



EU expertise on social protection,
labour and employment

GUIDE FOR EXPERTS & COLLABORATIVE INSTITUTIONS

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This guide provides information about SOCIEUX+ and its procedures for the mobilisation of individual experts and experts from collaborative institutions. It is aimed at representatives of collaborative institutions, focal points at public and mandated organisations in EU member states, and at individual public and private experts. It covers the modalities for collaboration and the entitlements for experts working within the framework of the international technical cooperation actions supported by SOCIEUX+. It also outlines the main roles of experts mobilised in SOCIEUX+ actions.

The SOCIEUX+ Team is committed to facilitating peer-to-peer exchanges and cooperation among public practitioners and social partners. For more information on SOCIEUX+, please visit our website at www.socieux.eu or contact us at contact@socieux.eu.

SOCIEUX+ is implemented by a partnership led by:

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1 What is SOCIEUX+?

Facilitating expertise from peers to peers

The European Union Expert Facility on Employment, Labour and Social Protection (SOCIEUX+) is a technical cooperation and facilitation mechanism set up to respond to the needs for capacity building of international cooperation and development partner countries of the European Union (EU). SOCIEUX+ enables peer-to-peer exchanges and institutional cooperation between EU member states and partner countries.

SOCIEUX+ is results oriented and demand driven. It responds to the direct requests of public institutions and social partner organisations in EU partner countries. It contributes to designing, expanding and managing inclusive, effective and sustainable labour and employment policies and social protection systems.

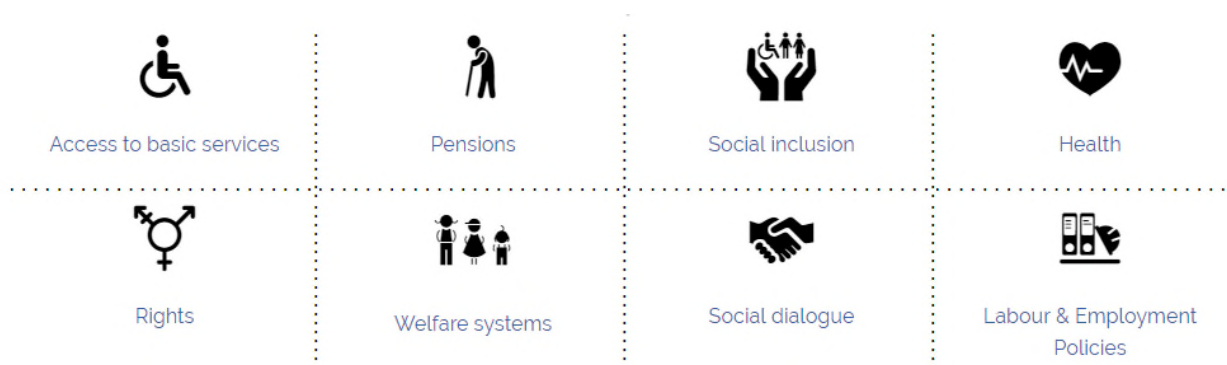
SOCIEUX+ connects practitioners and institutions by mobilising high-level EU expertise for short-term technical cooperation activities with their peers outside the EU. It primarily draws on expertise within EU member states' publicly mandated bodies and social partners, but also relies on joint actions with specialised international agencies and academia. When necessary, it capitalises on triangular technical cooperation by mobilising teams of public experts from the EU and partner countries. Private consultants may also complement mission teams in SOCIEUX+ actions.

SOCIEUX+ actions are micro-projects implemented through short-term activities. They are designed in collaboration with the requesting institution to best address their needs. SOCIEUX+ does not provide financial cooperation, such as financing events, purchasing equipment or materials, compensation for work, or contributions of staff from requesting institutions and social partners.

SOCIEUX+ is implemented by a partnership of international cooperation agencies from the EU member states of France, Belgium, and Spain, and co-funded through EU international cooperation and development instruments.

Contributing to better social protection, labour and employment

SOCIEUX+ supports policies and measures on social protection, labour and employment, with the aim of alleviating poverty, reducing vulnerability, and providing income security and access to essential services and job opportunities. The Facility advances inclusive social protection and growth, particularly in low- and middle-income countries.



