



Peer Review in Social Protection and Social Inclusion and Assessment in Social Inclusion

[www.peer-review-social-inclusion.eu](http://www.peer-review-social-inclusion.eu)

# Operational Guide – Peer Reviews



On behalf of the  
**European Commission**  
DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities



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## Introduction

On 2 July 2008 an ambitious agenda was adopted by the European Commission in order to ensure that European Union policies respond effectively to today's economic and social challenges. The renewed social agenda (2008-2010)<sup>1</sup> aims to create more opportunities for EU citizens, improve access to quality services and demonstrate solidarity with those who are affected negatively by change. Its implementation relies on a combination of instruments including EU legislation, social dialogue, cooperation between Member States, as well as financial support, mainly from the EU's Structural Funds, the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund and the PROGRESS Programme on employment and social solidarity.

The overall aim of PROGRESS<sup>2</sup> is to financially support the implementation of the objectives of the European Union in employment, social affairs and equal opportunities, as set out in the Social Agenda. It will thereby also contribute to the achievement of the EU 'Lisbon' Growth and Jobs Strategy.<sup>3</sup> Section two of the Programme shall support the implementation of the OMC in the field of social protection and inclusion by:

- a) improving the understanding of social exclusion and poverty issues, social protection and inclusion policies, in particular through analysis and studies and the development of statistics and common indicators, within the framework of the OMC in the field of social protection and inclusion;
- b) monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the OMC in the field of social protection and inclusion and its impact at national and Community level as well as analysing the interaction between this OMC and other policy areas;
- c) organising exchanges on policies, good practice and innovative approaches and promoting mutual learning in the context of the social protection and inclusion strategy;
- d) raising awareness, disseminating information and promoting the debate about the key challenges and policy issues raised in the context of the Community coordination process in the field of social protection and inclusion, including among the social partners, regional and local actors, NGOs and other stakeholders;
- e) developing the capacity of key European level networks to support and further develop Community policy goals and strategies on social protection and inclusion;

The Commission is responsible for implementing the programme under the supervision of a Programme Committee made up of national representatives.

In order to assist the Commission services and Member States in carrying out a voluntary mutual learning process through a Peer Review methodology, the Commission manages a **Peer Review in Social Protection and Social Inclusion sub-programme**. This programme, originally

<sup>1</sup> For more information on the renewed social agenda see:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=547&langId=en>

<sup>2</sup> For more information on the PROGRESS programme see:

[http://ec.europa.eu/employment\\_social/progress/index\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/progress/index_en.html)

<sup>3</sup> On the Growth and Jobs Strategy see: [http://ec.europa.eu/growthandjobs/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/growthandjobs/index_en.htm)

launched in 2004, contributes to the dissemination and identification of good practice on the basis of a systematic exchange of experiences and evaluation of policies, actions, programmes or institutional arrangements taking place in seminars hosted by individual Member States.<sup>4</sup>

In order to assist the Commission in monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the National Action Plans on Inclusion (NAPsIncl), i.e. the social inclusion section of the National Reports on Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion (NRSSPSI), the Commission also manages an **Assessment sub-programme**. In the context of this sub-programme a **Network of Independent Social Inclusion Experts** was set up. Originally, in December 2002, the Network included experts from 15 countries. Now it includes experts from all 27 Member States as well as from Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia, Turkey and Iceland. The members of the network have produced a series of reports on the implementation of the NAPs/Inclusion as well as on new policy developments or key trends. They work bilaterally with DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities on other related issues.<sup>5</sup>

ÖSB Consulting (Austria), with its partners CEPS/INSTEAD (Luxembourg), The Institute for Employment Studies (United Kingdom) and Applica (Belgium) (hereafter ÖSB/C-I/IES/Applica), have been selected through a public tendering process to provide support services to DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities for the joint management of the Network of independent experts and the Peer Reviews. Close collaboration with all countries involved in the programme will be essential for its success.

