



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Central Asia-Invest Programme 2007- 2008

Guidelines
for grant applicants
responding to the call for proposals
for 2007 - 2008

Restricted Call for Proposals

LAUNCHED UNDER A SUSPENSIVE CLAUSE

Budget line: 19.10.02

Reference: EuropeAid126265/C/ACT/Multi

Deadline for submission of Concept Notes: 15/02/2008

Deadline for submission of proposals: 15/05/2008

NOTICE

The "Contracting Authority" in all instances in this document refers to the European Commission (EC).

1. Please note that this Call for Proposals follows the revised procedures introduced by the new Practical Guide to contract procedures for EC external actions as from 1st February 2006 and revised on May 2007, available for consultation at the following address:

http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/work/procedures/implementation/practical_guide/index_en.htm

These guidelines set out the rules for the submission, selection and implementation of actions financed under the Central Asia Invest Programme, in conformity with the provisions of the "Practical Guide to contract procedures for EC external actions.

2. The Central Asia Programme is organised under a Restricted Call for Proposals. The selection of project proposals is now a two-step procedure: successful applicants only will be asked to submit their full application if a concept note has been provisionally selected. Proposals are first screened on the basis of a concept note for their relevance to the objectives of the Central Asia Invest Programme. Only proposals which successfully complete this first step will be asked to submit an application for full evaluation. The eligibility conformity check will only be performed for the proposals that have been provisionally selected at the end of the evaluation of the full applications, on the basis of the supporting documents requested by the Contracting Authority and the Declaration by the applicant signed and sent together with the application.
3. The elements contained in the concept note cannot be modified in the full application form. The detailed budget (please provide budget with round figures) may not vary from the initial estimate by more than 20%, while the applicant is free to adapt the percentage of co-financing required as far as the minimum and maximum amount of co-financing, as laid down in this application form, is respected.
4. Proposals are selected through a competitive system and all candidates are subject to the same application rules. Please read the Guidelines for Applicants carefully and consider the recommendations and requirements regarding the content, design and expected outcomes with regard to your proposal. The Guidelines contain a sample of the evaluation grid which will be used to technically assess your proposal. Applicants are encouraged to familiarise themselves with this grid.
5. The Basic Act and Financial Resources for this Programme are: EC Regulation No 1905/2006 of 18 December 2006 establishing a Financing Instrument for Development Cooperation; Budget line 19.10.02 (Cooperation with developing countries in Central Asia)

SUSPENSIVE CLAUSE

This call for proposals is launched with a suspensive clause. The award of grant contracts selected under this call for proposals will be subject to the adoption of the Commission Decision on the Annual Action Programme 2007 for Central Asia.

The occurrence of this condition does not depend only on the European Commission. If the above elements is substantially modified, does not provide adequate coverage for the proposed action or is not adopted, the present call for proposals may be cancelled and/or replaced by a new call for proposals adapted to the finally approved financing decision.

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1. THE CENTRAL ASIA-INVEST PROGRAMME

1.1 BACKGROUND

The Five Central Asian countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) have significant development and business potential based on availability of energy, natural resources and work force. However, they are facing major challenges linked to the heritage of a centrally planned system, weak institutional development, legal and institutional reforms and a relatively limited regional integration, despite the existence of regional economic cooperation initiatives (e.g. Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation).

In the past decade their economic development has generally been robust, but with visible differences between the countries and resulting prospects. The growth of private sector has been supported so far with varying results. The governments have committed themselves to liberalization and structural reforms and are making efforts to improve the investment climate. Their agendas include new legislation and regulation on private entrepreneurship, support to the private sector development, professional training and reform of the credit system as well as trade and transit facilitation with immediate neighbours. Nevertheless in some countries improvements materialize slowly and the investment and business climate remains difficult.

The development of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) is vital if the benefits of economic growth are to be extended to a wider proportion of the population. If the obstacles to establishing and running a small business are reduced, then many people who would otherwise be excluded from the labour market will have the opportunity to work as either entrepreneurs or employees.

While the level of private and SMEs development in Central Asian countries varies due to different levels of progress made in the past decade, some features are common to the region. Business intermediary organisations which are supposed to support local SMEs lack expertise and resources. Networks at regional and international level are not yet fully established. Basic management capacities are limited. Due to missing know-how, in most cases they are not able to deliver proper business services to small enterprises such as legal, technical and economic advice, support to export and investment promotion, match-making (exhibitions, fairs, economic forums, etc.), or support in project management to enter new or expand existing markets. In-depth sector or trade-related knowledge is barely available. Also, lobbying and advocacy functions in favour of SMEs need further development.

Seen from a microeconomic perspective, most of Central Asian SMEs have fragmented knowledge of business administration, in particular of strategic marketing, appropriate marketing-mixes, access to information and capital. In conjunction with the level of appropriate vocational education sometimes being low, these SMEs face difficulties to produce quality that is competitive. Foreign investors or business partners can face problems emerging from little knowledge of Central Asian markets, their legal and regulatory frameworks, business culture and traditions in formal and informal sectors as well as from language barriers.

The Central Asia Invest programme will promote the sustainable development of SMEs and the private sector through institution building actions for Business Intermediary Organizations. These actors play a key role in the reform process towards a market economy, contributing to civil society development and to the creation of new employment opportunities and income. By improving their capacity to assist small business and to create bridges between the governments and the private sector, they will contribute to the eradication of poverty and to the gradual democratic and economic transition of these countries.

Complementary to this objective, the programme will support the development of relationships between European and Central Asian Business Intermediary Organisations, with a view to the integration of the Central Asian markets in the world economy.

1.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAMME AND PRIORITY ISSUES

The overall purpose of the Programme is to promote the sustainable economic development of Central Asia Countries by encouraging the development of Small and Medium Enterprises. In addressing this overall objective, the Programme has the following specific objectives at a regional level:

1. To reinforce Institutional skills and competences of Central Asian Business Intermediary Organisations
2. To promote closer linkages between Business Intermediary Organisation in the EU and Central Asian countries and contribute to regional economic integration.

1.3 FINANCIAL ALLOCATION PROVIDED BY THE CONTRACTING AUTHORITY

The overall indicative amount made available under this call for proposals is EUR 4 400 000. The Contracting Authority reserves the right not to award all available funds.