Social protection

SOCIEUX+ contributes to the design and implementation of social protection systems and programmes that expand coverage and increase equality, inclusivity, efficiency, appropriateness, and fiscal feasibility and sustainability, such as:

- Legal and institutional frameworks for the provision of effective and efficient social protection coverage;
- Individual and organisational capacities for policymaking;
- Capacity building for social protection programmes, systems and policy implementation;
- Advocacy and capacity building for mainstreaming cross-sectoral policies and issues related to social protection;

- Advocacy and capacity building for sustainability of domestically funded social protection systems and programmes;
- Portability of social benefits and rights at national and regional levels;
- Social protection coverage and inclusion of migrant workers and their dependents;
- Empowering civil society and social partners;
- Social assistance and the protection of most vulnerable categories of the population;
- Innovative means of extending social protection coverage in the informal economy.

Labour and employment

SOCIEUX+ contributes to the design and implementation of effective employment strategies and labour market policies, such as:

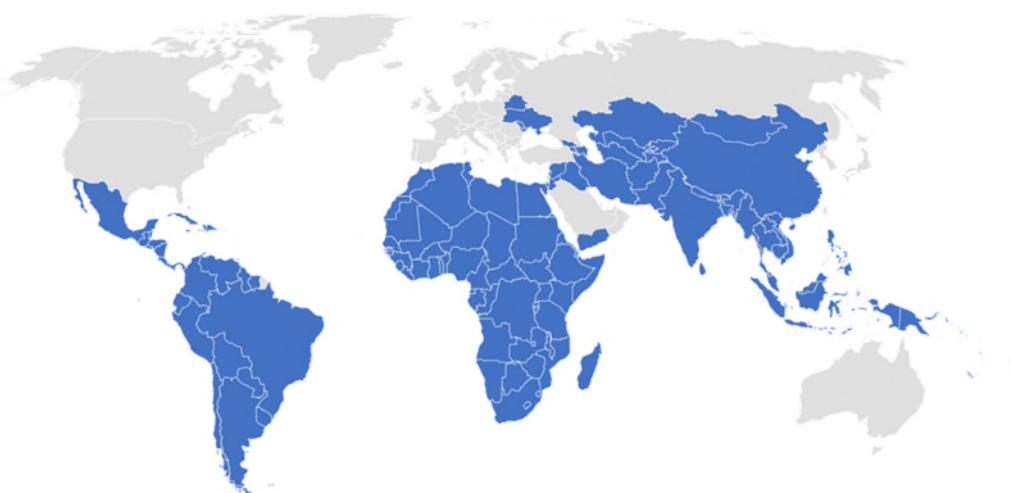
- Comprehensive employment strategies across various policy areas;
- Labour market information systems and other intelligence and operational research;
- Active and passive labour market policies;
- Compliance with international labour standards;
- Informal labour and economic transition policies and strategies;
- Employment of migrant populations;
- Vocational education and training and skills development;
- Labour intensive public work programmes;
- Labour market intermediation;
- Inclusive labour markets;
- Social dialogue.

Partnering with public institutions and social partners

SOCIEUX+ actions can be implemented in 155 eligible countries and territories in four global regions:

- Latin America, Asia and the Middle East;
- Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific;
- the European Neighbourhood;
- EU Overseas Countries and Territories.

SOCIEUX+ cooperates with public authorities and mandated bodies in charge of social protection, labour and employment at all levels (national, regional, and local) in partner countries. Public and semi-public sector bodies are eligible, including: central governments; ministries; legislative councils; regional governments; and other mandated bodies and institutions responsible for the implementation or provision of social protection, labour and employment initiatives. SOCIEUX+ also cooperates with partners engaged in social dialogue to influence policy and strategic agendas, such as trade unions and employer and worker organisations and associations.



