

**COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAMME TO COMBAT SOCIAL EXCLUSION**

**CALL FOR TENDERS**

**«Peer Review in the Field of Social Inclusion Policies»**

Number VT/2002/54

**Period of Performance: 1.11.2002 – 31.10.2003**  
*(Annual contract renewable four times)*

**Budget Line B3-4105**

**TERM OF REFERENCE**

## 1. Background

At the **Lisbon European Council** of March 2000, the Union has set itself a new strategic goal for the next decade: to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth, with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion. The European Council agreed to base **social inclusion policies** on an **open method of co-ordination** combining national action plans and a Commission initiative for co-operation.

Implementing this strategy through the open method of co-ordination while respecting the principle of subsidiarity and actively involving all relevant actors, as recommended by the European Council implies:

- fixing guidelines for the Union combined with specific timetables for achieving the goals which they set in the short, medium and long term;
  - establishing, where appropriate, quantitative and qualitative indicators and benchmarks against the best in the world and tailored to the needs of different Member States and sectors as a mean of comparing best practice;
  - translating these European guidelines into national and regional policies by setting specific targets and adopting measures, taking into account national and regional differences; and
- **periodic monitoring, evaluation and peer review** organised as mutual learning processes.

Responding to the invitation of the Lisbon European Council, the Commission presented a Community action programme to support the EU policy co-operation called for by this strategy<sup>1</sup>.

The programme, adopted by the Council and the Parliament on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2002, entered into force on 12 January 2002. Its budget amounts to 75 M € over 5 years (2002-2006).

The programme is intended to support public and private organisations in different Member States involved in combating poverty and social exclusion that wish to share experience and to work together on common policy issues identified in their National Action Plans against social exclusion and poverty (NAPs/incl). The programme is not intended to fund directly interventions that benefit people in situations of exclusion.

The programme is composed of three strands: 1) improving the understanding of social exclusion and poverty, supported by comparable indicators; 2) organising policy co-operation and mutual learning in the light of the national action plans to combat poverty and social exclusion; 3) developing the capacity of actors to address social exclusion and poverty effectively and to promote innovative approaches, in particular through networking at EU level.

Combating social exclusion is first and foremost the responsibility of Member States and their national, regional and local authorities. The proposed Community

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<sup>1</sup> All information concerning the open method of co-ordination and the action programme is available at the following WebPages: [http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment\\_social/soc-prot/soc-incl/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/soc-prot/soc-incl/index_en.htm)

programme is intended to add value to Member States' action. Building on the national action plans established by Member States, and the Joint Report on Social Inclusion, the programme will focus on transnational co-operation as a means of improving understanding and the effectiveness of policy action against poverty and social exclusion. The issues to be addressed as a matter of priority should cover the whole range of the objectives agreed by the European Council of Nice in December 2000 and will be identified by the Member States and the Commission. The committee in charge of the management of the programme will have an important role to play in this respect.

### **I. Objectives. The peer review method.**

The objective of this call for tenders is to select the consultancy organisation that will assist the Commission and the Member States in carrying out the identification and dissemination of best practice in the fight against poverty and social exclusion through a peer review methodology.

Member States adopted their first National Action Plans against social exclusion and poverty (NAPs/incl) in June 2001. The NAPs/incl present existing or planned policy measures in each Member State to combat social exclusion and poverty from July 2001 to June 2003. The Commission reviewed the NAPs/incl and adopted its draft Social Inclusion Report in October 2001. This Communication served as a basis for a Joint Report on Social Inclusion that was adopted by the Social Affairs Council on December 3<sup>rd</sup> 2001 and endorsed at the EU Laeken-Brussels Summit in December 2001. The Report represents a significant advance towards the achievement of the EU's strategic goal of achieving greater social cohesion.

Member States have included in their NAPs/incl a more or less detailed description of the policy measures in place or planned in order to meet the priorities set-up at the Nice Summit. The large majority have also included examples of good practice to facilitate their identification. It was recognised in the JIR that the exchange of good practice between Members States should be enhanced in the future by more extensive evaluations of the impact of national policies and through the development of a comprehensive set of indicators and methodologies, at both national and EU level.

