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ANNEX



Enclosure 1

DG INFORMATION SOCIETY AND MEDIA

eParticipation

Work Programme 2008

ePARTICIPATION in legislative and decision-making processes

eParticipation is a Preparatory Action to promote the development and use of Information and Communication Technologies in legislative and decision-making processes within parliamentary and government environments, aiming at enhancing the participation of citizens and contributing to better legislation.



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I. INTRODUCTION

There is a strong feeling that Europe should move closer to its citizens. In the context of the European Institutions this could be reflected in: ensuring equal attention to all citizens; enabling a greater role for the European Parliament and greater involvement of national parliaments; and by fostering new forms of interaction between citizens and the European institutions

This Preparatory Action contributes directly to these principles, especially the latter. eParticipation has become increasingly important because it can help effectively address some of the major political challenges that we are facing:

- Fighting the *perceived democratic deficit*, which requires a new relationship between politicians and citizens, and which is particularly challenging *at EU level*;
- Reconnecting citizens with politics and policy-making, e.g. with a view to the next European elections and sustaining citizens' involvement beyond 2009;
- Reducing the complexity of decision-making and legislation processes in an enlarged EU of 27 countries, in addition to the increasing number of cross-border issues.

The eParticipation Initiative is in line with the Commission's actions in this direction, notably the Transparency Initiative¹, and the Commission's Plan D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate², which aims to stimulate debate between the EU institutions and citizens.

At the same time, we are witnessing the development and wide use of powerful new ICT applications (e.g. social networking technologies), which are transforming the way citizens and civil society interact, debate and participate in public life. These new tools have enormous potential to enhance decision-making processes by involving large numbers of EU citizens.

The EU Member States have recently recognised this potential and agreed in the Ministerial Declaration³, adopted in Lisbon in September 2007, to *keep up momentum on improving transparency and public participation* by using ICT tools. They invited the Commission to build on the ongoing eParticipation action and define future support mechanisms. They also recognised the need to share and organise the exchange of experiences on fostering democratic engagement. By the end of 2008 the Member States committed to identify and exchange information on their own national initiatives that aim to make intensive use of electronic means to increase participation and public debate.

¹ COM(2006) 194 final Green Paper European Transparency Initiative

² COM (2005)494 final The Commission's contribution to the period of reflection and beyond: Plan-D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate.

³ Ministerial Declaration at the 4th Ministerial eGovernment Conference, Lisbon, September 19-21, 2007;
http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/egovernment/docs/lisbon_2007/ministerial_declaration_180907.pdf

Therefore, both at EU and Member State levels there is a strong need and demand to structure and widen the efforts for the growth of eParticipation.

The eParticipation Preparatory Action

The Preparatory Action was first launched in 2006 based on the budget amendment approved by the European Parliament on 15 December 2005. It aims to harness the benefits of ICTs to improve legislation and legislative processes at all levels of government decision-making and to enhance public participation in such processes.

The successful launch in 2006 led to an increased budget and continuation of the Action in 2007 and 2008⁴. Six trial projects were selected in the first year, which focused in particular on making the legislative processes more accessible, creating awareness and increasing transparency. A number of national parliaments have been involved in these projects.

Seven trial projects were selected under the 2007 Work Programme and started work in January 2008. These projects aim to give citizens the opportunity to discuss, input and interact with decision-makers. A number of MEPs are expected to be involved in the trials. The policy fields concerned include climate change, environment, consumer affairs, public health and energy. A Support Action was also selected to help the Commission services to coordinate and promote project results⁵.

This year is the final year of this Preparatory Action. Therefore, as well as building on, and consolidating, the achievements over the past two years, the 2008 Work Programme aims to prepare the ground for the future orientation of the eParticipation Initiative.

II. OBJECTIVES FOR 2008

The overall objective is to strengthen and broaden citizens' participation in democratic decision-making and contribute to better legislation through applying the latest available innovative ICT tools and concepts in concrete cases.