There are no restrictions on the total cost of an action. However, any grant awarded under this programme must fall between the following minimum and maximum amounts:

- minimum amount: EUR 200 000
- maximum amount: EUR 500 000

In addition, no grant may exceed 85 % of the total eligible costs of the action (see also section 2.1.4). The balance must be financed from the applicant's or partners' own resources, or from sources other than the European Community budget or the European Development Fund.

The size of the project must correspond to clearly identified activities and outputs, including adequate dissemination of information and multiplier effects.

No proposal will be considered where the request for funding is below the minimum value or where the percentage requested exceeds the maximum.

2. RULES FOR THIS CALL FOR PROPOSALS

These guidelines set out the rules for the submission, selection and implementation of actions financed under this call, in conformity with the provisions of the Practical Guide to contract procedures for EC external actions, which is applicable to the present call (available on the Internet at this address: http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/work/procedures/implementation/practical_guide/index_en.htm).

2.1 ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

There are three sets of eligibility criteria, relating to:

- applicant(s) which may request a grant (2.1.1), and their partners (2.1.2),
- actions for which a grant may be awarded (2.1.3),
- types of cost which may be taken into account in setting the amount of the grant (2.1.4).

2.1.1 <i>Eligibility of applicants: who may apply?</i>
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For the sake of clarity, please note that:

- “**Partnership**” refers to the grouping of organisations, i.e. the applicant and its partners;
- “**Applicant**” refers to the lead organisation within the partnership which submits the proposal;
- “**Partner**” refers to organisations - other than the applicant - which are members of the partnership;
- “**Beneficiary**” refers to the applicant (of the grant contract) with whom a grant contract has been signed.
- “**Associate**” refers to organisations/institutions which play a real role in the action but may not receive funding from the grant (see 2.1.2).
- “**Subcontractor**” refers to organisations which are neither partners nor associates, but are contracted by the applicant or partners using the relevant procurement procedures to carry out limited specific tasks within the project (see 2.1.2).

(1) In order to be eligible for a grant, applicants **must**:

- (a) be legal persons;
- (b) be non profit making;
- (c) be business intermediaries representing small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and promoting trade and investment between Europe and Central Asia. This includes inter alia chambers of commerce, sector-specific trade, industrial and professional associations, regulatory bodies and agencies promoting trade, investment and commercial activities as well as sector-based agencies concerned with working with SMEs. Government agencies (typically boards of investment, trade promotion agencies etc) are considered eligible as long as they are not the main applicant.
- (d) be nationals¹ of a Member State of the European Union or of:
 - a Member State of the European Economic Area

¹ Such nationality being determined on the basis of the organisation's statutes which should demonstrate that it has been established by an instrument governed by the internal law of the country concerned. In this respect, any legal entity whose statutes have been established in another country cannot be considered an eligible local organisation, even if they are registered locally or accompanied by a “Memorandum of Understanding”.

- an official Candidate Country as recognised by the EC
 - any of the following eligible Central Asian countries: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan.
- be directly responsible for the preparation and management of the action with their partners, not acting as an intermediary **and**
 - have stable and sufficient financial resources to ensure the continuity of their organisation throughout the project and, if necessary, to play a part in financing it;
 - be able to demonstrate their experience and capacity to manage activities corresponding in scale and complexity with those for which a grant is requested.

(2) Potential applicants may not participate in calls for proposals or be awarded grants if they are in any of the situations which are listed in Section 2.3.3 of the Practical Guide to contract procedures for EC external actions (available from the following Internet address:

http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/work/procedures/implementation/practical_guide/index_en.htm).

In part A, section III of the grant application form (“Declaration by the applicant”), applicants must declare that they do not fall into any of the situations. Their signatures on the Declaration by the Applicant must appear in original.

2.1.2 Partnerships and eligibility of partners

Applicants must act with partner organisations as specified hereafter. The applicant will act as the lead organisation and, if selected, as the contracting party (the "Beneficiary").

Partnerships

Partnership, i.e. the applicant and it(s) partner(s), will constitute a minimum of two partners from two different countries and with both regions represented.

Example: 1 from Central Asia and 1 from Europe (EU Member States, EEA Member States or official candidate country as recognized by the EC).

There is no upper limit on the number of members of a partnership.

Applicants' partners participate in designing and implementing the action, and the costs they incur are eligible in the same way as those incurred by the grant Beneficiary. They must therefore satisfy the same eligibility criteria as applicants.

Each member of a partnership must have a precise and clearly defined role in the implementation of the project and this must be explained in the proposal. However, this does not mean that very large partnerships are necessarily seen as preferable to smaller ones. The partnership should be composed in such a way as to allow for the achievement of project objectives in the most efficient and cost-effective manner.

We encourage the involvement of partners from more than one Central Asian country, provided that their role is clearly identified in the proposal.

Even though the contracting authority concludes a contract with the Beneficiary only, all partners should be shown to actively contribute to the implementation of the project. It is strongly recommended that the applicant and its partners draw up an agreement defining the technical and financial rights and obligations of each partnership member. A clear written allocation of responsibilities and a balanced distribution of costs will contribute to the partnership's success.

The Applicant and each partner must sign and date a Partnership Statement individually in the Application Form (Annex A, III, 2). The signatures of the Applicant and of each partner must appear in original.

The following are not partners and do not have to sign the “partnership statement”:

- Associates

Other organisations may be involved in the action. Such associates play a real role in the action but may not receive funding from the grant with the exception of per diem or travel costs. Associates do not have to meet the eligibility criteria referred to in section 2.1.1. The associates have to be mentioned in Part B section IV - “Associates of the Applicant participating in the Action” of the Grant Application Form.

In addition to organisations from eligible European and Central Asian countries, organisations from the following non-eligible Asian countries or territories are eligible to participate fully in projects as associates: China, Mongolia, Russian Federation, Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan.

- Subcontractors

The grant beneficiaries have the possibility to award contracts to subcontractors. Subcontractors are neither partners nor associates, and are subject to the procurement rules set out in Annex IV to the standard grant contract.