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<sup>4</sup> For more information on the Peer Reviews please visit: <http://www.peer-review-social-inclusion.eu/peer-reviews>

<sup>5</sup> For more information on the Network please visit: <http://www.peer-review-social-inclusion.eu/network-of-independent-experts>

## The Peer Reviews in Social Protection and Social Inclusion

This Operational Guide takes into account the experiences of implementing the Peer Review programme achieved so far. It describes all the activities that need to be undertaken to organise a Peer Review of good practices in social protection and social inclusion. The responsibilities of the various participants in the review process are indicated.

### Objectives of Peer Reviews

The overall objectives of the Peer Reviews are:

- to contribute to a better understanding of the Member States<sup>6</sup> policies, as laid down in their National Reports on Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion and of their impact;
- to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the policies and the strategies for social inclusion, pensions, healthcare and long term care in present and future Member States and at EU level, by learning from the experiences in the Member States;
- to facilitate the transfer of key components of policies or of institutional arrangements, which have proved effective in their original context and are relevant to other contexts.

It is important to note that the Peer Review programme is not based on competition, but should be regarded as an invitation to discover and exchange the wealth of experiences and good practices available at Member State level and to explore their applicability in other contexts.

### Selection process

The points of departure for the selection of policies are those policies identified by Member States which present greater potential for dissemination, in view of their particularly good results and their general interest for the Union presented in the National Action Plans on Social Inclusion, the National Reports on Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion and the implementation reports. The host countries present their views on how their social systems, their strategies, policies or institutional arrangements contribute to outcomes that are clearly better than the EU average or the outcomes obtained by other countries in the same situation.

Alternatively, other scenarios can also be considered. For instance, host countries can consider the Peer Review seminars as an opportunity to gather expert advice from other countries in order to inform the process of preparation of a major policy reform in the field of social protection or social inclusion (or new programme or institutional arrangement). Their aim would be to take advantage of "good practices" or interesting approaches existing in other EU countries to improve the efficiency of their reforms. Alternatively, host countries could be identified on the basis of the

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<sup>6</sup> In the context of the Peer Review meetings organised under this programme, the term "Member State" includes all countries participating in the programme.

common indicators endorsed by the Laeken European Council as the countries showing best performance in a number of areas (e.g. risk of poverty, in general or for specified categories, early exit from school, illiteracy, etc.).<sup>7</sup>

The selection is based on four criteria:

- The willingness and/or capability of the source countries (referred to as host countries) to provide the information required for Peer Reviews, and to act as host for a Peer Review meeting, including local visits (where appropriate);
- The interest expressed by other Member States in reviewing the policies (referred to as peer countries);
- The availability of preparation reports of the reform or, evaluation results or, at least, of substantive early monitoring data, providing sufficient information for examination;
- Relevance of the policies to the EU strategy towards Social Protection and Social Inclusion, and to the strategic priorities identified by the EU Social Protection Committee in this context.

Peer Review policies have been identified using the following process:

1. Member States have been asked to identify which policy measures presented as a good practice or of the policy reform in their National Reports on Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion they would be willing to present as host countries.
2. On the basis of the replies to this first query, the European Commission has compiled a list of potential Peer Review policies, in accordance with the criteria.
3. Each Member State has been asked to select and rank four preferences of good practices or policy reforms on the basis of the list of potential policies and good practices or policy reforms to be reviewed.
4. The most frequently preferred policies and good practices or policy reforms have been selected for the Peer Review process.
5. Each country will be able to take part (with one official and one independent expert) in at least two Peer Review seminars per year as a peer country on the basis of the preferences expressed.

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<sup>7</sup> For further information on the indicators please visit:  
[http://ec.europa.eu/employment\\_social/spsi/common\\_indicators\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/spsi/common_indicators_en.htm)

## General organisation of a Peer Review

The review method will in general include an intensive one to two days evaluation of the policy under review and possibly a site visit, although each host country may propose variations. The meetings will take place in the host country and will be held in English.<sup>8</sup>

To allow for discussions that go beyond the mere exchange of information, it is essential that Peer Reviews be well prepared. Before meetings take place, several papers will be written and disseminated.

