

CALL FOR PROPOSALS – SANCO/1/2009

Call for proposals to develop and coordinate a network of nursing educators and regulators

1. BACKGROUND

In Commission Decision C(2009)6096¹ of 6 August 2009 concerning the financial contribution by the Community towards a pilot project in the field of health professionals, the Budget Authority asks the Commission to fund initiatives which help dealing with the new employment situation in the health sector, particularly in relation to professional qualifications and duties carried out by healthcare workers, healthcare assistants and lower-skilled nurses and which help examining the effects of cross-border mobility both in the host country and the country of origin.

A total of three actions are put forward in that Decision that are in line with the Commission's Green Paper on the European workforce for Health² which has started a process of detailed consideration of health workforce planning and supply and the impact of health worker mobility within Member States and within the EU.

One of these actions is a pilot network of nurse educators and regulators exchanging best practices to improve the qualifications of healthcare workers, healthcare assistants and lower-skilled nurses with a particular emphasis on cross-border mobility. The purpose of the present call for proposals is to implement this action.

2. OBJECTIVES

The specific objective of this call for proposals is to create and service a pilot network of nurse educators and regulators to carry out the following tasks:

- To produce a map of the EU in terms of the different legislative frameworks for the employment and duties of lower skilled nurses and care assistants
- To examine the scope of the skills and competences required of these staff within the EU
- To exchange and map best practices in training for healthcare workers, healthcare assistants and lower-skilled nurses, and to take into account opportunities for the cross-border mobility of this cadre of staff.
- To make recommendations for training requirements for lower skilled nurses and care assistants

¹ Commission Decision C(2009)6096 of 6 August 2009 concerning the financial contribution by the Community, for the year 2009, towards a pilot project in the field of health professionals.

² Green Paper on the European Workforce for Health, COM(2008) 725 final.

- To make recommendations for educational support for informal carers

Expected results – a map of the range of educational/training requirements for lower skilled nurses and healthcare assistants and a shared understanding of core competencies and standards. Ultimately, consensus on the benchmarks for enhanced education and training programmes throughout EU, based on a shared understanding of core competencies and standards.

2.1. Themes and priorities

There are serious issues facing the health workforce in the EU. The ageing population means that the health workforce is itself an ageing one and there are insufficient recruits coming through to replace people leaving. This, and the growing pressures on health systems, means that there are already shortages in many health professions. Migration of health professionals into and out of the EU and mobility within it - and in particular the movement of some health professionals from poorer to richer countries inside and outside the EU - also has the effect of increasing shortages in some regions.

There is also the issue of ensuring that the workforce is properly trained and equipped to deal with the consequences of medical and technological innovation which are changing patterns of care, demonstrated in particular in the shift from acute care to long-term care.

The aim of the Green Paper, which was published in December 2008, was to increase the visibility of these issues. Views from governments and stakeholders received during the consultation point to a need for nurses and care assistants to engage in life-long learning to keep up with technological and demographic developments.

3. TIMETABLE

Applications must be dispatched no later than 31st March 2010. The intention is to inform applicants of the outcome of the selection procedure on 30th June 2010

The period of eligibility of costs will start on the day the contract is signed by the last of the parties. If a beneficiary can demonstrate the need to start the action before the agreement is signed, expenditure may be authorised before the grant is awarded. Under no circumstances can the eligibility period start before the date of submission of the grant application. Activities would start between 1 of September 2010 and 31 of December 2010. The maximum duration of the project projects is 36 months. However, if after the signing of the agreement and the start of the project it becomes impossible for the beneficiary, for fully justified reasons beyond his/her control, to complete the project within the scheduled period, an extension to the eligibility period may be granted. A maximum extension of 3 additional months will be granted, if requested before the deadline specified in the agreement. The maximum duration will then be 39 months.

4. BUDGET AVAILABLE

Budget line 17 03 08 will be used for financing this action. The action shall be implemented via a call for proposals with a maximum budget of EUR 400 000 and a co-financing of a maximum of 80%. The legal basis is provided for in Commission Decision C(2009)6096 of 6

August 2009 concerning the financial contribution by the Community, for the year 2009, towards a pilot project in the field of health professionals.

5. EXCLUSION, ELIGIBILITY AND SELECTION CRITERIA

The exclusion, eligibility and selection criteria adopted for the financial contributions to the actions under the second Community programme in the field of health (2008-2013)³, Annex II shall apply to the present call.