Only a limited portion of a project may be sub-contracted: this may not include overall project management itself. **The amount of sub-contracted costs (including fees, travel and accommodation costs, etc.) must not exceed 30% of the project’s total eligible costs (Item 9 in Annex B, Budget).** The involvement of contractors must take place only if necessary for the implementation of the project and for services/expertise that cannot be secured through the not-for-profit partners. No projects should be controlled by contractors or driven by commercial purposes. A fair amount of other costs for subcontracted services are acceptable in excess to the latter for the following: publication, standard computer services, travel arrangement and other costs related to logistics.

The costs for subcontracted services – including consultancy services – must be listed under item 5. in the “Budget for the Action” table – Annex B. In addition, financial details concerning the subcontracted activities (rates, number of days/months, outputs, etc.) must be developed as necessary in the budget justification section to be attached to the budget tables and highlighted in the “Budget for the Action” table (Annex B).

Proposals which fail to comply with these principles will be rejected by the Evaluation Committee.

Experts’ nationality

Project team members can be nationals of any country, provided they are legally employed by a partner organisation.

2.1.3 Eligible actions: actions for which an application may be made

Eligible actions

Institutional capacity building activities targeting European and Central Asian intermediary business organisations which aim to upgrade the skills of staff members and to reinforce networking, making them better equipped to service the local businesses and to facilitate trade between Europe and Asia.

Duration

The planned duration of an action may not be lower than 12 months nor exceed 24 months, from the starting date of activities.

Sectors or themes

Applicants are encouraged to consult the European Commission's Country Strategy Papers for each eligible country. Country Strategy Papers can be consulted on the following website:

http://ec.europa.eu/comm/external_relations/sp/index.htm

Location

Actions must take place in one or more of the following countries:

European Union	
Austria	Latvia
Belgium	Lithuania
Bulgaria	Luxembourg
Cyprus	Malta
Czech Republic	Netherlands
Denmark	Poland
Estonia	Portugal
Finland	Romania
France	Slovakia
Germany	Slovenia
Greece	Spain
Hungary	Sweden
Ireland	United Kingdom
Italy	

Central Asia	
Kazakhstan	Turkmenistan
Kyrgyzstan	Uzbekistan
Tajikistan	
European Economic Area	
Iceland	Norway
Liechtenstein	
Official Candidate Countries as recognized by the EC	
Croatia	Turkey
FYRoM	

Types of action

Institutional capacity building activities may indicatively include:

- Upgrading the capacity, skills and technical know-how of staff members of Business Intermediary Organizations, with the aim to make them better equipped to service the local businesses, facilitating trade between Europe and Asia and reinforcing networking between counterparts. Training activities may include master classes for managers and employees (management, promotion and internationalization, networking, data base management, customer satisfaction, marketing and communication, business start-up and development etc.), practical demonstrations, study visits.
- Capacity building seminars, workshops and training for staff of intermediary organisations and Asian companies and on issues required for accessing the European marketplace (business familiarisation, raising awareness of market opportunities, corporate social responsibility issues, organisational methods, promotional strategies, improvement of services, technical regulations, commercial and customs regulations, etc);
- Organising collaborative workshops with European and Asian standards and quality management organisations.

- Mutual visits and staff exchanges between Asian and European intermediary organisations;
- Creation of information links and exchange of matchmaking opportunities between European and Asian intermediaries (organisations and companies' partner search database);
- Other topics could be exchange of best practices, production techniques, technological know-how, corporate social responsibility, environmental Europe-Asia trade relations and co-operation.

Activities like SMEs training or match-making events involving a limited number of European and Central Asian companies can be organised but only as a follow up of previous training activities for Central Asian Intermediary organisations. In case of match-making, targeted SMEs should ideally have good prospects to internationalise their business strategies and detailed selection criteria should be provided in the proposal. Particular attention shall be given to the organisation of preliminary and follow up activities, necessary to develop sustainable partnerships among participating companies.

Applicants are encouraged to include in their projects appropriate dissemination actions which increase multiplier effects, including scope for replication and extension of the outcome of the action. Please note that sustainability and multiplier effects are part of the project evaluation (see also section 2.3).

Eligible costs must be in accordance with the general rules under 2.1.4 and may cover:

- Experts fees, rental of facilities or material, cost for services regarding the implementation of training or capacity building workshops and conferences, including travel and accommodation costs for trainers and invited speakers;
- Experts fees and cost of services regarding the preparation of market information and promotional material of partners activities and services;
- Travel and accommodation costs regarding twinning and exchange of the staff personnel of the business intermediaries partners;
- Expert fees and acquisition of systems providing support for information links between participating business intermediaries and their associated companies;
- Purchase costs for equipment (new or used) and services (transport, rent, etc.), provided they correspond to market rates and that these expenses are fully justified;
- Dissemination of the results of the project (including translation into local language).
- Incentives to mobilise companies by covering their travel and accommodation costs (visiting companies only);

The following types of action are ineligible:

- Actions concerned only or mainly with individual sponsorships for participation in workshops, seminars, conferences, congresses;
- Actions concerned only or mainly with individual scholarships for studies or training courses;
- Actions concerned with public relations and sales promotional activities;
- Activities that conflict, either directly or indirectly, with the policies of the European Union or which may be linked to a prejudicial image.

Number of proposals and grants per applicant

An applicant may submit more than one proposal under this call for proposals, however the partners, the geographical coverage and content must be different for each proposal.

Please note that in this case, each proposal must be submitted in a separate envelope with different electronic versions. Partners should be careful to avoid claims for double funding if they are working on more than one Central Asia-Invest (or another EC funded) project at the same time.

Where a partner has already gained financial support under the Asia-Invest Programme, subsequent proposals will only be accepted if, at the time of submitting the new proposal, the organisation is up to date with all reporting obligations as identified in the grant contract.

An applicant may not be awarded more than two grants under this call for proposals.

2.1.4 Eligibility of costs: costs which may be taken into consideration for the grant

Only "eligible costs" can be taken into account for a grant. These are detailed below. The budget is therefore both a cost estimate and a ceiling for "eligible costs". Note that the eligible costs must be based on real costs based on supporting documents (except for subsistence costs and indirect costs where flat-rate funding apply).

Recommendations to award a grant are always subject to the condition that the checking process which precedes the signing of the contract does not reveal problems requiring changes to the budget (for instance arithmetical errors, inaccuracies or unrealistic costs and other ineligible costs). The checks may give rise to requests for clarification and may lead the Contracting Authority to impose modifications or reductions to address such mistakes or inaccuracies. The amount of the grant and the percentage of co-financing as a result of these corrections may not be increased in any case.