First of all, a discussion paper will be provided by an independent thematic expert proposed by ÖSB/C-I/IES/Applica, presenting the policy under consideration, commenting on its effects and operating conditions and focusing on evaluation results, bringing in European comparative aspects. The discussion paper also raises the main questions to be addressed. The host country is expected to provide the thematic expert with the required information on the good practice / policy under review, including policy descriptions, evaluation studies, statistics and survey results. If possible, the discussion paper should be complemented by a host country paper, prepared by a host country representative, supported by a national expert, if necessary.

Short 'comments and question' papers will then be prepared from the viewpoint of the peer countries and stakeholders, in response to the discussion paper/s from the thematic expert and the host country. To this end, peer country independent experts will support the government officials representing the peer countries.

The meetings will be structured so as to ensure the active contribution of all participants. It may be necessary to identify and select the most relevant aspects of the programme under review – in terms of transferability and contribution to European policy development – so as to allow for focused discussion. In most cases it may be useful to form subgroups of participants during parts of the meeting in order to discuss specific issues in more detail. The subgroup results can then be considered in plenary meetings.

The review may involve local visits to institutions active in the delivery of such policies, workshops, discussions with those responsible for local implementation, analysis of evaluation studies, wide dissemination of information, etc. Such visits may also allow for direct contact with those persons targeted by the policy or action in question.

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<sup>8</sup> However, the host country may arrange simultaneous interpretation from the host country language into English and vice versa.

Peer Review seminars will in general have the following structure:

1. Presentation of the policy by Member State officials and possibly a national social inclusion or social protection expert;
2. Presentation of the discussion paper by the independent thematic expert focusing on evaluation results and European (and possibly international) comparative aspects, and with a synthesis of key questions to be addressed during the meeting;
3. Site visit (where appropriate);
4. Discussion of the key issues;
5. Short presentation by the European stakeholders: key elements concerning policies/measures from their perspective;
6. Assessment of the relevance for and the transferability of key components of the good practice / policy to the peer countries; including comments by peer countries' representatives based on their comment papers: key elements concerning policies/measures debated in the peer countries;
7. Identification of shared conclusions;
8. Evaluation of the Peer Review. At the end of each Peer Review, participants will complete a questionnaire in order to evaluate the results and methodological approach used.

For further preparation of the meeting, a preparatory visit of the thematic expert and the Peer Review manager – a senior member of the ÖSB/C-I/IES/Applica team appointed for each Peer Review – to the host country is envisaged. The purpose of these visits is to prepare with the host country officials the agenda and the organisation of the review meetings.

## **Participants**

Peer Review meetings will involve:

- Official representatives from the Member States: representatives from the host country and one representative from each interested peer country. They are expected to hold a senior position and to demonstrate a highly professional and objective approach to the matters under examination. Depending on the subject of the good practice / policy, different national representatives of the host country may be involved;
- One independent social inclusion or social protection expert for each participating country to assist the representatives of the Member States, both from the host and the peer countries;
- The member of the independent social inclusion or social protection experts' network in the host country;

- European Commission officials: they will support the chairperson in steering the discussions and maintaining them at the expected level as well as clarify any policy questions related to the EU;
- Representatives of relevant stakeholders: representatives of two European NGOs or other stakeholder organisations and if appropriate one or two representatives of national stakeholders expressing the viewpoints of the beneficiaries or other important actors involved.

They will be supported by three consultants from the ÖSB/C-I/IES/Applica team:

- One thematic expert to make a keynote presentation on the programme under review, setting it in a broader comparative European context and helping to draw relevant conclusions for the further development of the Commission's and the Member States' policies in the field of social protection or social inclusion;
- A Peer Review manager responsible for the smooth implementation of the Peer Review process and prepared to assist the host country chairperson with the facilitation of the meeting;
- A professional minutes' taker and editor for the documentation of the meeting and the discussions.

