research, additional value and more efficient use of resources and where it will ensure a complementary or greater impact and/or visibility for the Agency's work.

Legal and policy framework

The legal basis for entering into cooperation and partnerships with external partners is Eurofound's Founding Regulation.²

Cooperation with external partners includes a potentially wide range of national, EU and international institutions, agencies, academic and research organisations and other bodies. As part of its core tasks, Eurofound works closely with its immediate stakeholders – the EU institutions and other EU bodies, social partners and national governments, providing data and knowledge the stakeholders need for their work.

1. EU institutions and EU bodies

Eurofound cooperates on an ongoing basis with the European Commission, the European Parliament, the Council and the European Economic and Social Committee, as well as the EU-level social partners. When needed, this cooperation is further enhanced and focused with special agreements to carry out particular projects, i.e. pilot projects requested by the European Parliament, joint research projects with the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC) and capacity building in (potential) EU candidate countries, funded by EU pre-accession assistance funds. To further facilitate these regular relations with the stakeholders – namely the EU

² See Articles 2(1)(h), 5(1)(q), 11(5)(p) and 30 of [Regulation \(EU\) 2019/127 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 January 2019 establishing the European Foundation for the improvement of living and working conditions \(Eurofound\), and repealing Council Regulation \(EEC\) No 1365/75](#).

institutions and the social partners at European level, Eurofound maintains a Liaison Office in Brussels, established in compliance with Article 11(6) of the Founding Regulation: provided that prior consent is given by the Commission, the Management Board and the relevant Member State, the Executive Director *'shall also be responsible for deciding whether it is necessary for the purpose of carrying out Eurofound's tasks in an efficient and effective manner to establish a liaison office in Brussels to further Eurofound's cooperation with the relevant Union institutions.'*

2. EU agencies

In accordance with one of the specific tasks listed under Article 2(3) of its Founding Regulation, Eurofound *'may conclude cooperation agreements with other relevant Union agencies in order to facilitate and promote cooperation with them'*. Cooperating with other Union agencies and concluding cooperation agreements with them, where relevant, is among the responsibilities of the Executive Director (Article 11(5)(p) of Eurofound Founding Regulation). Among these, the primary partners are the agencies partnering with DG Employment – the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP); the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA), the European Training Foundation (ETF) and the European Labour Authority (ELA).

3. International organisations and third countries

As stated in Article 30(1) of its Founding Regulation, Eurofound may also cooperate with the competent authorities of third countries and with international organisations, in so far as it is necessary to achieve its objectives, and without prejudice to the respective competences of the Member States and of the Union institutions. As part of its functions, Eurofound's Management Board shall *'authorise the establishment of cooperation arrangements with the competent authorities of third countries and with international organisations in accordance with Article 30'* (Article 5(1)(q) of Eurofound Founding Regulation). This legal basis is used to develop different cooperation links, for instance with the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

4. National actors

As part of its tasks as listed under its Founding Regulation, Eurofound shall *'provide forums for exchange of experiences and information between the governments, the social partners and other stakeholders at national level, including through evidence-based information and analysis'* (Article 2(1)(f)). In order to achieve this, Eurofound maintains regular contact and cooperation with national-level actors.

5. Research and academic institutions, NGOs and think tanks

Article 2(4) of Eurofound Founding Regulation states that *'[i]n carrying out its tasks, Eurofound shall maintain a close dialogue particularly with specialised bodies, whether public or private, national or international, with public authorities, with academic and research bodies, with employers' and employees' organisations, and with national tripartite bodies where they exist.'*

Forms of cooperation with external partners

Eurofound engages in two different types of cooperation:

1. **Strategic cooperations** are partnerships where Eurofound considers investing time and resources with a view to gaining added value both in the short and in the long run; and
2. **Ad hoc cooperations** are opportunities that arise and are considered to bring benefits in the short run or on a particular theme or action.

1. **Strategic cooperation** with other organisations is considered when Eurofound objectives can be better achieved with partnership, and the benefits are considered to be significantly higher than the effort required. Organisations to be considered for strategic partnership should be regarded as fulfilling the following criteria:

- The partner organisation's knowledge and expertise in a particular area is known to be of an excellent standard and/or complementary to Eurofound's, thereby enabling synergies and facilitating the achievement of better results;
- The partner organisation is ready to share costs and can provide significant (human and financial) resources allowing for a scaling up of the activity to an extent not feasible for Eurofound on its own; and
- The partner organisation's outreach is higher and/or clearly complementary to Eurofound's, acting as a multiplier to increase Eurofound's outreach and visibility towards key target audiences in a substantial manner, ensuring a better uptake of Eurofound evidence.