2 What is the role of mobilised experts in SOCIEUX+?

Areas of expertise

SOCIEUX+ actions require a wide array of expertise to address the demands and needs of partner countries. Mobilised experts come from all areas of social protection, labour and employment (see *Contributing to better social protection, labour and employment* section, above). They are practitioners, technicians, researchers, academics, advisors, decisionmakers and policymakers. In addition to their sector expertise, they provide competencies in key fields, such as:

- Policy and strategy development, formulation, and implementation;
- Legislation and regulation development, formulation, and implementation;
- Governance, ethics, transparency and accountability;
- Organisational management and administration;
- Financing and financial management;
- Planning and budgeting;
- Information management, business intelligence, and statistics;
- Human resource management and development;
- Monitoring and evaluation;
- Communication, social marketing, and public relations;
- Information systems and technology;
- Individual training need assessments and capacity building;
- Change management, reforms, and processes;
- Public procurement;
- Service delivery.

Capacity building through peer-to-peer exchange

Experts are mobilised to work in a wide array of activities and missions. These activities are part of technical cooperation actions implemented to respond to the needs and requests of SOCIEUX+ partner institutions. Experts can accompany entire actions or single activities according to the needs and workplans.

SOCIEUX+ activities focus on peer-to-peer exchange. They address structural or institutional needs for capacity building, including:

- Gaps and need assessments for capacity building;
- Design of capacity building and development measures;
- Sector and functional analysis and recommendations;
- System design and policy formulation;
- Legal and regulative framework review and formulation;
- Strategic planning support;
- Data and information management and processing;
- Other relevant interventions, in line with the mandate of SOCIEUX+.

SOCIEUX+ activities take place on site in the partner country and rely on the mobilisation of mixed teams of public experts. These activities are implemented through short-term missions of one to three weeks and are usually carried out by a team of two mobilised experts from different EU member states or institutions. In practice, SOCIEUX+ activities may take different forms, such as:

- Expert advice and consulting on specific technical issues;
- Screening and reviews of documents/programmes;
- Expert support in drafting sector policies and strategies, and their translation into legislation and regulation;
- Training of trainers;
- Technical trainings;
- Fact-finding missions or initial assessments;

- Roundtable discussions;
- Thematic workshops;
- Other measures that can be provided through short-term, peer-to-peer exchange formats.

SOCIEUX+ may also support single-activity actions for targeted needs, such as high-level regional peer consultations. In these instances, experts are mobilised to work with their peers on the design and planning of specific events or sessions. They may also participate as resource persons or speakers.

In exceptional cases, additional measures can complement on-site activities, such as remote support and study visits to third countries. Experts, their organisations, and collaborative institutions play a key role in identifying the most relevant EU member states and potential host institutions for study visits. They also contribute to framing the learning objectives and facilitating the visits.

Formulation of tailor-made actions

For successful peer-to-peer exchanges, mobilised experts and their peers from partner institutions need to own the preparation, implementation, and follow-up actions supported by SOCIEUX+.

Actions are formulated based on dialogue between the in-house experts of SOCIEUX+, partner institutions or organisations, and mobilised experts. The main product of this dialogue is a workplan of short-term activities. The workplan is tailor-made specifically for each action and partner institution, and is results-oriented in both management and implementation. However, it remains flexible throughout the action so that activities can be adjusted. Mobilised experts play a key role in workplan reviews.

It is not always possible for institutions or social partners to clearly formulate expected results in their requests to SOCIEUX+. If discussions with the SOCIEUX+ Team result in the development of overall objectives for an action, fact-finding missions may be organised to assess the feasibility of an action, and develop detailed workplans based on focused expected results. Fact-finding missions are implemented with the support of mobilised experts. In most cases, in-house experts from SOCIEUX+ accompany those missions.

Participation in knowledge development activities

SOCIEUX+ is committed to recording the lessons learned and good practices resulting from supported actions, and making these available to the international cooperation community, and institutions and social partners interested in social protection, labour and employment. As such, SOCIEUX+ capitalises on the results of selected actions to generate knowledge products. SOCIEUX+ also participates in and organises knowledge development events, where peer-to-peer exchanges have a central role. Collaborative institutions and previously mobilised experts may be invited to contribute to the development of products or events organised or supported by SOCIEUX+.