Building on the experience gained in the field of Active Labour Market Policies (where a Peer review exercise has been running since 1999), the intention is to organise a voluntary exchange of experiences between Member States in the field of social inclusion policies on the basis of actions and measures presented in the various NAPs/incl. It is the first time that such a systematic exchange of experience will take place in the field of social inclusion.

The term "peer review" usually refers to a critical evaluation of scientific, technical or academic work by independent experts and is methodologically related to quality assessment processes. In the case of the social inclusion peer review exercise, the **host countries** will identify from the range of policy measures and actions described in their NAPs/incl those which present greater potential for dissemination, in view of their particularly good results (based, for example, on evaluation studies or monitoring) and their general thematic interest for their partners in the Union. They

shall present such policy measures or actions in peer reviews which encourage an open discussion of their merits and relevance for dissemination elsewhere in the Union. The other Member States participating in the review (the **peer countries**) will have a keen interest in the policy measure or action in question, either because they envisage adopting similar policies in the near future, or because a similar policy already exists, and a comparison is deemed useful.

The **aim of the peer reviews** will be to assess the effectiveness of particular policies or programmes, to contribute to their further improvement and to promote their dissemination across Member States. Emphasis will be given to the examination of the transferability of examples of good practice to other Member States. An important objective of the peer review exercise will be to develop and propose a list of methodology criteria for the selection and review of good practices. While this exercise will concentrate on particular examples of good practice, it could serve as a useful input to Member States to help them in focusing their policies in order to meet the objectives agreed at the Nice Summit.

The **selection** of the policy measures or actions to be reviewed will be of the responsibility of the Member States, and that will take into account the following criteria:

- Policy relevance for the common objectives agreed at the Nice Summit and comprehensive coverage of such objectives;
- The availability of evaluation results or, at least, of substantive early monitoring data, providing sufficient material evidence for the examination;
- The willingness and/or capability of the host countries to provide the information material required for the peer reviews, as well as to organise local visits or meetings;
- The interest expressed by the peer countries in each of the policies.

The policy actions and measures to be reviewed will be identified on the basis of a process coordinated by the Commission:

- Member States will be asked to identify which policies they would be willing to present as host countries among those mentioned as good practices in their NAP/incl. Each Member State should indicate no more than two policies.
- On the basis of the replies to this first query, a list of potential peer review policies will be compiled.
- Each Member State will be asked to state four preferences for peer participation in the review teams on the basis of the list of potential peer review policies.
- The most frequently preferred policies will be selected for the peer review exercise. Member States with a preference for such policies will be included in the respective teams. If a Member State has a preference for non-selected policies, it could be reallocated among the selected policies taking into account the balanced participation of all Member States.

The peer review exercise will be undertaken in co-operation with Member States and under the aegis of the Social Protection Committee. The technical assistance to the implementation is provided under strand 2 of the Social Exclusion Programme.

The proposed maximum number of participating 'peer' countries is five or six countries. Indeed, a larger number of 'peer' countries would result in a too large group of participants. This would not allow for informal, open and in-depth discussions and the review would then not go beyond the mere exchange of information. On the other hand, the reviews should be attended by a minimum of three 'peer' countries.

As from the next year, depending on their participation in the Social Exclusion Programme, and in particular its strand n° 2, Candidate countries, might express interest in attending some of the review meetings. Possible inclusion of EFTA/EEA countries has also to be considered.

### **III – Organization of the peer reviews**

It is foreseen to have a maximum of **eight reviews per year**. The proposed maximum number of peer countries taking part in those reviews will be five or six with a minimum of three.

The consultancy organisation selected will be responsible for assisting the services of the Commission and the Member States to carry out the various elements of the work programme of the reviews. Such elements include logistical support setting up and co-ordination of the teams responsible for the development of the proposed programme of reviews, as well as the organisation of various initiatives taken by the programme.

The reviews will be conducted by teams consisting of:

- Government representatives from both the **host** and **peer** countries (if they wish, government representatives could be assisted by a national expert selected by the Member States and contracted by the consultancy organisation);
- Independent experts, able to bring an international, comparative perspective on the specific topic of the review;
- Commission officials.

Furthermore, it is important to involve in each peer review stakeholders, such as social partners and NGOs with a particular responsibility in the policy field of the peer review. One could also involve, where appropriate, people experiencing poverty and social exclusion who have been targeted by the policy measure in question.