It is therefore in the applicant's interest to provide a **realistic and cost-effective budget, together with a budget justification** to be attached to the budget tables (no template provided)

Eligible direct costs

To be eligible under the call for proposals, costs must respect the provisions of article 14 of the General Conditions to the Standard Grant Contract (see Annex F):

http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/work/procedures/documents/execution/grants/e3h_2gencond_en.pdf

Contingency reserve

A contingency reserve not exceeding 5% of the direct eligible costs may be included in the Budget of the Action. It can only be used with the **prior written authorisation** of the Contracting Authority.

Eligible indirect costs (overheads)

The indirect costs incurred in carrying out the action may be eligible for flat-rate funding fixed at not more than 7% of the total eligible direct costs, save where the beneficiary is in receipt of an operating grant financed from the Community budget.

Contributions in kind

Any contributions in kind, which must be listed separately at Annex III, do not represent actual expenditure and are not eligible costs. The contributions in kind may not be treated as co-financing by the Beneficiary.

The cost of staff assigned to the Action is not a contribution in kind and may be considered as co-financing in the Budget of the Action when paid by the Beneficiary or his partners.

Notwithstanding to the above, if the description of the action as proposed by the beneficiary foresees the contributions in kind, such contributions have to be provided.

Ineligible costs

The following costs are not eligible:

- debts and provisions for losses or debts;
- interest owed;
- items already financed in another framework;
- purchases of land or buildings, except where necessary for the direct implementation of the action, in which case ownership must be transferred to the final beneficiaries and/or local partners, at the latest by the end of the action;
- currency exchange losses;
- taxes, including VAT, unless the Beneficiary (or the Beneficiary's partners) cannot reclaim them and the applicable regulations do not forbid coverage of taxes;
- credits to third parties.

2.2 HOW TO APPLY AND THE PROCEDURES TO FOLLOW

Please note that the prior registration in PADOR² for applicants for this Call for proposal is not obligatory. However the applicant can register its organisation data, and upload supporting documents in PADOR.

2.2.1 *Concept Note content*

Applications must be submitted with the guidance on the Concept Note in the Grant Application Form annexed to these Guidelines (Annex A).

Applicants must apply in English.

In the Concept note, the applicants must provide an estimate only of the probable total cost of the action and of the requested amount of the EC contribution. Only the applicants invited to submit a full proposal in the second phase will be required to present a detailed budget with round figures. This detailed budget may not vary from the initial estimate by more than 20%, while the applicant is free to adapt the percentage of co-financing required as far as the minimum and maximum amount of co-financing, as laid down in the present Guidelines, is respected.

Any error or major discrepancy related to the points listed in the guidance on the Concept Note may lead to the rejection of the Concept Note.

Clarifications will only be requested when information provided is unclear, thus preventing the Contracting Authority from conducting an objective assessment.

Hand-written Concept Notes will not be accepted.

Please note that only the Concept Note form will be transmitted to the assessors. It is therefore of utmost importance that this document contain ALL relevant information concerning the action. Applicants should keep strictly to the format of the application and fill in the paragraphs and the pages in order.

The application form is also available on the Central Asia-Invest website:

http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/asia/regional-cooperation/trade-business/ca_invest_en.htm

2.2.2 *Where and how to send concept notes*

Concept Notes must be submitted in a sealed envelope by registered mail, private courier service or by hand-delivery (a signed and dated certificate of receipt will be given to the deliverer) at the address below:

Postal address

European Commission
EuropeAid Co-operation Office
Directorate D, Asia
Unit D3, Finances. Contracts and Audit
Office: J-54, 8/16
B-1049, Brussels

² <http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/online-services/pador>

Address for hand delivery or by private courier service

European Commission
EuropeAid Co-operation Office
Directorate D, Asia
Unit D3, Finances, Contracts and Audit
Office: J-54, 8/16
Avenue du Bourget 1
B-1140, Brussels

Concept Notes sent by any other means (e.g. by fax or by e-mail) or delivered to other addresses will be rejected.

The Concept note together with the Checklist for the Concept Note (Part A section II of the grant application form) and the Declaration by the applicant for the Concept Note (Part A section III of the grant application form) must be submitted in **one original**, bound (e.g. spiral binder or equivalent)

Concept Notes must be submitted as well in electronic format (CD-Rom). The electronic format must contain **exactly the same** proposal as the paper version enclosed.

Where an applicant sends several different concept notes, each one must be sent separately.

The outer envelope must bear the **reference number and the title of the call for proposals**, together with the lot number and title the full name and address of the applicant, and the words "Not to be opened before the opening session".

Applicants must verify that their Concept Note is complete using the Checklist for Concept Note (Part A section II of the grant application form). Incomplete concept notes may be rejected.

2.2.3 *Deadline for submission of the Concept Notes*

The deadline for the submission of Concept Note is **Friday 15 February 2008 at 16.00 Brussels time**, as evidenced by the date of dispatch or the date of the deposit slip. In case of hand-deliveries, the deadline for receipt remains the same, as evidenced by the signed and dated receipt. Any Concept Note submitted after the deadline will automatically be rejected.

Any Concept Note submitted after the deadline will automatically be rejected, even if the postmark indicates a date preceding the deadline or if the delay is due to the private courier service.

2.2.4 *Further information for Concept Note*

Guidance for Proposal preparation

A document entitled "Guidance for concept Note/Proposal Preparation" is available on the Central Asia Invest Programme website:

http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/asia/regional-cooperation/trade-business/ca_invest_en.htm

This document provides guidance on the preparation of the proposal and relates to specific sections in the application form (Annex A). It is strongly recommended to make use of this guidance when preparing your proposal.

Information session

An information session on this call for proposals will be held at the end of November 2007. Details and registrations will be provided in advance on the Central Asia Invest web site.

Questions may in addition be sent by e-mail or by fax no later than 21 days before the deadline for the submission of concept notes to the addresses below, indicating clearly the reference of the call for proposals:

E-mail address: europeaid_ca_invest@ec.europa.eu
Fax: + 32 2 298 48 63

Replies will be given no later than 11 days before the deadline for the submission of concept notes.