3 What are the sources of expertise mobilised by SOCIEUX+?

Individual experts

In principle, SOCIEUX+ mobilises public experts from the public administrations and mandated bodies of EU member states, and practitioners working for social partners, including:

- Practitioners, public servants, and employees from publicly mandated bodies of EU member states;
- Collaborators and employees of social partner institutions, such as trade unions and employer associations;
- Academic and research institutions from EU member states.

Public experts can be active or retired professionals. The mobilisation of experts currently employed with international specialised agencies is limited to activities and/or actions that are jointly implemented with that expert's agency of origin. Retired employees from international specialised agencies or cooperation agencies can also be mobilised, without regard to their former employer's affiliation with an action. Retired experts are considered as public experts for all purposes, benefits, and financial compensation provided by SOCIEUX+.

Private consultants may also complement expert teams, but to a lesser extent. The core mandate of SOCIEUX+ is to foster peer-to-peer exchanges between public experts, their institutions, and social partners from EU member states and partner countries.

When necessary, SOCIEUX+ capitalises on triangular technical cooperation by setting up teams with experts from both EU member states and partner countries.

Individual experts may directly apply to opportunities of collaboration in SOCIEUX+ actions (see 4 - *How are mobilised experts identified*, below).

Collaborative institutions

An alternative to individual expert mobilisation, SOCIEUX+ also aims to set up strategic partnerships with collaborative institutions. These are public or mandated institutions of excellence in EU member states with recognised expertise on social protection, labour or employment. Experts mobilised from collaborative institutions are generally contracted and financially compensated by SOCIEUX+ through their institution of origin.

The benefits of cooperation with SOCIEUX+

The opportunities for professional and personal development and growth for individual experts that engage in peer-to-peer exchanges with SOCIEUX+ are substantial, and include:

- Building or expanding an international professional network;
- Boosting their professional image;
- Increasing experiences in multicultural and international work environments;
- Sharing and acquiring knowledge and improving skills through peer-to-peer interaction;
- Improving their professional status by sharing good practices;
- Gathering new ideas and inputs from different cultures and perspectives as an inspiration to look "outside-inside";
- Acquiring first-hand experience of social protection, labour and employment systems abroad,
- Contributing to enhanced cooperation between the EU and partner countries.

Collaborative institutions benefit from being part of actions supported by SOCIEUX+ through increased international status, human resource development, and opportunity development by:

- Gaining international recognition through cooperation with partner countries and other EU member state institutions;
- Sharing good practices with the EU and international community;
- Strengthening their image and recognition as a centre of excellence;
- Extending the knowledge of their experts to international challenges;
- Exposing their staff to alternative approaches to problem solving;
- Identifying and capitalising on opportunities for collaboration with partner institutions inside and outside the EU.

4 How are mobilised experts identified?

Dissemination of collaboration opportunities

The rapid mobilisation of expertise is a constant effort of SOCIEUX+. The Facility relies on several channels to engage EU member state institutions and social partners in our actions, including:

- Publishing calls for experts on the websites of SOCIEUX+ and implementation partners;
- Reliance on national thematic focal points across EU member states, collaborative institutions, and centres of excellence;
- Dissemination and direct contacting of recommended experts, institutions, and organisations identified by the partner institution;
- Identification of potential experts in the online database maintained by SOCIEUX+.

Upon identification of experts, the preparation of mission logistics and activities is initiated with the partner institution. Experts participate in the review and framing of activities, while partner institutions retain an active role also in the implementation of activities and the overall mission.

Calls for experts

Opportunities to participate as an individual expert in a SOCIEUX+ activity are regularly published on the websites of SOCIEUX+, its implementation partners (Expertise France, FIIAPP, and BELINCOSOC) and other relevant websites. Experts may apply directly to SOCIEUX+. Institutions interested in collaborating with SOCIEUX+ and making experts available for SOCIEUX+ actions are invited to directly contact SOCIEUX+.

Experts may also be recommended and invited to apply through the SOCIEUX+ network of focal points across partner institutions in EU member states.

Experts with relevant profiles and already registered in the SOCIEUX+ Expert Database directly receive an invitation to apply to mobilisation opportunities.