In that respect, the consultancy organisation selected through this call for tenders will:

- Provide the necessary assistance for the organisation and conduct of the reviews.
- Undertake all administrative tasks and contracting the 'peer' and 'host' countries' national experts;
- Propose to the Commission, in relation to the themes of each review, a 'thematic' expert and contracting with him/her.

Before each review, the 'Consultancy organisation' should elaborate a document presenting elements such as: the description of the tasks to be undertaken, expected outputs, presentation of the team of experts, Member State representatives or other persons involved, duration, time schedule and reference documents.

Other papers are necessary for the good preparation and success of the reviews. In that respect, before each review meeting, a document should be prepared by the 'thematic expert' (and if required with the assistance of the consultancy organisation responsible for the logistic co-ordination of the programme) presenting the merits of the policy to be reviewed and the way it relates with the situation in the host country. An additional paper could be provided by the host country. It might also be useful to have papers from the viewpoint of the "peer" countries.

**Standard model of a peer review meeting (to be adapted to particular circumstances):**

- Presentation of the topic/case from different viewpoints – country and policy context, cost-effectiveness, implementation and (where appropriate) the delivery system for each policy.
- Intervention of the "peer" countries which may follow several formats: questions, value added, presentation of similar policies, etc.;
- Points of view of other actors;
- Discussion about the transferability of the measure to the countries concerned and about the adaptations that may be needed;
- Attempt to arrive at shared conclusions.

The meetings will be structured so as to ensure an active contribution of all the participants. For instance, in some cases, it can be useful that during parts of the meeting subgroups are formed to discuss specific issues in more detail. The results of the subgroups could then be discussed in plenary meetings.

The review may involve local visits to institutions active in the delivery of such policies, workshops, interviews 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. Follow-up meetings for reviewing the same policies or actions at a later stage of implementation should be considered, in order to allow for longer term monitoring.

**Dissemination** of the results of the peer review meetings will play an important role in the successful transfer of good practice through the exchange of experiences of social policies. The documents and findings of each review will be put on the web. After completion of the first year of peer reviews, the main results will be summarised in a document that will be presented at the Social Protection Committee. Such document will include an assessment of the methodology used, with a view to a possible adaptation in the remaining years of the exercise. The conclusions of the peer reviews will be summarised in annual reports to be widely distributed, and which could be presented in public conferences (e.g. the Round Table on Social Exclusion).

#### IV. Description of Tasks

An indicative breakdown of the activities to be undertaken by the consultancy organisation and the different types of experts is detailed below:

##### Consultancy Organisation

- Identifying and proposing “thematic experts” (in relation to the theme to be reviewed);
- Contracting the “national” experts (selected by the Member States; 'host' and 'peer' countries);
- Organising all meetings in relation to the review exercise (this include all practical matters such as: mailing programme and contacts with participants, sending invitations, making accommodation and travel arrangements and reservations, bookings of meeting rooms, organising interpretation<sup>2</sup>);
- Preparation and conduct of the reviews (this include all matters such as assisting the host Member State and/or the Commission for the preparation of the peer review meetings; analysing evaluation studies, organising production of evaluation reports in advance of each peer review, providing translation of selected papers/documents, facilitating, structuring and/or animating meetings, advising the host Member State and/or the Commission on the peer review programme (e.g. study visits, host country papers, dissemination methods of best practices, etc, ...) producing a report on each review, regularly meeting with the European Commission's Services and/or Member States, developing and regularly updating a web-site devoted to the Peer Reviews Programme on Social Inclusion Policies which would be linked to the Commission's web-site devoted to the social exclusion issues ([http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment\\_social/soc-prot/soc-incl/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/soc-prot/soc-incl/index_en.htm));
- Drafting of annual reports summarising the conclusions of the peer reviews carried out in the previous 12 months. The first report should include an detailed assessment of the methodology in use and recommendations for its improvement.

For each **peer review** and/or event, the Commission will discuss in advance with the selected consultancy organisation and after consultation with the Member States the nature of each envisaged task/initiative. When necessary the consultancy organisation selected will have to present in advance for approval all the elements for a specific event or peer review. The presentation of each initiative may include:

- Description of the task to be undertaken;
- Expected outputs;
- Presentation of the team of Experts, Member State representatives or other persons involved;
- Time schedule and duration;
- A work plan, reference documents, dates, etc;

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<sup>2</sup> The peer reviews meetings will be held in English or French. At the request of the Member States, simultaneous interpretation should be arranged for all appropriate languages.