6. AWARD CRITERIA

Only projects which have satisfied the requirements of the exclusion and the selection criteria will be eligible for further evaluation on the basis of the following award criteria.

- (1) Policy and contextual relevance of the project (40 points, threshold: 20 points)
 - (a) Project's contribution to the present call in terms of meeting the objectives and priorities (8 points).
 - (b) Strategic relevance in terms of relevance to the Green Paper on the European Workforce for Health and in terms of expected contributions to the existing knowledge and implications for the health workforce (8 points).
 - (c) Added value at European level in the field of public health (8 points):
 - impact on target groups, long-term effect and potential multiplier effects such as replicable, transferable and sustainable activities,
 - contribution to, complementarity, synergy and compatibility with EU relevant policies and other programmes.
 - (d) Pertinence of the geographical coverage (8 points)

Applicants must ensure that a geographical coverage of the project is appropriate with regard to its objectives, explaining the role of the eligible countries as partners and the relevance of the project resources or target populations they represent.

Proposals at national or sub-national dimension (i.e. which involve only one eligible country or a region of a country) will be rejected.

- (e) Adequacy of the project with social, cultural and political context (8 points)

Applicants must relate the project with the situation of the countries or specific areas involved, ensuring the compatibility of the envisaged actions with culture and views of the target groups.

³ OJ L 53, 26.02.2009, p 41. Commission Decision 2009/158/EC of 23 February 2009 on the adoption of the Work Plan for 2009 for the implementation of the second programme of Community action in the field of health (2008 to 2013), and on the selection, award and other criteria for financial contributions to the actions of this programme, Annex II.

(2) Technical quality of the project (30 points, threshold: 15 points)

(a) Evidence base (6 points)

Applicants must include the problem analysis and clearly describe the factors, the impact, the effectiveness and applicability of measures proposed.

(b) Content specification (6 points)

Applicants must clearly describe the aims and objectives, target groups including relevant geographical factors, methods, anticipated effects and outcomes.

(c) Innovative nature, technical complementarity and avoidance of duplication of other existing actions at EU level (6 points)

Applicants must clearly identify the progress the project intends to accomplish within the field in relation with the state of the art and ensure that there will be neither inappropriate duplication nor overlap, whether partial or total, between projects and activities already carried out at European and international level.

(d) Evaluation strategy (6 points)

Applicants must clearly explain the kind and adequacy of methods proposed and indicators chosen.

(e) Dissemination strategy (6 points)

Applicants must clearly illustrate the adequacy of envisaged strategy and methodology proposed to ensure transferability of results and sustainability of the dissemination.

(3) Management quality of the project and budget (30 points, threshold: 15 points)

(a) Planning and organisation of the project (5 points)

Applicants must describe the activities to be undertaken, timetable and milestones, deliverables, nature and distribution of tasks, risk analysis.

(b) Organisational capacity (5 points)

Applicants must describe the management structure, competency of staff, responsibilities, internal communication, decision making, monitoring and supervision.

(c) Quality of partnership (5 points)

Applicants must describe the partnerships envisaged in terms of extensiveness, roles and responsibilities, relationships among the different partners, synergy and complementarity of the various project partners and network structure.

(d) Communication strategy (5 points)

Applicants must describe the communication strategy in terms of planning, target groups, adequacy of channels used, visibility of EU co-funding.

- (e) Overall and detailed budget including financial management (10 points, threshold: 5 points)

Applicants must ensure that budget be relevant, appropriate, balanced and consistent in itself, between partners and with the specific objectives of the project. Budget should be distributed within partners at a minimum reasonable level, avoiding excessive fragmentation.

Applicants must describe financial circuits, responsibilities, reporting procedures and controls.

Any project failing to achieve the threshold marks will be rejected.

Following the evaluation, proposals recommended for funding are drawn up in a list, ranked according to the total marks awarded. Depending on budget availability, the highest ranked proposals will be awarded for co-funding. The remaining proposals recommended for co-funding will be placed on a reserve list.