Experts with appropriate profiles proposed by collaborative institutions may be mobilised directly, without publication of a call for applications.

Safety and security

The SOCIEUX+ Team considers the security conditions for on-site mobilisation of experts to be of the utmost importance. No experts will be mobilised for activities in geographic areas where their safety cannot be guaranteed.

Application process for experts

Interested experts should submit their application on the SOCIEUX+ website: <https://pmt.socieux.eu>. The application process is:

1. If they have not already, experts create their own personal SOCIEUX+ account by clicking on "Create an account".

Upon receiving the login details for their account, experts should create and submit their profile for review. Expert profiles have to be accompanied by an updated curriculum vitae (CV) in Europass format. CVs can be submitted in English, French, or Spanish. Europass templates for CVs are available here: <http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/en/documents/curriculum-vitae/templates-instructions>

2. Once their profile is approved by the SOCIEUX+ Team, they can apply to any available calls for experts accessible under the tab "Call for experts".

If more information is needed, please contact SOCIEUX+ by email at experts@socieux.eu with the reference number of the application.

Collaborative or interested institutions wishing to make expertise available for a specific call for application may directly contact the team of SOCIEUX+ at contact@socieux.eu.

Selection of experts

Active public experts from collaborative institutions are given priority in the selection process. However, experts are also selected based on alignment with the skills and expertise needed to successfully implement planned activities.

The requirements for the selection of experts is outlined in the terms of reference for each activity, and the published calls for experts. The requirements include, among others, area and language skills for the respective region. The evaluation of experts also considers their previous experience in international cooperation and the geographic area of intervention.

5 What are the logistical and financial considerations for experts conducting SOCIEUX+ activities?

Contracting of experts

SOCIEUX+ contracts selected experts using its own standardised contracts and terms of reference. Contracts are signed either with the experts and/or with their organisation of origin (employing institution). The latter situation is preferred to ensure compliance with any regulations on secondary or external activities (regardless of remuneration) of public employees and civil servants. Experts contracted through their organisation of origin (or collaborative institutions) may not be replaced without the prior consent of SOCIEUX+.

Terms of reference

Terms of reference for experts are integral parts of the contracting process. Terms of reference describe in detail what is expected from mobilised experts, and include at least:

- Description of results of previous activities and the current status of the action;
- Details of expected tasks;
- Respective responsibilities of each expert to be mobilised;
- Detailed estimated workloads including preparation, travel, mission, reporting and, if applicable, remote-working days per expert;
- Detailed deliverables and their format;
- Reporting rules, including delays for the submission of deliverables;
- An indicative time schedule for the activity.

Backstopping

In-house experts of SOCIEUX+ accompany activities from their preparation to the finalisation of deliverables. These staff members are responsible for:

- Finalising the terms of reference for activities, in consultation with mobilised experts (when appropriate);
- Briefing mobilised experts prior to their missions;
- Liaising between mobilised experts or collaborative institutions, and partner institutions.
- Debriefing mobilised experts on the completion of missions;
- Reviewing experts' products before delivering them to partner institutions;
- Collecting feedback from partner institutions and experts on implemented activities.

Feedback of experts

SOCIEUX+ uses capacity-building indicators in its evaluation of actions and reporting of results. The feedback of mobilised experts is key to accurately capture these indicators. Mobilised experts provide their feedback on the overall process and achievement of results through standardised mission reports and brief online surveys completed at the end of supported activities/missions.

Mobilised experts may be asked to participate in external evaluations of SOCIEUX+.

Travel arrangements

Per diem and accommodation

Experts mobilised by SOCIEUX+ are entitled to receive a per diem (daily subsistence allowance) for each night spent outside their normal place of work. The per diem is a financial compensation intended to cover accommodation costs, meals, local travel and sundry expenses (such as private telephone calls, minibar and other personal expenses) on location and during on-site missions.

The exact per diem rate will be fixed in the contract. Any per diem to be paid must not exceed the published EU per diem rates:

http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/work/procedures/implementation/per_diems/index_en.htm_en.