In the interest of equal treatment of applicants, the Contracting Authority cannot give a prior opinion on the eligibility of an applicant, a partner or an action.

Further Information

Questions that may be relevant to other applicants, together with the answers, will be published on the internet at the EuropeAid web site:

http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/asia/regional-cooperation/trade-business/ca_invest_en.htm

2.2.5 Full Application form

Applicants invited to submit a full application form following short-listing must do so by using the Part B of the application form annexed to these Guidelines (Annex A). Applicants should keep strictly to the format of the application and fill in the paragraphs and the pages in order.

The elements contained in the concept note cannot be modified in the full application form. The detailed budget (please provide budget with round figures) may not vary from the initial estimate by more than 20%, while the applicant is free to adapt the percentage of co-financing required as far as the minimum and maximum amount of co-financing, as laid down in this application form, is respected.

Applicants must submit their applications in the same language as their concept note.

Please complete the full application form carefully and as clearly as possible so that it can be assessed properly.

Any error related to the points listed in the Checklist (section V of Part B of the grant application form) or any major inconsistency in the full application form (e.g. the amounts mentioned in the budget are inconsistent with those mentioned in the full application form) may lead to the rejection of the proposal.

Clarifications will only be requested when information provided is unclear, thus preventing the Contracting Authority from conducting an objective assessment.

Hand-written applications will not be accepted.

Please note that only the full application form and the published annexes which have to be filled in (budget, logical framework) will be transmitted to the evaluators and assessors. It is therefore of utmost importance that these documents contain ALL relevant information concerning the action. **No supplementary annexes should be sent.**

2.2.6 Where and how to send the Full Application form

Applications must be submitted in a sealed envelope by registered mail, private courier service or by hand-delivery (a signed and dated certificate of receipt will be given to the deliverer) at the address below:

Postal address

European Commission
EuropeAid Co-operation Office
Directorate D, Asia
Unit D3, Finances. Contracts and Audit

Office: J-54, 8/16
B-1049, Brussels

Address for hand delivery and by private courier service

European Commission
EuropeAid Co-operation Office
Directorate D, Asia
Unit D3, Finances, Contracts and Audit
Office: J-54, 8/16
Avenue du Bourget, 1
B-1140, Brussels

Applications sent by any other means (e.g. by fax or by e-mail) or delivered to other addresses will be rejected.

One original version of the full application (Part B. Full application form, budget, budget justification and logical framework) must be submitted. The full application form must also be supplied in electronic format (CD-Rom) in a separate and unique file (e.g. the full application form must not be split into several different files). The electronic format must contain **exactly the same** proposal as the paper version.

The Checklist (Section V of part B of the grant application form) and the Declaration by the applicant (Section VI of part B of the grant application form) must be stapled separately and enclosed in the envelope

So as to facilitate the processing of applications, please present the original dossier in A4 size, bound (e.g. spiral binder or equivalent).

Where an applicant sends several different proposals, each one must be sent separately.

The outer envelope must bear the **reference number and the title of the call for proposals**, together with the number and title of the lot the full name and address of the applicant, and the words "Not to be opened before the opening session".

Applicants must verify that their application is complete using the checklist (section V of part B of the grant application form). Incomplete applications may be rejected.

2.2.7 *Deadline for submission of the Full Application form*

The deadline for the submission of applications is **Thursday 15 May 2008 at 16.00 Brussels time** as evidenced by the date of dispatch or the date of the deposit slip. In case of hand-deliveries, the deadline for receipt is the same, as evidenced by the signed and dated receipt.

Any application submitted after the deadline will automatically be rejected, even if the postmark indicates a date preceding the deadline or if the delay is due to the private courier service

2.2.8 *Further information for the Full Application form*

Guidance for Proposal preparation

A document entitled "Guidance for concept Note/Proposal Preparation" is available on the Central Asia Invest Programme website:

http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/asia/regional-cooperation/trade-business/ca_invest_en.htm

This document provides guidance on the preparation of the proposal and relates to specific sections in the application form (Annex A). It is strongly recommended to make use of this guidance when preparing your proposal.

Further Information

Questions may be sent by e-mail or by fax no later than 21 days before the deadline for the submission of proposals to the addresses listed below, indicating clearly the reference of the call for proposals:

E-mail address: europeaid_ca_invest@ec.europa.eu
Fax: + 32 2 298 48 63

Replies will be given no later than 11 days before the deadline for the submission of proposals.

In the interest of equal treatment of applicants, the Contracting Authority cannot give a prior opinion on the eligibility of an applicant, a partner or an action.

Questions that may be relevant to other applicants, together with the answers, will be published on the internet at website:

http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/asia/regional-cooperation/trade-business/ca_invest_en.htm

2.3 EVALUATION AND SELECTION OF APPLICATIONS

Applications will be examined and evaluated by the Contracting Authority with the possible assistance of external assessors. All actions submitted by applicants will be assessed according to the following steps and criteria:

(1) STEP 1: OPENING SESSION AND ADMINISTRATIVE CHECK

The following will be assessed:

- The deadline has been respected. If the deadline has not been respected the proposal will automatically be rejected.
- The Concept Note satisfies all the criteria mentioned in the Checklist (section II of part A of the grant application form). If any of the requested information is missing or is incorrect, the proposal may be rejected on that sole basis and the proposal will not be evaluated further.

Following the opening session and the administrative check, the Contracting Authority will send a letter to all applicants, indicating whether their application was submitted prior to the deadline, informing them of the reference number they have been allocated, whether they have satisfied all the criteria mentioned in the checklist and whether their Concept Note has been recommended for evaluation.

(2) STEP 2: EVALUATION OF THE CONCEPT NOTE

The evaluation of the Concept Notes that have passed the first administrative check will cover the relevance of the action, its merits and effectiveness, its viability and sustainability. The Contracting Authority reserves the right to skip the evaluation of the Concept Notes whenever considered justified (for example when a less than expected number of proposals are received) and to directly send invitations to submit a full proposal.

Please note that the scores awarded to the Concept Note are completely separate from those given to the Full Application.

The Concept Note will be given an overall score out of 50 points in accordance with the breakdown provided in the Evaluation Grid below. The evaluation shall also verify the compliance with instructions provided in the guidance for Concept Note, part A of the grant application form.