There are two objectives for 2008:

Advancing eParticipation: exploring the future course of eParticipation by applying novel tools and applications to the EU decision-making processes, including their scalability with a view to mainstreaming them within institutional environments;

Inter-parliamentary networking and cooperation: exploring ways to improve inter-parliamentary networking and cooperation on applications of eParticipation.

The 2008 Work Programme includes also an assessment of the Preparatory Action itself.

⁴ Amendment No 4729 to the budget by the European Parliament of 15 December 2005, allocating 2m€ for this Preparatory Action. Amendment No 0616 to the budget by the European Parliament of 14 December 2006, increasing the budget to 5m€ for 2007. Amendment No.0003 to the budget by the European Parliament of 13 December 2007, maintaining the 5m€budget for 2008

⁵ Further information on the 14 projects that have been financed so far can be found on our website: <http://ec.europa.eu/eparticipation>

II.1 ADVANCING ePARTICIPATION

The first objective aims at complementing and advancing the eParticipation activities currently covered by the trial projects. A number of trials in 2006 and 2007 addressed specific policy making fields, like environment, energy or consumer protection. A number of key policy areas are therefore included in this year's focus. Emphasis is placed on governance, transparency and engagement of civil society in legislative and decision-making processes.

In this context proposals should address focused activities in one or more of the following five areas:

II.1.1 Transparency in tracking legislation and decision-making processes

Transparency is essential if we are to reconnect Europe and its citizens. People need to understand what the EU does and why. This not only requires greater openness, but also more effective ways of presenting information and communicating. While each institution, whether EU or national, provides information on its activities, ordinary people often find it difficult to see the different stages of the decision-making process on a cross-institutional basis. Tools should be tested that provide both decision-makers and the public with clear and understandable information on the decision-making process for any policy field, and the stage at which a policy proposal is at any point of time.

II.1.2 Visualisation of impacts of legislation

Even at the drafting stage, both citizens and policy-makers lack the tools to better understand and visualise the possible impacts of legislation in a number of areas or issues. The wide availability of statistical and other information could be used to project possible impacts. Therefore proposals are invited to apply ICT-enabled ways to visualise arguments, dialogues and impacts of legislation and to provide tools to assess the costs and benefits of proposed or adopted legislation.

II.1.3 Policy developments related to the Internet and its governance

Internet has become very important for citizens, the society as a whole and increasingly so in politics. Questions related to the Internet are of key concern today for both policy-makers and citizens. Amongst others, the Internet has led to the freeing up of information flows on a global scale. At the same time, the Internet raises many questions linked, for example, to civil liberties, privacy, security, diversity, access, intellectual property and so on. The Internet Governance Forum addressed some of these issues gathering together diverse stakeholders from various regions of the world. The EU has an important role to support this process. The views of citizens, including young citizens, are invaluable. Ways should be explored to allow people to provide input and interact with the EU institutions (in particular the European Parliament) on this issue.

Proposals are invited to present tools and services to facilitate and widen the participation of citizens in this debate.

II.1.4 Petitions

One of the most traditional ways for the general public to try and influence decision-making is by organising a petition. E-petition systems have been introduced in some Member States in order to make it easier to gather signatures from a wider audience. The Lisbon Treaty introduces the idea of the citizen's initiative⁶, whereby citizens will have the opportunity to call on the Commission to bring forward new policy proposals if they have the support of 1 million people from a significant number of EU Member States. However, this Treaty is still subject to ratification by all Member States.

Tools should be developed that could be used to allow the public from across the EU to discuss ideas and create an online petition on EU issues. Such tools can also be used in a number of cross-border decision-making cases and therefore are relevant also in many legislative and decision-making processes.