In order to maintain the specific character of a Peer Review and to allow for in-depth discussion and exchange the maximum number of participants in the Peer Review meetings, including the ÖSB/C-I/IES/Applica team, should be about 30.

Peer countries will select their own representatives and independent experts. The thematic experts will be proposed by ÖSB/C-I/IES/Applica and approved by the European Commission.

### **Contents of the papers and presentations to be prepared**

The papers will form the basis of the discussions during the meetings. Their purpose is to provide a common framework for discussions.

#### **Discussion paper(s) describing the policy measures or institutional arrangements reviewed**

An independent thematic expert will write a discussion paper of a maximum of 15 pages (plus annexes) in English on the selected good practice / policy. This paper will be written in close cooperation with the host country officials and should give a balanced view of the good practice / policy under consideration including aspects of transferability to other Member States and its possible contribution to European policy development. Besides it should address the question how the success of the respective policy can be measured. **The final version** will have to be **available four to five weeks before the review** is to be held.

If possible, this paper should be complemented by a separate paper written by the host country representatives (host country official and/or host country non-governmental expert). This paper may deal particularly with policy considerations, objectives and evaluation results of the measure. The host country will be responsible for providing this paper and its contents, which should be co-ordinated with the paper written by the independent thematic expert in order to avoid overlapping and serious contradictions.

The discussion paper will have to cover the following aspects of the good practice / policy studied:

**A. The policy debate at EU level:**

- The policy framework at EU level;
- A summary of the related policy debate at EU level;
- European (and possibly international) comparative aspects;
- A reference to related previous Peer Reviews and expert reports produced under the programme, if applicable (How will this Peer Review build on or add to the lessons learnt in earlier reviews or put forward in the reports of the independent experts in social inclusion?);
- An assessment of the contributions of the good practice / policy to the EU policy debate;
- An assessment of its transferability to and learning value for other Member States,
- An assessment of possible ways to measure the results or the impact of the good practice / policy under review.

**B. Description of the main elements of the good practice / policy:**

- Background (date of introduction, the reasons for developing the good practice / policy, the baseline situation against which it will be measured, the problems it is intended to solve);
- The goals, objectives, and target groups of the good practice / policy (indicating which aspects of the EU strategy and of the national, regional or local policy to promote social inclusion or social protection it addresses);
- The institutional, legal, financial and human resources provisions and the working methods to implement the good practice / policy and the different policy levels involved;
- Any intended future adaptations to the good practice / policy.

**C. The results so far:**

- The quantitative results of the good practice / policy so far, in relation to the baseline situation and to the goals and targets (including costs per beneficiary, gross/net effects, substitution and deadweight effects);
- An evaluation of the delivery system of the good practice / policy;
- Other results and achievements of the good practice / policy (e.g. in relation to other objectives and priorities of the EU strategy on social inclusion/social protection, or any significant unintended or indirect effects);
- An assessment of the obstacles and constraints encountered, a description of how policies have been adjusted in response to them and an indication of the factors determining success.

**D. The policy debate in the host country:**

- An assessment of the arguments of the different interest groups (social partners, civil society organisations), including mention of the results of any evaluations of the policy undertaken by them;
- Main questions and areas of debate on the policy within the country.

**E. Key issues for debate at the Peer Review meeting**

**Comments papers from the viewpoint of the peer countries**

The peer country officials will nominate a national independent social inclusion or social protection expert and they will collaborate on a short 'comments and questions' note on the good practice / policy studied. This paper will include:

- A brief assessment of the possible relevance of the good practice / policy to the peer country (e.g. what problems in the peer country it could potentially solve, the extent to which it fits with the policy and legislative system in the peer country, etc.);
- A brief assessment of the similarities/differences of the good practice / policy with the experience of the peer country;
- A brief assessment of the potential transferability of the good practice / policy (as a whole or in part) to the peer country and of the likely conditions for its application;
- A brief assessment of possible ways to measure the results or the impact of the good practice / policy;
- A note of any important questions about the policy that are being raised and debated in the peer country;

- Attention should be paid in particular to the potential contribution of such a good practice / policy to the peer country's Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion as laid down in their national strategy reports;
- Key issues and main questions proposed for debate at the review meeting.