If the examination of the Concept Note reveals that the proposed action does not meet the eligibility criteria stated in paragraph 2.1.3, the proposal shall be rejected on this sole basis.

The evaluation criteria are divided into headings and subheadings. Each subheading will be given a score between 1 and 5 in accordance with the following assessment categories: 1 = very poor; 2 = poor; 3 = adequate; 4 = good; 5 = very good.

	Scores	
	Sub-score	
1. Relevance of the action	Sub-score	15
1.1 Relevance of the problems to needs and constraints of the country/region to be addressed in general, and to those of the target groups and final beneficiaries in particular	5	
	5(x2)*	
1.2 Relevance to the priorities and objectives mentioned in the Guidelines		
2. Effectiveness and Feasibility of the action	Sub-score	25
2.1 Assessment of the problem identification and analysis	5	
2.2 Assessment of the proposed activities (practicality and consistency in relation to the objectives, purpose and expected results).	5(x2)*	

2.3 Assessment of the role and involvement of all stakeholders and proposed partners.	5(x2)*	
3. Sustainability of the action	Sub-score	10
3.1 Assessment of the identification of the main assumptions and risks, before the start up and throughout the implementation period.	5	
3.2 Assessment of the identification of long-term sustainable impact on the target groups and final beneficiaries.	5	
TOTAL SCORE		50

*the scores are multiplied by 2 because of their importance

Once all Concept Notes have been assessed, a list will be established with the proposed actions ranked according to their total score.

Firstly, only the Concept Notes which have been given a score of a minimum of 12 points in the category "Relevance" as well as a minimum total score of 30 points will be considered for pre-selection.

Secondly, the list of Concept Notes will be reduced in accordance to the ranking to those whose sum of requested contributions amounts to at least two times the available budget for this Call for proposals. The pre-selected applicants will subsequently be invited to submit full proposals.

(3) STEP 3: EVALUATION OF THE FULL APPLICATION

OPENING SESSION AND ADMINISTRATIVE CHECK OF THE FULL APPLICATION

The following will be assessed:

- The deadline has been respected. If the deadline has not been respected the proposal will automatically be rejected.
- The application form satisfies all the criteria mentioned in the Checklist (Section V. of part B of the grant application form). If any of the requested information is missing or is incorrect, the proposal may be rejected on that sole basis and the proposal will not be evaluated further.

Following the opening session and the administrative check, the Contracting Authority will send a letter to all applicants, indicating whether their application was submitted prior to the deadline, informing them of the reference number they have been allocated, whether their application has satisfied all the criteria mentioned in the checklist and whether their application has been recommended for evaluation.

EVALUATION OF THE FULL APPLICATION

An evaluation of the quality of the proposals, including the proposed budget, and of the capacity of the applicant and his partners, will be carried out in accordance with the evaluation criteria set out in the Evaluation Grid included below. There are two types of evaluation criteria: selection and award criteria.

The selection criteria are intended to help evaluate the applicants' financial and operational capacity to ensure that they:

- have stable and sufficient sources of finance to maintain their activity throughout the period during which the action is being carried out and, where appropriate, to participate in its funding;
- have the management capacity, professional competencies and qualifications required to successfully complete the proposed action. This also applies to any partners of the applicant.

The award criteria allow the quality of the proposals submitted to be evaluated in relation to the set objectives and priorities, and grants to be awarded to actions which maximise the overall effectiveness of the call for proposals. They enable the selection of proposals which the Contracting Authority can be confident will comply with its objectives and priorities and guarantee the visibility of the Community financing. They cover such aspects as the relevance of the action, its consistency with the objectives of the call for proposals, quality, expected impact, sustainability and cost-effectiveness.

If the examination of the proposal reveals that the proposed action does not meet the eligibility criteria stated in paragraph 2.1.3, the proposal shall be rejected on this sole basis.

A balance in terms of number of projects between the 5 countries will be observed.

Scoring:

The evaluation criteria are divided into sections and subsections. Each subsection will be given a score between 1 and 5 in accordance with the following guidelines: 1 = very poor; 2 = poor; 3 = adequate; 4 = good; 5 = very good.

Evaluation Grid

Section	Maximum Score
1. Financial and operational capacity	20
1.1 Do the applicant and partners have sufficient experience of project management ?	5
1.2 Do the applicant and partners have sufficient technical expertise ? (notably knowledge of the issues to be addressed.)	5
1.3 Do the applicant and partners have sufficient management capacity ? (including staff, equipment and ability to handle the budget for the action)?	5
1.4 Does the applicant have stable and sufficient sources of finance ?	5
2. Relevance	25
2.1 How relevant is the proposal to the objectives and one or more of the priorities of the call for proposals? Note: A score of 5 (very good) will only be allocated if the proposal specifically addresses at least one priority . Note: A score of 5 (very good) will only be allocated if the proposal contains specific added-value elements, such as promotion of gender equality and equal opportunities...	5 x 2
2.2 How relevant to the particular needs and constraints of the target country/countries or region(s) is the proposal? (including avoidance of duplication and synergy with other EC initiatives.)	5
2.3 How clearly defined and strategically chosen are those involved (final beneficiaries, target groups)? Have their needs been clearly defined and does the proposal address them appropriately?	5 x 2
3. Methodology	25
3.1 Are the activities proposed appropriate, practical, and consistent with the objectives and expected results?	5
3.2 How coherent is the overall design of the action? (in particular, does it reflect the analysis of the problems involved, take into account external factors and anticipate an evaluation ?)	5
3.3 Is the partners' level of involvement and participation in the action satisfactory? Note: If there are no partners the score will be 1.	5
3.4 Is the action plan clear and feasible?	5
3.5 Does the proposal contain objectively verifiable indicators for the outcome of the action?	5
4. Sustainability	15
4.1 Is the action likely to have a tangible impact on its target groups?	5
4.2 Is the proposal likely to have multiplier effects ? (including scope for	5

replication and extension of the outcome of the action and dissemination of information.)	
4.3 Are the expected results of the proposed action sustainable : - financially (<i>how will the activities be financed after the funding ends?</i>) - institutionally (<i>will structures allowing the activities to continue be in place at the end of the action? Will there be local "ownership" of the results of the action?</i>) - at policy level (where applicable) (<i>what will be the structural impact of the action — e.g. will it lead to improved legislation, codes of conduct, methods, etc?</i>)?	5
5. Budget and cost-effectiveness	15
5.1 is the ratio between the estimated costs and the expected results satisfactory?	5
5.2 Is the proposed expenditure necessary for the implementation of the action?	5 x 2
Maximum total score	100

Note on Section 1. Financial and operational capacity

If the total average score is less than 12 points for section 1, the Evaluation Committee will reject the proposal.