II.1.5 Inclusive social networking

The benefits of eParticipation should be felt by the wider community. Online collaboration sites have been successful in recent years, especially among the young. Social networking technologies and practices could be powerful when used in a political context. Proposals are invited to enable people with the same interests to form groups which transverse social, administrative or geographic barriers, and help these groups to participate in decision-making on specific EU policies, using innovative ICT tools and applications.

II.2 INTER-PARLIAMENTARY NETWORKING AND COOPERATION

EU citizens may be unaware of the involvement of national parliaments in EU decision-making, in particular debates on draft EU legislative and non-legislative documents, but also on the transposition of EU legislation into national law. The Lisbon Treaty, as mentioned above, enhances the role of national parliaments and therefore makes the involvement of citizens in these processes an even greater opportunity.

A range of activities are being tried out in national parliaments. Proposals are invited to suggest innovative ways to create an inter-parliamentary network to enhance dialogue between Member State parliaments with a view to stimulating the uptake of ICT tools to enhance transparency and citizen participation in the processes mentioned above. Particular attention should be given to enhanced inter-parliamentary cooperation and recommendations should be provided on how to improve citizens' involvement, public debate and participation on EU affairs when they are debated in national parliaments.

III PROGRAMME OPERATIONS

The Work Programme will provide funding through primarily calls for proposals and a call for tenders.

⁶ Title II, Article 8b of the Treaty of Lisbon, "Not less than one million citizens who are nationals of a significant number of Member States may take the initiative of inviting the European Commission, within the framework of its powers, to submit any appropriate proposal on matters where citizens consider that a legal act of the Union is required for the purpose of implementing the Treaties."

The call for proposals will address trial or support action projects as defined in II.1 and II.2 above. The “eParticipation Guide for Applicants 2008”, which provides specific guidance on how to prepare a proposal, should be read in conjunction with the Work Programme.

The call for tenders will assess the Preparatory Action, as mentioned in Objective II above.

III.1 CALL FOR PROPOSALS

The call for proposals covers two types of projects: trial projects and a support action.

Trial Projects

eParticipation trial projects will aim to test state-of-the-art ICT tools and novel solutions to achieve one of the objectives set out in II.1 .

These trials should typically define the precise conditions to be fulfilled, the desires and needs expressed by citizens and policy-makers for collective participation in major EU issues, and the specific barriers to be overcome for deployment, demonstrate possible solutions, document practices, and assess the benefits, drawbacks and critical success factors.

A trial project will include the following activities:

- Tailoring the tool, application or solution to the specific requirements of the intended objective.
- Implementing the trial with real-life users for a period of typically one year.
- Analysis of the results and assessment of the impact of the trial on users (i.e. policy-makers and citizens) and on decision-making and legislative processes as well as on its potential scalability.
- Dissemination of the project objectives and results, and joined-up activities with other initiatives in the field of eParticipation.

All projects will contribute to improving the accessibility and usability of web-based and other ICT tools in the field. This should include ways in which to engage a wider audience across the EU to participate. Multi-lingual and multi-cultural issues need to be addressed as well as adapting the tool to be used by people who may have only limited knowledge of the subject area and low level IT skills.

The activities can focus on making the decision-making process more transparent and accessible, which will improve people's understanding and knowledge and assist policy-makers in developing legislation. They can also focus on offering citizens the opportunity to work together to try and influence decision-making, on a particular shared interest or concern, which contributes to greater social cohesion.

The application of these tools should address key issues at EU level, or at national or regional level in cases where there is a clear cross-border dimension, and should involve citizens from a number of EU countries. Both the needs of decision-makers and citizens should be taken into account. The ICT tools should enable a wider group of people to voice their opinions and get involved in politics, including those who would not normally be interested.

Support Action

It is intended to fund one Support Action to address the Objective II.2 above (Inter-parliamentary networking and cooperation). This action should put together a network of experts, and European and national parliaments to explore and propose the best ways of interacting among the institutions. Innovative ICT tools should be exploited in order to achieve greater collaboration. The action should encourage the exchange of experience as well as facilitating the deployment of eParticipation initiatives, with a particular focus on improving citizens' awareness and participation in EU-related issues. The action should run for up to two years and provide a set of options, tools and methods for possible use by parliaments.