The total number of days eligible for per diem amount is determined by the travel schedule (arrival and departure from the mission location) and justified by boarding passes when travelling by plane, or tickets when travelling by train. Experts are provided with suggestions for hotels, the booking and payment of which is the responsibility of the expert.

Travelling by plane

Experts attending an activity abroad or mobilised for an on-site mission are entitled to have their international travel arranged and paid for. Flight tickets are booked in economy class. Original boarding passes must be retained and submitted to SOCIEUX+ (see previous section).

If an airline charges an additional fee for activity-related, checked-in luggage (e.g., training materials), the fee amount can be reimbursed to experts upon presentation of original supporting documents and the prior agreement of the SOCIEUX+ Team.

Costs for travel between cities in the country of action, as well as costs for travel between cities in an expert's home country to facilitate travel to the country of action, will be reimbursed upon submission of a proper invoice from the transporter and supporting documents as outlined below.

Experts whose travel time to an international airport exceeds 24 hours are entitled to receive a corresponding per diem to cover their travel and accommodation costs to and from that airport.

Travelling by train

The cost of a second-class ticket will be reimbursed, except for trips in countries where bookings must be made for first-class carriage. For high-speed trains, first-class tickets may also be reimbursed if proof is provided that this option was more economical than standard second-class tickets.

Local transportation

Taxi fares linked to international travel for missions and activities may be reimbursed based on evidence of payment and prior approval by the SOCIEUX+ Team. Such expenditures may be eligible for travel to and from airports/bus stations/train stations for any of the following reasons:

- no public transport is available;
- the expert arrives at the airport or station (bus or train) between 10pm and 8am;
- there are credible safety or security reasons to justify the use of a taxi.

All other costs for local transportation are covered by the per diem.

Travel time

If the expert is travelling on a mission outside their place of posting, a maximum of two days of travel time (including travel during weekends) can be considered as working time. These travel costs can then be included in the timesheet and invoiced, if provided for by the terms of reference for that activity, and the individual contract. Time spent travelling other than for a direct assignment (e.g., departure on Saturday for an assignment on Monday) is not considered as working time and cannot be invoiced unless it can be demonstrated that it is the most economical option and had the prior agreement of the SOCIEUX+ Team.

Travellers are not entitled to per diem for the duration of their journeys.

Visas

Visa costs are reimbursed to experts upon request and provision of an invoice.

The SOCIEUX+ Team assists mobilised experts by providing useful information regarding visa procedures and by coordinating the preparation and delivery of an invitation letter from the partner institution. However, experts are responsible for obtaining their own visas for all missions, mobilisations, and assignments with SOCIEUX+.

Travel insurance and vaccinations

Travel insurance for mobilised experts is provided by SOCIEUX+. The insurance plan includes emergency medical expenses and repatriation. The detailed insurance terms and conditions will be provided to experts along with their plane tickets.

Experts are highly encouraged to have up-to-date vaccinations/immunisations before their journey of their stay/mission. The costs for vaccinations specifically required for SOCIEUX+ related travel are reimbursed based on the prior approval by SOCIEUX+, a request for reimbursement, and provision of supporting documentation.

Reimbursement of travel costs

An advance of 75% on the total estimated per diem amount for a mission can be paid to the expert before their departure, when time allows. Payment of this advance is conditional on the request of an expert, and return of the signed copy of their contract by email. The advance remains due to SOCIEUX+ until the submission of boarding passes and/or tickets upon return of mission.

The balance of the per diem is to be paid after the end of the activity and upon receipt of the original boarding passes/tickets, or other travel documents for missions not requiring travel by air, and the timesheet signed by the expert.

Other eligible travel costs are paid upon request after the end of the activity by completing an expense statement. Insufficiently documented expenses may not be reimbursed. The form shall be submitted as an attachment to the final invoice provided by the expert.

Advances are deemed reimbursable by the traveller in case of cancellation of the activity and are cleared against final documentation and payment of remaining contract amounts.

Financial arrangements

Working time

The standard working days for mobilised experts are Monday to Friday. Weekends (Saturday and Sunday) and national holidays in the country of activity are not considered as working days. Experts mobilised for missions to countries where the normal working days are Sunday to Thursday are entitled to allowances for these days. Working days outside these norms and standards may be agreed upon in only with the prior written consent of SOCIEUX+.