Note on Section 2. Relevance

If the total average score is less than 20 points for section 2, the Evaluation Committee will reject the proposal.

Provisional selection

Following the evaluation, a table listing the proposals ranked according to their score and within the available financial envelope will be established as well as a reserve list following the same criteria.

Note: The scores awarded in this phase are completely separate from those given to the concept note of the same application.

(4) STEP 4: VERIFICATION OF ELIGIBILITY OF THE APPLICANT AND PARTNERS

The eligibility verification, based on the supporting documents requested by the Contracting Authority (see section 2.4) will only be performed for the proposals that have been provisionally selected according to their score and within the available financial envelope.

- The Declaration by the applicant (Section VI of part B the grant application form) will be cross-checked with the supporting documents provided by the applicant. Any missing supporting document or any incoherence between the Declaration by the applicant and the supporting documents may lead to the rejection of the proposal on that sole basis.
- The eligibility of the applicant, the partners, and the action will be verified according to the criteria set out in sections 2.1.1, 2.1.2 and 2.1.3.

Following the above analysis and if necessary, any rejected proposal will be replaced by the next best placed proposal in the reserve list that falls within the available financial envelope, which will then be examined for the eligibility of its applicant and the partners.

2.4 SUBMISSION OF SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS FOR PROVISIONALLY SELECTED PROPOSALS

Applicants who have been provisionally selected or listed under the reserve list will be informed in writing by the Contracting Authority. They will be requested to supply the following documents in order to allow the Contracting Authority to verify the eligibility of the applicants and their partners:³

1. **The statutes or articles of association of the applicant organisation⁴ and of each partner organisation.** Where the Contracting Authority has recognized the applicant's eligibility for another call for proposals under the same budget line within 2 years before the deadline for receipt of applications, the applicant may submit, instead of its statutes, copy of the document proving the eligibility of the applicant in a former Call (e.g: copy of the special conditions of a grant contract received during the reference period), unless a change in its legal status has occurred in the meantime.
3. Copy of the **applicant's latest accounts** (the profit and loss account and the balance sheet for the previous financial year for which the accounts have been closed)⁵.
4. **Legal entity sheet** (see annex D) duly completed and signed by the applicant, accompanied by the justifying documents which are requested therein. If the applicant has already signed a contract with the Contracting Authority, instead of the legal entity sheet and its supporting documents the legal entity number may be provided, unless a change in its legal status occurred in the meantime.
5. **A financial identification** form conforming to the model attached at Annex E, certified by the bank to which the payments will be made. This bank must be located in the country where the applicant is registered. If the applicant has already signed a contract with the European Commission or where the European Commission has been in charge of the payments of a contract, a copy of the previous financial identification form may be provided instead, unless a change in its bank account occurred in the meantime.

The supporting documents requested must be supplied in the form of originals or photocopies of the said originals. However, the Legal entity sheet and the financial identification form must always be submitted in original.

Where such documents are not in one of the official languages of the European Union, a translation into the language of the call for proposals of the relevant parts of these documents, proving the applicant's eligibility, must be attached and will prevail for the purpose of analysing the proposal.

Where these documents are in an official language of the European Union other than the language of the call for proposals, it is **strongly** recommended, in order to facilitate the evaluation, to provide a translation of the relevant parts of the documents, proving the applicant's eligibility, into the language of the call for proposals.

If the supporting documents are not provided before the set deadline (15 calendar days from the receipt of the letter sent by the Contracting Authority), the application may be rejected.

Based on the verification of the supporting documents by the Evaluation Committee it will make a final recommendation to the Contracting Authority which will decide on the award of grants.

³ No supporting document will be requested for applications for a grant not exceeding EUR 25 000.

⁴ Where the applicant and/or (a) partner(s) is a public body created by a law, a copy of the said law must be provided

⁵ This obligation does not apply to natural persons who have received a scholarship, nor to public bodies nor to international organisations. It does not apply either when the accounts are in practice the same documents as the external audit report already provided pursuant to section 2.4.2.

2.5 NOTIFICATION OF THE CONTRACTING AUTHORITY'S DECISION

2.5.1 Content of the decision

Applicants will be informed in writing of the Contracting Authority's decision concerning their application and the reasons for the decision.

Applicants believing that they have been harmed by an error or irregularity during the award process may petition to the Contracting Authority directly. The Contracting Authority must reply within 90 days of receipt of the complaint.

The applicant may have recourse to procedures established under Community legislation. European citizens or residents, including legal entities with a registered office in the European Union, also have the right to complain to the European Ombudsman, who investigates complaints of maladministration by the European Community Institutions.

2.5.2 Indicative time table

	DATE	TIME*
Information meeting (if any)	30/11/ 2007	09.00
Deadline for request for any clarifications from the Contracting Authority	28/01/2008	-
Last date on which clarifications are issued by the Contracting Authority	05/02/2008	-
Deadline for submission of Concept Notes	15/02/2008	16.00
Information to applicants on the opening & administrative check	07/03/2008*	-
Information to applicants on the evaluation of the Concept Notes	31/03/2008*	-
Invitations for submission of Full Application Form	31/03/2008*	-
Deadline for submission of Full Application Form	15/05/2008	16.00
Information to applicants on the evaluation of the Full Application Form	30/06/2008*	-
Notification of award (after the eligibility check)	31/07/2008*	-
Contract signature	31/09/2008*	-

Provisional date. All times are in the time zone of the country of the Contracting Authority

2.6 CONDITIONS APPLICABLE TO IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACTION FOLLOWING THE CONTRACTING AUTHORITY'S DECISION TO AWARD A GRANT

Following the decision to award a grant, the Beneficiary will be offered a contract based on the Contracting Authority's standard contract (see Annex F). By signing the Application form (Annex A), the applicant declares accepting, in case where it is awarded a grant, the Contractual conditions as laid down in the Standard Contract.