III.2 FUNDING FOR ACTIONS SELECTED FOLLOWING THE CALL FOR PROPOSALS

- Community funding for actions selected following the call for proposals (see above section III.1) is granted in accordance with the principles of co-financing and non-profit for the funded activities.
- Community funding will not exceed 75% of eligible costs incurred by each partner.
- The indicative contribution for a trial project should be between 600.000 € to 800.000 € and the Support Action 400.000 €

Common requirements:

All proposals should be prepared to cooperate with all other projects financed under the Preparatory Action and avoid isolated or disconnected implementation.

All proposals should clearly and expressly indicate how they will address the selected objective and in particular explain how they will improve legislative and decision-making processes, the participation of citizens and their interaction with policy-makers.

All proposals will ensure that sufficient resources are allocated to joined-up implementation among all selected proposals (cross-project cooperation, exchange of knowledge and common dissemination plans, as appropriate) and avoid isolated or disconnected implementation

Proposals should demonstrate their awareness, complementarity and possible added-value to other Commission-funded programmes or applications, e.g. research projects funded by DG-RTD, the Interactive Policy Making (IPM⁷) application and the European Business Test Panel (EBTP), the Trans-JAI initiative, the Eur-lex portal, the “Europe for citizens” programme, etc.

Proposals should provide precise success targets to allow the monitoring of tangible results and impacts. Their timely implementation is also important.

In order to be eligible for Community funding, all proposals must be consistent with competition policy⁸ in the European Union and with the institutional rules governing the decision-making bodies. For the institutional partners in the proposal or those institutional

⁷ <http://ec.europa.ec/idabc/en/document/6541/5644>

⁸ http://www.europa.eu/pol/comp/index_en.htm

actors concerned by the proposal's results, each proposal should state or define clearly their competence to act.

Proposals must indicate the opportunities for sustainable operation beyond the project's lifetime. Each proposal should therefore include ways in which the project could continue without EC financial support.

III.3 GENERAL CONDITIONS FOR PARTICIPATION AND STRUCTURE OF CONSORTIA

The call is open to proposals from legal entities in the 27 EU Member States. Legal entities are:

- Legal persons.
- Natural persons, who may, however, participate only where required by the nature or characteristics of the action. For natural persons, references to establishment are deemed to refer to habitual residence.

Exceptionally, entities that do not have legal personality under the applicable national law may participate, provided that their representatives have the capacity to undertake legal obligations on their behalf and assume financial liability. Subject to these conditions, such entities will be considered as legal entities for the purpose of this Work Programme.

The Community may allow participation of legal entities established in third countries (i.e. non EU Member States) in individual actions on a case-by-case basis. Such entities will not receive Community funding.

Consortia must comprise **a minimum of three independent, legal entities from at least three EU Member States intending to participate as signing beneficiaries of the grant agreement with the Commission.**

Applicants should ensure that all stakeholders, including in particular **users from civil society and decision-making bodies** in the public sector, are actively present in the consortium in order to secure the best possible prospects for *sustainable implementation of the trials*. The consortium must have at least one participant organisation responsible for *implementing* the proposed user trial.

Consortia must have sufficient expertise and resources (personnel, equipment, finances) to carry out the proposed project and these should be convincingly integrated to form a coherent action. All the participants must have the financial means to bear their co-financing share of the project and have an adequate number of staff to implement the project. It is essential to have adequate and skilled project management resources available. The participants must be committed to the tasks assigned to them and there must be sufficient complementarities between participants to ensure that all tasks can be adequately addressed.

III.4 MAKING A PROPOSAL

A call for proposals in the Official Journal of the European Union will be published in June 2008. Guidelines for the preparation of proposals and other information for applicants will be available on the following website: <http://ec.europa.eu/eparticipation>

Proposals should be submitted on paper in accordance with the procedure defined in the text of the call.