Strategic partnerships entail a written memorandum of understanding (with EU agencies) or framework for cooperation (with international institutions). Overall, cooperations should be established based on the shared interest and clear added value and benefit of having a joint activity, considering the required effort to engage with them.

The closest strategic partners of Eurofound are other decentralised EU agencies, addressing interconnected issues. Among those are the other five agencies that partner with DG Employment – CEDEFOP, EU-OSHA, ELA, ETF and ELA, as well as the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) and the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA).

Memoranda of understanding are key to identifying areas of common interest. These are in place with CEDEFOP since 2006, with EU-OSHA and ETF since 2007, with ELA since 2022, and with two other agencies with similar fields of interest, and therefore closely related to Eurofound's work: FRA since 2009, and EIGE since 2010. Since 2021, Eurofound has introduced **observer status** to the Management Board meetings of these agencies on a reciprocal basis.

The regular exchange and consultation on draft single programming documents leads to the identification of synergies and the selection of activities of shared interest, which result in **Annual Action Plans** which are discussed and mutually agreed by the Directors. The Executive Board, at its January meeting, is informed about the content and progress in the implementation of Annual Action Plans with other EU agencies.

Cooperation at the activity level includes joint data collection and research activities, shared resources and methodologies, joint events and dissemination activities and shared human resources.

Strategic partnerships with international organisations such as the ILO are also based on agreements, called frameworks for cooperation, adopted by the Management Board and supported by annual or biannual work programmes.

Other strategic partners can include national actors, academia, think tanks, or research centres such as the European University Institute and others.

2. Ad hoc partnerships follow the same criteria as above but have a stronger focus on gains limited to particular actions in the short run. The following elements are considered:

- common field of interest,
- complementary approach that could give rise to wider-ranging positive effects,
- concrete and well-defined activity,
- potential for increased visibility,
- potential for increased timeliness, and
- clear cost sharing benefits.

Cooperation on particular projects provides excellent opportunities for flexibility and synergies. Based on the good experience of joint work with, among others, the European Environment Agency (EEA), the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), ETF, DG Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR) (for work in neighbouring and candidate countries), national authorities (for expanding Eurofound surveys in third countries), the JRC and national governments, Eurofound will continue to explore partnership opportunities as a means to deliver best on its mandate.

Eurofound shall continue its active participation in the European Union Agencies Network (EUAN). This is an excellent platform for sharing experience among directors, heads of resources, IC, HR and ICT leaders. Eurofound has a particular interest in participating in formats like the Scientific Advice Network (EU-ANSA) and the Performance Development Network (PDN) or the Heads of Information and Communication Network (HCIN), as well as the Information and Communication Technology Advisory Committee (ICTAC). These platforms provide an invaluable resource for knowledge sharing, not least in areas such as methodological research information, experience in data collection and data management, cybersecurity and many others, ensuring the highest quality of research and communication.

Expected results and internal organisation



Cooperation with external partners increases the analytical, research and outreach capacity of Eurofound, allowing access to data and knowledge that are complementary to that which the Agency possesses. It increases the efficiency of the work, as overlaps and duplications are replaced by exchanges and complementarity. Working together and sharing experiences allows more focused and flexible results when addressing the challenges of a rapidly evolving environment, characterised by multiple crises, the high speed of digitalisation and climate deterioration.

Expected outcomes of the cooperation with external partners include: avoiding duplication of activities; enhancing the quality of Eurofound's work by adopting a holistic and cross-cutting approach; improving learning and development within the organisation; consolidating and enhancing Eurofound's reputation and credibility in a context of rising misinformation; and achieving savings through sharing of costs in a context of increasing budget constraints.

Cooperation also contributes to maximising the Agency's impact and visibility among key stakeholders, breaking down silos and addressing more horizontal issues. Joint communication initiatives organised with EU bodies, other agencies, national governments, social partners, research organisations and NGOs highlight complementarities, target new and complementary audiences and provide valuable channels and fora for information sharing and debate.

To streamline and coordinate the cooperation with external partners, Eurofound adopts a lean and efficient internal structure. The existing toolbox with various instruments to support cooperation is well established and based on accumulated experience. Every strategic partnership is promoted and monitored by a staff coordinator. Coordinators have the task of working on a continuous basis with their counterparts, to prepare and monitor the annual work plans and to explore possibilities for additional added value creation. The coordinators report to the Executive Director and the Deputy Director, the latter being responsible for the overall coordination of the research activities. A member of staff is nominated to facilitate, follow and assess the overall process of cooperation with external partners. Annual developments in cooperation with external partners are reflected in the Consolidated Annual Activities Report (CAAR).