**Comments papers from the viewpoint of the stakeholders' European organisations (by experts from European social NGO networks, European regional or/and local authority networks or European social partner organisations)**

This short 'comments and questions' note on the good practice / policy studied should present the viewpoint of their organisations (at national and European level) and/or the people they represent bringing in a comparative European perspective.

It will include:

- A brief assessment of the possible relevance of the good practice / policy to other countries in the EU (e.g. what problems it could potentially solve, the strong points of the good practice / policy, the points to be strengthened or avoided, etc.);
- A brief assessment of the potential transferability of the good practice / policy (as a whole or in part) to other EU countries and of the likely conditions for its application or of the likely kinds of obstacles which would make it impossible to put in practice;
- A brief assessment of the possible ways to measure the results or the impact of the good practice / policy;
- A note of any important questions about the good practice / policy that are being raised and debated in the stakeholders' organisation;
- Attention should be paid in particular to the potential contribution of such a good practice / policy to the content of the National Strategy Reports on Social Protection and Social Inclusion;
- Key issues and main questions proposed for debate at the review meeting.

**The comments papers** of the peer countries and of the stakeholders' organisations will have to be **available at least two weeks before the review.**

**Dissemination of results**

Promoting the EU-wide transfer of good social protection and social inclusion practices requires more than the introduction of Peer Review groups in which some interested countries discuss these practices. The conclusions of these discussions should also be communicated to other EU Member States, candidate and EFTA/EEA countries.

Following each Peer Review meeting, ÖSB/C-I/IES/Applica will prepare minutes of the meeting, containing a note of the principal issues and conclusions reached. The independent thematic expert may be asked to amend his or her discussion paper in the light of comments made during the Peer Review. Peer country participants and stakeholders may also wish to make amendments to their papers following the meeting.

The independent thematic expert will then prepare a synthesis report on the Peer Review exercise, which summarises the following inputs:

- The (revised) discussion paper of the thematic expert;
- The (revised) paper of the host country representatives;
- The (revised) comments of peer countries and stakeholders;
- Conclusions of the assessment of the transferability of the good practice / policy;
- Conclusions of the assessment of possible ways to measure the results or the impact of the good practice / policy;
- Conclusions regarding the potential contribution of the good practice / policy to EU policies and strategies;
- Annexes: bibliography and references, evaluation results etc.

The participants involved will review and approve the minutes before they are made available to third parties. The synthesis report will be sent to the European Commission for approval.

The reports and other relevant documents and information will be published on the programme's website [www.peer-review-social-inclusion.eu](http://www.peer-review-social-inclusion.eu).

### **Responsibilities of participants**

First of all, it should be emphasised that the success of the Peer Reviews depends on a joint effort by all parties involved. Both ÖSB/C-I/IES/Applica and the host country will work together in organising the reviews. It should be noted that ÖSB/C-I/IES/Applica is acting on behalf of and in close cooperation with the European Commission.

### **ÖSB/C-I/IES/Applica**

The consultants will be responsible for:

- Organising the Peer Reviews in close co-operation with the host country.
- Providing complete logistical support for the participants;
- Contracting and supervising the thematic expert;

- Preparing the agenda and the organisational aspects of the review meeting, e.g. site visits, in close co-operation with the host country officials and the Commission;
- Facilitating the meetings and structuring the discussions together with the review chairperson(s) and Commission officials. ÖSB/C-I/IES/Applica will ensure that the discussions go beyond the mere exchange of information;
- Reporting on the reviews. ÖSB/C-I/IES/Applica will be responsible for the minutes, the short and synthesis reports, which will be written after each review.