- Financial estimates in the form of a breakdown of costs with fees, direct expenses and reimbursable items. The rates used will be equal to (or lower than) the rates indicated in the proposal of the consultant selected for the whole programme;
- The deliverables of the project (reports, publications etc.);

Each initiative will be financed by the programme according to the Terms and Conditions attached. The elements of each initiative (description, staff, work plan, etc.) will be prepared by the selected consultancy organisation. Expert costs are reimbursed and if necessary, participants of Member States might also receive reimbursement.

The organisation and the administrative and logistical details related to such initiatives should be part of the methodology proposed by each tender. High quality reporting of each event is essential. Such reporting and accompanying graphs or tables might have to be presented in form ready for immediate publication. It is envisaged that arising from the experience of undertaking peer reviews that the consultants will develop guidelines to assist the Commission and Member States to better evaluate the impact of policies and programmes to combat poverty and social exclusion.

The tasks assigned to the different experts could cover:

#### **Thematic experts**

- Prepare a paper on the selected good practice
- Liase with the government representatives of the 'host' country and the 'national' expert
- Prepare a paper which comments on the selected good practice and sets it in a broader European context.
- Present the paper (if appropriate) at the meeting.

#### **'National' expert of the 'host' country**

- Liase with and assist the government representatives of the 'host' country
- Advise the 'host' country and the Commission on the envisaged programme for the peer reviews (study visits, dissemination methods of good practices, etc.)
- Present a paper (if appropriate) on the selected good practice at the meeting from the national perspective
- Participate in the review discussions.

#### **'National' expert of the 'Peer' countries**

- Liase with and assist the government representatives of the 'peer' countries
- Prepare a paper in response to the paper of the 'host' country on the selected good practice which would examine the relevance of the theme to their own national context.

- Present the paper (if appropriate) at the meeting
- Participate in the review discussions.

## **V. Time table**

The contract period will have a duration of 12 months and the expected starting date is the 1<sup>st</sup> November 2002. The contract might be renewed four times.

## **VI. Interim and final reporting**

Apart from the separate reporting for each specific task, and collective reporting for a number of tasks, an interim report explaining the state of play of the activities carried out should be submitted when the services already rendered reach 70% of the total services required by each annual contract. Rules in Annexes also apply to this contract.

## **VII. Documentation**

Documents related to activities of Social Exclusion can be found at the Internet address:

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment\\_social/soc-prot/soc-incl/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/soc-prot/soc-incl/index_en.htm)

## **VIII. Selection criteria**

The following information on the consulting organisation's experience, expertise and financial and economic standing should be supplied.

1. A minimum experience and expertise of three years in the fields of policy analysis and assessment, working with European and National authorities and relevant experts –demonstrate this by providing a list of main related projects. Experience or sound understanding of the EU social inclusion process. Links with NGO's, national, regional and local authorities.
2. Details of educational and professional qualifications of the persons providing the services: Curriculum Vitae of Project Director and main assessors; the Project Director should be a senior consultant with a minimum of five years experience in managing similar transnational projects and with good organisational and coordination skills.
3. The consultant should have no conflict of interest and be completely independent. A statement of independence should be included in the offer.
4. Sound financial and economic position of the consultant. Full set of audited financial statements and accounts -balance sheet and profit and loss account for the past three years. Annual budget of the last two years for a semi-public or non-profit organisation.

## **IX. Contract Award criteria**

### 1. Quality of the offer

#### a) Approach (30%)

- demonstration of understanding of the nature of the tasks to be carried out, its context and results to be achieved.
- operational feasibility of the proposal

#### b) Technical quality (70%)

- clarity and coherence of the work plan; timetable
- structure of team(s) and relationship to tasks
- cost efficiency

### 2. Price.

The contract will be awarded to the consultant whose offer represents the best value for money, taking into account the above criteria.

## **X. Methods of Payment**

Payments shall be made in EUR (€)

The terms of payment are as follows:

- 30% within 60 days after the signing of the contract;
- 40% after the submission and acceptance of the interim report;
- and the balance following the Commission's acceptance of both the final report and final invoice.