The date planned for the start of actions, following the signing of the contract by the parties, is no later than December 2008. The actions should all be finished before 1 January 2011.

It may be useful for applicants preparing proposals and budgets to be aware of the key specifications of the standard grant contract. The contract will, in particular, establish the following rights and obligations:

Audit firm

The name and address of the audit firm which will carry out the expenditure verification(s) referred to in article 15.6 of annex II to the standard grant contract, if such verifications are required, will have to be included in Article 5.2 of the contract.

Final amount of the grant

The maximum amount of the grant will be stipulated in the contract. As explained in point 2.1.4, this amount is based on the budget, which is itself only an estimate. As a result, it will be final only once the action has ended and the final accounts have been presented (see Articles 17.1 and 17.2 of the General Conditions).

Failure to meet the objectives

If the Beneficiary fails to implement the action as undertaken and agreed in the contract, the contracting authority reserves the right to suspend payments, and/or to terminate the contract (see Article 11 of the General Conditions). The Contracting Authority's contribution may be reduced, and/or the contracting authority may demand full or partial repayment of the sums already paid, if the Beneficiary does not fulfil the terms of the contract (see Articles 12.2 and 17.4 of the General Conditions).

Amendments to the contract and variations within the budget

Any amendment to the contract must be set out in a written addendum to the original contract (Article 9.1 of the General Conditions). However, some amendments (addresses, bank account, etc.) may simply be notified to the Contracting Authority (see Article 9.2 of the General Conditions).

The description of the Action (Annex 1 to the contract) and budget items may vary from the original figures provided that the following conditions are met

- (1) they do not affect the basic purpose of the action; and
- (2) the financial impact is limited to a transfer between items within a single main budget heading or to a transfer between the main budget headings involving a variation of less than 15% of the original amount (as the case may be modified by addendum) of each relevant main budget heading.

In such instances, the Beneficiary may make alterations to the budget, and inform the Contracting Authority.

This method may not be used to amend the heading for overhead costs and contingency reserve (see Article 9.2 of the General Conditions).

In all other cases, a written request must be made in advance to the Contracting Authority and an addendum is required.

Reports

Reports must be drafted in the language provided for in the contract. Technical and financial reports conforming to the templates provided by the Contracting Authority are to be submitted on a quarterly basis and where relevant supplied together with payment requests (other than the first instalment of pre-financing).

An action plan and budget for the next period of implementation must accompany reports submitted with requests for further payments of pre-financing.

Reports will be submitted in English.

Additional information

In accordance with Article 2.2 of the General Conditions, the Contracting Authority may request additional information.

Payments

The Beneficiary will receive pre-financing. If the overall duration of the action does not exceed 12 months or if the grant does not exceed EURO 100 000, the pre-financing will be 80% of the grant (see Article 15.1 option 1 of the General Conditions). If the overall duration of the action exceeds 12 months and if the grant exceeds EUR 100 000, the first pre-financing instalment will be 80% of the part of the estimated budget for the first 12 months of the action financed by the Contracting Authority (see Article 15.1 option 2 of the General Conditions). In that case, subsequent pre-financing payments may be made upon submission by the Beneficiary and approval by the Contracting Authority, of an interim report.

In each case, the final balance will be paid upon submission by the Beneficiary and approval by the Contracting Authority of the final report (see Article 15.1 of the General Conditions).

Payments will be made to a bank account or sub-account which identifies the funds paid by the Contracting Authority and allows calculating the interests produced by these funds.

Accounts of the action

The Beneficiary must keep accurate and regular records and dedicated, transparent accounts of the implementation of the action (see Article 16.1 of the General Conditions). It must keep these records for seven years after payment of the balance.

Expenditure verification

A report on the verification of the Action's expenditures, produced by an approved auditor who is a member of an internationally recognised supervisory body for statutory auditing, must be attached to:

- any request for payment of the balance in the case of a grant of more than EUR 100 000
- any request for payment of over EUR 100 000 for the financial year, in the case of an operating grant

In an expenditure verification report conforming to the model attached at Annex VII to the contract, the auditor will certify that the costs declared by the Beneficiary are real, exact and eligible in accordance with the Contract (see Article 15.6 of the General Conditions).

The contract will permit the Commission, the European Anti-Fraud Office, the European Court of Auditors and the external auditor to carry out both record-based and on-the spot inspections of the action (see Article 16.2 of the General Conditions).

Publicity

Appropriate visibility and credit must be given to the grant made by the European Union, for example, in reports and publications stemming from the action or during public events associated with the action, etc. (see Article 6 of the General Conditions).

Visibility guidelines will be provided to the Beneficiary after signature of the contract.

Implementation contracts

Where implementation of the action requires the Beneficiary to award procurement contracts, it must award the contract to the tenderer offering the best value for money, that is to say, the best price-quality ratio, in compliance with the principles of transparency and equal treatment for potential contractors, care being

taken to avoid any conflict of interests. To this end, the Beneficiary must follow the procedures set out in Annex IV to the contract.

3. LIST OF ANNEXES

DOCUMENTS TO FILL IN

ANNEX A: GRANT APPLICATION FORM (WORD FORMAT)

ANNEX B: BUDGET (EXCEL FORMAT)

ANNEX C: LOGICAL FRAMEWORK (EXCEL FORMAT)⁶

ANNEX D: LEGAL ENTITY SHEET (EXCEL FORMAT)⁷

http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/work/procedures/implementation/grants/annexes_standard_documents/index_en.htm

ANNEX E: FINANCIAL IDENTIFICATION FORM

DOCUMENTS FOR INFORMATION

ANNEX F: STANDARD CONTRACT (WORD FORMAT), available at the following address (Annexes E3h_1 and E3h_2):

http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/work/procedures/implementation/grants/annexes_standard_documents/index_en.htm

ANNEX G: DAILY ALLOWANCE RATES (PER DIEM), available at the following address:

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

⁶ Optional where the total amount of the grants to be awarded under the call for proposals is EUR 100 000 or less.

⁷ Only applicable where the European Commission is the Contracting Authority or will make the payments under the contracts to be signed.