### **Chairperson**

Normally, an official or expert of the host country will chair each session in the review seminar, with the support of the facilitator (Peer Review manager), the thematic expert and the Commission official(s).

### **Facilitator**

A professional facilitator provided by ÖSB/C-I/IES/Applica will support the chairperson of the review meeting. The facilitator will be responsible for managing the process and for ensuring the equal involvement of all participants, the efficient use of time and available resources, and the immediate formulation and documentation of results.

### **Official representatives of the host country**

Representatives of the host country are asked to:

- assist with organising the reviews, including fixing the date of the meeting, identifying a suitable venue, as well as to select host country experts and stakeholders representatives, etc.;
- organise site visits, where appropriate;
- prepare, with the help of a national expert, a paper on the good practice / policy studied and give one or several short presentation(s) of the paper (power point presentation in English). ÖSB/C-I/IES/Applica may assist in ensuring the clarity of the material for a European audience;
- participate in the review discussions;
- approve the minutes of the Peer Review meeting.

### **National expert for the host country**

The national expert for the host country will carry out the following tasks:

- support the host country official, if required, with the preparation of a paper describing the good practice / policy that will be the focus of the seminar and discussing its merits in relation to the national situation on the basis of empirical evidence, preferably with reference to evaluation or monitoring results. The national expert should liaise with the independent thematic expert to make sure that their respective papers do not overlap;
- support the host country official with the presentation of the policy under review at the meeting;
- participate in the review discussions;
- revise, if necessary, the host country paper in the light of discussions at the meeting.
- approve the minutes of the Peer Review meeting.

### **Stakeholders' representatives of the host country**

The stakeholders' representatives of the host country invited to Peer Reviews will carry out the following tasks:

- give a short presentation of their viewpoint at the meeting;
- participate in the review discussions;
- approve the minutes of the Peer Review meeting.

### **Network expert of the host country**

The network expert of the host country is invited to Peer Reviews in order to actively participate in the debate during the meeting.

### **Thematic expert**

The independent thematic expert, contracted by ÖSB/C-I/IES/Applica, will carry out the following tasks:

- prepare a paper on the selected good practice / policy with a focus on evaluating or monitoring results and European (and possibly international) comparisons and with a synthesis of key questions to be addressed during the meeting;
- analyse and synthesise the comment papers of the peer countries;

- prepare, in close co-operation with the Peer Review manager and the host country official and expert, the agenda of the meeting and the methodology;
- give a short presentation of his or her paper at the meeting focusing on evaluation or monitoring results and European comparisons, and summarising the key questions to be addressed during the meeting;
- participate actively in the review discussions;
- amend, if necessary, the discussion paper following the meeting;
- review the short report produced after the meeting;
- draft the synthesis report;
- approve the minutes of the Peer Review meeting.

### **Official representatives of the peer countries**

The representatives of the peer countries are asked to:

- select and contract a national expert and to collaborate with this expert on the preparation of a short paper reflecting their point of view in response to the paper(s) on the good practice / policy studied; the paper could present, when appropriate, good practices / policies implemented in those countries that bear similarity with the main good practice / policy under review;
- give a brief response to the good practice / policy at the meeting;
- participate actively in the review discussions;
- revise, if necessary, the paper in the light of discussions at the meeting;
- approve the minutes of the Peer Review meeting.

### **National experts for the peer countries**

The national experts for the peer countries will carry out the following tasks:

- collaborate with the official representative on preparing a paper in response to the discussion paper(s) of the thematic expert and host country representatives;
- give a short presentation of this paper at the meeting;
- participate in the review discussions;
- revise, if necessary, the paper in the light of discussions at the meeting;
- approve the minutes of the Peer Review meeting.