7. FINANCIAL CONDITIONS

Acceptance of an application by the Commission does not constitute an undertaking to award a financial contribution equal to the amount requested by the beneficiary. The awarding of a grant does not establish an entitlement for subsequent years. Community grants are incentives to carry out projects which would not be feasible without the Commission's financial support, and are based on the principle of co-financing. They complement the applicant's own financial contribution and/or national, regional or private assistance that has been obtained elsewhere. The allocated amount may not exceed the amount requested. Grant applications must include a detailed estimated budget in which all prices are given in euro. Applicants from countries outside the euro zone must use the conversion rates published in the Official Journal of the European Union, series C, on the date of publication of this call for proposals. The budget for the action attached to the application must have revenue and expenditure in balance *and show clearly the costs which are eligible for financing from the Community budget.*

The applicant must indicate the sources and amounts of any other funding received or applied for in the same financial year for the same action or for any other action and for routine activities. The beneficiary shall supply evidence of the co-financing provided, either by way of own resources, or in the form of financial transfers from third parties. The applicants shall provide an explicit undertaking from each co-financing organisation to provide the amount of funding stated in the grant application for the operation.

The Commission grant may not have the purpose or effect of producing a profit for the beneficiary. Profit is defined as a surplus of receipts over costs. The amount of the grant will be reduced by the amount of any surplus. The account or sub-account indicated by the beneficiary must make it possible to identify the funds transferred by the Commission. If the funds paid into this account give rise to interest or equivalent profits in accordance with the legislation of the country where the account is held, such profit or interest will be recovered by the Commission where it results from the pre-financing payment.

7.1. Payment procedures

In the event of definitive approval by the Commission, a financial agreement, drawn up in euro and detailing the conditions and level of funding, will be entered into between the Commission and the beneficiary. This agreement (the original) must be signed and returned to the Commission immediately. The Commission will sign it last. A pre-financing payment of 80% will be transferred to the beneficiary within 45 days of the date when the last of the two parties signs the agreement and all the possible guarantees are received. Pre-financing is intended to provide the beneficiary with a float. The Commission will establish the amount of the final payment to be made to the beneficiary on the basis of the final reports. If the eligible costs actually incurred by the organisation during the project are lower than anticipated, the Commission will apply its rate of funding to the actual costs, and the beneficiary will, where applicable, be required to repay any excess amounts already transferred by the Commission under the prefinancing payments.

7.2. Certificate on the financial statements and underlying accounts

A certificate on the financial statements and underlying accounts, produced by an approved auditor or in case of public bodies, by a competent and independent public officer, may be requested in support of any payment on the basis of his assessment of risks. In the case of a grant for an action or of an operating grant, the certificate shall be attached to the request for payment. The certificate shall certify, in accordance with a methodology approved by the contracting authority, that the costs declared by the beneficiary in the financial statements on which the request for payment is based are real, accurately recorded and eligible in accordance with the grant agreement. Except in the case of lump sums and flat rate financing, the certificate on the financial statements and underlying accounts shall be compulsory for interim payments per financial year and for payments of balances in cases of grants for an action of EUR 750.000 or more, when the cumulative amounts of request for payment is at least EUR 325.000, and operating grants of EUR 100.000 or more.

7.3. Guarantee

The Commission may require any organisation which has been awarded a grant to provide a guarantee first, in order to limit the financial risks linked to the pre-financing payment. The purpose of this guarantee is to make a bank or a financial institution, third party or the other beneficiaries stand as irrevocable collateral security for, or first-call guarantor of, the grant beneficiary's obligations. This financial guarantee, in euro, shall be provided by an approved bank or financial institution established in one of the Member State of the European Union. When the beneficiary is established in a third country, the contracting authority may agree that a bank or financial institution established in that third country may provide the guarantee if he considers that the bank or financial institution offers equivalent security and characteristics as those offered by a bank or financial institution established in a Member State.

The guarantee may be replaced by a joint and several guarantee by a third party or by a joint guarantee of the beneficiaries of an action who are parties to the same grant agreement. The guarantee shall be released as the pre-financing is gradually cleared against interim payments or payments of balances to the beneficiary, in accordance with the conditions laid down in the grant agreement.

7.4. Double financing

Subsidised projects may not benefit from any other Community funding for the same activity.