## **XI. Deposit and Guarantees**

If the advance payment exceeds EUR 150,000 a Bank guarantee may be required. A model for the text of the Bank guarantee is attached.

## **XII. Legal form**

The execution of the service is not reserved by law or regulation or administrative provision to a specific profession. Tenders should conform to the requirements of the general conditions. Tenders from *consortia* of firms or groups of service providers, contractors or suppliers must specify the role, qualifications and experience of each member of group. Tenders must be signed by the legal representative of the consultant. Also tenders must specify the name of the person authorised to sign the proposed contract.

## **XIII. Prices**

Prices must be quoted in Euros using the conversion rates published in the C series of the Official Journal of the European Communities on the day when the tender was published. Also prices must be fixed amounts (with the exception of travel and subsistence). As regards travel and subsistence expenses, estimated figures must be given and these figures must be estimated separately from other expenses foreseen. The amount of VAT should be shown separately. Costs foreseen must be broken down as per annexes of the draft contract attached. As an indication, the maximum budget for the first year is around EUR 1,000,000. The price revision clause will be included within the contract.

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**Financial Guarantee for Service Contracts**  
 MODEL **awarded by the Employment and Social Affairs DG**

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*Letter of Guarantee from the Financial  
 Organisation to the European Commission*

1. The European Commission ("the Commission"), has concluded an Contract with ..... *(full legal name of the Contractor)* ("the Contractor") in the framework of ..... *(name of programme)* for a Contract entitled ..... *(title of the Contract)* under reference No ..... *(Contract reference No)* ("the Contract").
  
2. .... *(name of the financial organisation)* ("the Financial Organisation") hereby irrevocably undertakes to pay all amounts owed to the Commission by the Contractor up to a maximum of EUR (€) ..... *(insert the exact amount of the advance payment in figures and in words)* if he fails to fulfil his obligations within the time limit and/or in accordance with the provisions of the Contract, and/or if the said advance has not been recovered in full 60 days after the end of the period of performance specified in the Contract. The Financial Organisation shall pay these amounts without contestation and upon receipt of the first written demand from the Commission, following the provisions of paragraph 3.
  
3. This guarantee may be called in at any time by the Commission during the period specified under paragraph 4 by registered letter stating that the Contractor has failed to fulfil his obligations under the Contract and/or that the advance has not been fully recovered in due time, and specifying the amount being claimed.
  
4. The guarantee shall enter into force on the date of effective receipt of the advance payment  
 on the account No ..... *(Contractor's account No.)*  
 of ..... *(Contractor's account Holder)*  
 at ..... *(Financial Organisation, branch and full address)*  
 and shall remain valid up to and inclusive the 90<sup>th</sup> day after the end of the period of performance specified in the Contract.  
 In the case of an audit initiated before the end of the period of performance specified in the Contract, the guarantee shall be extended up to the conclusion of the audit.  
 In the case of an addendum to the Contract signed before the end of the period of performance specified in the Contract and extending this period of performance, the guarantee shall be extended up to and inclusive the 90<sup>th</sup> day after the end of the new period of performance.
  
5. Partial or full advance recoveries, executed by the Commission under interim payments made to the Contractor in accordance with the provisions of the Contract, and/or repayments made by the Contractor to the Commission as partial or full reimbursement in respect of the advance payment, may be deducted from the

guaranteed amount indicated in paragraph 2, upon written request from the Financial Organisation to the Commission. The Commission's decision on such deduction request(s) shall be given by registered mail to the Financial Organisation, with copy to the Contractor.

6. After the full and effective recovery by the Commission of the advance payment within the guarantee validity period indicated in paragraph 4, or at the latest after the expiration of the guarantee validity period indicated in paragraph 4, the Commission will return the present original letter of guarantee to the financial organisation, with copy to the Contractor, by registered mail.

7. This guarantee and the effect given to it are governed exclusively by the law applicable to the Contract. Any dispute between the Community and the Financial Organisation relating to this guarantee or to any payment made in the context thereof will be brought before the jurisdiction indicated in the Contract.

Done at ..... (place), on ..... (date)

*(name and signature of the authorised representative of the Financial Organisation)*

*(official stamp of the financial organisation)*