## **Stakeholder representatives**

The stakeholder representatives invited to Peer Reviews will carry out the following tasks:

- prepare a short paper (max. 5 pages) in response to the discussion paper(s) of the thematic expert and host country representatives, presenting the viewpoint of their organisations and/or the beneficiaries they represent with a comparative European perspective;
- give a short presentation of their viewpoint at the meeting;
- participate in the review discussions;
- revise, if necessary, the paper in the light of discussions at the meeting;
- approve the minutes of the Peer Review meeting;
- support the dissemination of the findings and documents through their networks.

## **European Commission officials**

EC officials should:

- approve the selection of the thematic experts;
- approve the discussion paper of the thematic expert;
- approve the agenda and proposed methodology of the meeting;
- help the chairperson to keep the discussions in line with the objectives of the Peer Review project;
- participate in the discussions;
- establish links in the discussions with European-level policies, objectives, agenda, and work programmes;
- revise and approve the minutes and reports of the Peer Review meeting.

## **Financing**

The European Commission (through ÖSB Consulting GmbH) covers travel expenses and accommodation of peer country participants and stakeholder representatives according to its rules and regulations.<sup>9</sup>

The national experts of the host and peer countries have to be selected, contracted and paid by the respective national governments.

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<sup>9</sup> see Annex for the regulations on the coverage of travel expenses

## Contact

European Commission:

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ÖSB/C-I/IES/Applica:

Ms. Monika NATTER: [socialinclusion@oesb.at](mailto:socialinclusion@oesb.at)

## Annex:

### Rules for the coverage of travel expenses for Peer Review participants

#### 1. Administrative formalities

The travel and accommodation costs will be covered for:

- One state representative and one independent expert from each peer country;
- A maximum of two state representatives, one independent expert and two representatives of the national stakeholders from the host country. Only if the point of departure referred to in the invitation is 100 km from the place of the meeting;
- The Network expert of the host country;
- One representative from each of the two stakeholders invited by the Commission.

Attention is drawn to the need to **comply strictly** with the following formalities.

#### Application form for the coverage of costs

For each meeting, an application form (including payment particulars) shall be filled in and signed by the expert. The **original return ticket and used boarding pass** must be sent to ÖSB Consulting in order to enable coverage of the effectively price paid. The experts must ensure that the fare is **shown on the tickets**, or else provide the **relevant invoice**.

#### 2. Travel expenses

Travel expenses are covered on the following basis:

- (a) Journeys have to be carried out by the most direct and economic route;
- (b) Train journeys: first class (original tickets should be submitted to ÖSB Consulting);
- (c) Air travel: full fare economy class (air travel allowed only for distances above 400 km, i.e. return flights above 800 km);
  - The original passenger receipt of flight tickets is requested. If the price is not indicated on the passenger receipt, the original flight ticket invoice should be submitted;
  - In case of using E-tickets the needed documents are: print of the booking confirmation mentioning name, date and price, flight number and destination or original ticket invoice;
  - Used boarding passes;

- (d) Car journeys: € 0,22/km up to a max. of a corresponding train ticket 1<sup>st</sup> class (price confirmation is requested);
- (e) Transfer from the airport to the city centre by public transportation will be covered only on production of the tickets.
- (f) Taxi fares and parking fees are NOT covered.

### **OTHER PROVISIONS**

- (a) The expenses will be transferred by bank in **Euro**.
- (b) The recipient will be required to repay any sums paid in error.
- (c) No moral, material or bodily harm incurred by the person in the course of the journey or stay in the place where the meeting is held may be the subject of a claim against ÖSB Consulting GmbH unless it can be imputed to ÖSB Consulting GmbH.
- (d) Persons using their own vehicle will remain fully liable for any accidents in which they may be involved.

### **IMPLEMENTATION OF PAYMENTS**

Travel expenses will be paid after the seminar by bank transfer on the basis of the original Expenses Form, which should be fully completed in block capitals (preferably typed), fully legible and signed by the participant. The form should be sent to ÖSB Consulting GmbH. Please note that all bank details are required. Failure to provide this will result in considerable delay in payment. Payment is generally made within 5 weeks following the receipt of all relevant documents.