7.5. Eligible costs

Eligible costs of the action/project are costs actually incurred by the beneficiary, which meet the following criteria:

- they are incurred during the duration of the action/project as specified in the grant agreement, with the exception of costs relating to final reports and certificates on the action/project's financial statements and underlying accounts;
- they are connected with the subject of the agreement and they are indicated in the estimated overall budget of the action/project;
- they are necessary for the implementation of the action/project which is the subject of the grant;
- they are identifiable and verifiable, in particular being recorded in the accounting records of the beneficiary and determined according to the applicable accounting standards of the country where the beneficiary is established and according to the usual cost-accounting practices of the beneficiary;
- they comply with the requirements of applicable tax and social legislation;
- they are reasonable, justified, and comply with the requirements of sound financial management, in particular regarding economy and efficiency.

The beneficiary's internal accounting and auditing procedures must permit direct reconciliation of the costs and revenue declared in respect of the action/project with the corresponding accounting statements and supporting documents.

Eligible direct costs:

The eligible direct costs for the action/project are those costs which, with due regard for the conditions of eligibility set out above, are identifiable as specific costs directly linked to the performance of the action and which can therefore be booked to it directly. In particular, the following direct costs are eligible, provided that they satisfy the criteria set out in the previous paragraph:

- the cost of staff assigned to the action/project, comprising actual salaries plus social security charges and other statutory costs included in their remuneration, provided that this cost does not exceed the average rates corresponding to the usual remuneration policy of the beneficiary or, where applicable, its partners. NB: this cost must be actual cost incurred by the beneficiary and staff cost of other organisations is eligible only if it is paid directly or reimbursed by the beneficiary;

The corresponding salary costs of personnel of national administrations are eligible to the extent that they relate to the cost of activities which the relevant public authority would not carry out if the project concerned were not undertaken;

- subsistence allowances for staff taking part in the action/project (for meetings, European conferences, etc.) provided that they do not exceed the scales approved annually by the Commission;
- travel allowances for staff taking part in the action/project (for meetings, European conferences, etc.), provided that they are reasonable, justified, and that they comply with the principle of sound financial management, in particular regarding economy and efficiency;
- purchase cost of equipment (new or second-hand), provided that it is written off in accordance with the tax and accounting rules applicable to the beneficiary and generally accepted for items of the same kind. Only the portion of the equipment's depreciation corresponding to the duration of the action/project and the rate of actual use for the purposes of the action may be taken into account by the Commission, except where the nature and/or the context of its use justifies different treatment by the Commission;
- costs of consumables and supplies, provided that they are identifiable and assigned to the action/project;
- costs entailed by other contracts awarded by the beneficiary or its partners for the purposes of carrying out the action/project, provided that the conditions laid down in the grant agreement are met;
- costs arising directly from requirements linked to the performance of the action/project (dissemination of information, specific evaluation of the action/project, audits, translations, reproduction, etc.), including, where applicable, the costs of any financial services (especially the cost of financial guarantees).

Eligible indirect costs (administrative costs):

- a flat-rate amount, not exceeding 7% of the eligible direct costs of the action, is eligible under indirect costs, representing the beneficiary's general administrative costs which can be regarded as chargeable to the action/project. Indirect costs may not include costs entered under another budget heading. Indirect costs are not eligible where the beneficiary already receives an operating grant. This does not apply in the event of an operating grant.

7.6. Ineligible costs

The following costs shall not be considered eligible:

- return on capital;
- debt and debt service charges;
- provisions for losses or potential future liabilities;
- interest owed;
- doubtful debts;

- exchange losses;
- VAT, unless the beneficiary can show that he is unable to recover it according to the applicable national legislation;
- costs declared by the beneficiary and covered by another action or work programme receiving a Community grant;
- excessive or reckless expenditure. Contributions in kind shall not constitute eligible costs

8. PUBLICITY

All grants awarded in the course of a financial year must be published on the Internet site of the Community institutions during the first half of the year following the closure of the budget year in respect of which they were awarded. The information may also be published using any other appropriate medium, including the Official Journal of the European Union. With the agreement of the beneficiary (taking account of whether information is of such a nature as to jeopardise its security or prejudice its financial interests), the Commission will publish the following information:

- name and address of the beneficiary,
- subject of the grant,
- amount awarded and rate of funding.

Beneficiaries must clearly acknowledge the European Union's contribution in all publications or in conjunction with activities for which the grant is used. Furthermore, beneficiaries are required to give prominence to the name and logo of the European Commission on all their publications, posters, programmes and other products realised under the co-financed project. To do this they must use the logo that will be provided by the Commission. If this requirement is not fully complied with, the beneficiary's grant may be reduced.