Working days include time for preparation, implementation of mission activities, and reporting.

In rare cases, activities may include or totally consist of remote work between mobilised experts and the partner institution. Such work may include backstopping and the review of products prepared by the partner institution or key stakeholders. Remote work is compensated under the standard contractual and financial rules of SOCIEUX+.

Financial compensation for public experts

A financial allowance of €250 is granted per working and effective travel day to:

- public experts (see section on *Individual experts*);
- practitioners working for social partners;
- academics and researchers;
- retired public experts; and,
- experts retired from international specialised agencies or cooperation agencies.

National regulations on remuneration and compensation of public employees and civil servants applies, and may limit the payment of allowances by SOCIEUX+. The responsibility for compliance and verification lies with individual experts and their institutions of origin. The payment of income or other taxes is the sole responsibility of the mobilised experts and/or their organisations.

Experts that are staff members of partner institutions benefiting from an action are not entitled to financial allowances.

Fees for private experts

Private and independent consultants, including international facilitators or interpreters, contracted to undertake SOCIEUX+ activities are entitled to receive a fee for each day spent working and travelling for these activities. Fee rates are set according to the number of relevant years of experience in the field of expertise. SOCIEUX+ applies a standardised fee rate for all private experts and consultants.

Payments

Payments to experts or their institution of origin are only made based on signed contracts. All payments are made by bank transfer.

Payments are normally paid directly to mobilised experts. Allowances may be paid to an organisation if the services provided by the expert were contracted through a third party (organisation of origin, collaborative institution, or other partnership).

Private experts have to provide their value added tax (VAT) and, if applicable, their national company registration number at the time of contract signature. If the expert was contracted through a third-party or a consulting company, payments are made directly to the company.

All payments related to allowances or fees are subject to the certification of performance, provision of deliverables, and the acceptance of the work by the SOCIEUX+ Team.

Other points regarding payment

Payment recipients cover their own banking fees.

All payments are made in euros (€).

Any expenses incurred in currencies will be reimbursed at the exchange rate specified in INFOEURO, published monthly by the European Commission for the corresponding month at: http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts_grants/info_contracts/infoeuro/infoeuro_en.cfm.

About SOCIEUX+

The EU promotes and maintains dialogue on social protection and inclusive employment policies with an increasing number of partner countries. This effort has been confirmed by the new European consensus on development entitled 'Our world, our dignity, our future'. A significant number of cooperation initiatives in these fields are funded by geographic or thematic instruments of the EU in different countries. Those initiatives are highly structured and address the medium- to long-term needs of partner countries. However, short-term measures and peer-to-peer cooperation to promote the development of social protection systems are needed to complement the EU's international cooperation agenda. The EU Expert Facility on Employment, Labour and Social Protection (SOCIEUX+) responds to this need.

The SOCIEUX+ facility was established and funded by the EU, with co-funding from France, Spain, and Belgium, and is managed by the European Commission's Directorate for Development and Cooperation (EuropeAid). The Facility is implemented by a partnership composed of development cooperation agencies from member states: Expertise France (the partnership lead), Fundación Internacional y para Iberoamérica de Administración y Políticas Públicas (FIIAPP) from Spain, Belgian International Cooperation on Social Protection (BELINCOSOC), and the Belgian Development Agency (Enabel).

The general objective of the Facility is to expand and improve access to better employment opportunities and inclusive social protection systems in partner countries. Its specific objective is to enhance the capacity of partner countries to design, manage, and monitor inclusive, effective, and sustainable employment strategies and social protection systems through short-term, peer-to-peer technical assistance and knowledge development.

SOCIEUX+ recognises the impact of social protection and employment in reducing poverty and vulnerability. It supports the efforts of partner governments in promoting inclusive and sustainable social protection and employment systems. SOCIEUX+ also complements the efforts made through other EU initiatives.

The Facility is an expansion of Social Protection EU Expertise in Development Cooperation (SOCIEUX), established in 2013.

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