9. DATA PROTECTION

All personal data (such as names, addresses, CVs, etc.) will be processed in accordance with Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2000 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data by the Community institutions and bodies and on the free movement of such data. Your replies to the questions in the application form are necessary in order to assess your grant application and they will be processed solely for that purpose by the department responsible for the Community grant programme concerned. On request, you may be sent personal data and correct or complete them. For any question relating to these data, please contact the Commission department to which the application must be returned. Beneficiaries may lodge a complaint against the processing of their personal data with the European Data Protection Supervisor at any time.

10. PROCEDURE FOR THE SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

In submitting a proposal, applicants accept the procedures and conditions as described in this call and in the documents to which it refers. Applications that do not comply with the requirements set out will be excluded from the selection procedure.

10.1. Publication

The call for proposals is being published on the Internet site of DG SANCO at the following address:

http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_systems/call_workforce_en.htm

10.2. Application form

Proposals must be prepared in one of the official EU languages using the standard form which can be downloaded from the website, including a summary in one of the working languages of the Commission (EN, FR, DE).

http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_systems/call_workforce_en.htm

10.3. Submission of the grant application

Proposals must be complete and include:

1. The proposal form, in one original printed version and four copies.
2. The proposal in electronic format, saved on one CD-ROM, using Adobe Acrobat Reader 8.1 (preferably 8.1.2);
3. The signed declaration of honour of the main applicant and of each of any associated partners, in one copy (original or fax print-out. In the latter case, the original shall be requested at a later stage), attached to the original printed version of the proposal;
4. Supporting documents in one certified copy, attached to the original printed version of the proposal.

Deadline

The deadline for the submission of proposals is the 31st of March 2010. Applications must be sent by postal mail, preferably by registered mail, clearly postmarked on or before the deadline indicated above to the following address:

"Call for proposals SANCO/1/2009"
Ms Nathalie Chaze
Office B232 8/132
European Commission
1049 Brussels

Applications must be submitted in a sealed envelope itself enclosed within a second sealed envelope addressed as indicated above. The inner envelope must bear, in addition to the address above, the words, "Call for proposal SANCO/1/2009" – Not to be opened by the mail

service.” If self-adhesive envelopes are used, they must be sealed with adhesive tape and the sender must sign across that tape. No changes to the dossier can be made after the application has been submitted. However, if there is a need to clarify certain aspects, the Commission may contact the applicant for this purpose. Applicants will be informed of the receipt of their proposal within 10 working days. Only applications that fulfil the eligibility criteria will be considered for a grant. If an application is deemed ineligible, a letter indicating the reasons will be sent to the applicant. All unsuccessful applicants will be informed in writing.

Selected proposals will be subjected to a financial analysis, in connection with which the Commission may ask the persons responsible for the proposed actions to provide additional information and, if appropriate, guarantees.

10.4. Rules applicable

Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002 of 25 June 2002 on the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the European Communities, as amended⁴;

Commission Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 2342/2002 of 23 December 2002 (rules for the implementation of the Council Regulation) as amended⁵.

10.5. Contacts

Contact between the Commission and the applicants is forbidden, save, exceptionally, in cases where clarification of the call for proposals dossier is necessary. Should the applicant require any clarification prior to the deadline for submission of applications, the request should be addressed to SANCO-health-workforce@ec.europa.eu.

Requests for clarifications received at least 15 days before the deadline for submission of applications, will be answered not later than 10 days before the deadline. Requests received 14 days or fewer before the deadline will not be answered. Responses which provide additional information to the call for proposals dossier will be available to all applicants on the website.

⁴ OJ L 248, 16.9.2002, amended by Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1995/2006 of 13 December 2006, OJ L 390, 30.12.2006.

⁵ OJ L 357, 31.12.2002, amended by Commission Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1261/2005 of 20 July 2005 amending Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 2342/2002 laying down detailed rules for the implementation of Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002 on the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the European Communities, OJ L 201, 2.8.2005 and Commission Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1248/2006 of 7 August 2006 amending Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 2342/2002 laying down detailed rules for the implementation of Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002 on the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the European Communities, OJ L 227, 19.8.2006.