Pre-registration of proposals is recommended one month prior to the deadline for submission in order to help the Commission's services best prepare for the evaluation phase. Pre-registration forms can be downloaded at: <http://ec.europa.eu/eparticipation>

III.5 STRUCTURE OF PROPOSALS

The proposal should be structured in two parts:

Part A is a set of forms containing basic information on the proposal and the applicants, e.g., proposal name, applicants' names and addresses, brief description of the work, total funding requested, etc.

Part B contains a description of the project, including three mandatory activities (work packages): project management, project implementation, and viability and dissemination of results.

Full details will be given in the Guide for Applicants, which will be made available on the above mentioned website.

III.6 EVALUATION AND SELECTION OF PROPOSALS

The evaluation of proposals will be based on the principles of transparency and equal treatment. It will be carried out by the Commission with the assistance of independent experts. Each proposal will be assessed on the basis of the evaluation criteria, which are divided into three categories: eligibility criteria, selection criteria and award criteria. Only proposals meeting the requirements of the eligibility criteria will be evaluated further. These criteria are described below. Applicants will be excluded from participation if they fall under one of the situations of exclusion criteria set out in the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the European Communities⁹.

Eligibility criteria

On receipt, all proposals will be subject to an eligibility check to ensure that they conform to the requirements of the call and to the submission procedure.

The following checks will be carried out:

- Receipt of proposal by the Commission on or before the deadline (date and time) established in the call.
- Proposal completeness. Proposals which are substantially incomplete — i.e. the forms do not include sufficient information to identify the partners or their legal status or to evaluate the scope of the proposed project — will be excluded.

⁹ Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002 of 25 June 2002 (OJ L 248, 16.09.2002, p. 1), as last amended by Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1525/2007 of 17 December 2007 (OJ L 343, 27.12.2007, p. 9)

Exclusion criteria

Applicants will be excluded from participation if:

- (a) they are bankrupt or being wound up, are having their affairs administered by the courts, have entered into an arrangement with creditors, have suspended business activities, are the subject of proceedings concerning those matters, or are in any analogous situation arising from a similar procedure provided for in national legislation or regulations;
- (b) they have been convicted of an offence concerning their professional conduct by a judgment which has the force of res judicata;
- (c) they have been guilty of grave professional misconduct proven by any means which the contracting authority can justify;
- (d) they have not fulfilled obligations relating to the payment of social security contributions or the payment of taxes in accordance with the legal provisions of the country in which they are established or with those of the country of the contracting authority or those of the country where the grant agreement is to be performed;
- (e) they have been the subject of a judgment which has the force of res judicata for fraud, corruption, involvement in a criminal organisation or any other illegal activity detrimental to the Communities' financial interests;
- (f) they are currently subject to an administrative penalty imposed by the Community in accordance with Article 96(1) of the Financial Regulation
- (g) they are subject to a conflict of interest;
- (h) they have made false declarations in supplying information required by the Community as a condition of participation in a procurement procedure or grant award procedure or fail to supply this information.

Applicants must declare on their honour that they are not in one of the situations listed above.

Applicants making false declarations are liable to financial penalties or exclusion from grants and contracts¹⁰.

Award criteria

Award criteria are grouped into five categories described below. In their proposals, applicants are required to explain in a systematic manner how their consortium addresses each award criterion. Further instructions, a checklist and the format for providing this information are included in the Guide for Applicants 2008.

A1) Nature of the proposed activity

- (a) Alignment with the objectives of the Work Programme.

¹⁰ Article 175 of Commission Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 2342/2002 of 23 December 2002 (OJ L 357, 31 December 2002, p. 1), as last amended by Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 478/2007 of 23 April 2007 (OJ L 111, 28.04.2007, p. 13).

- (b) Importance of the proposed activity in terms of its public interest and its anticipated impact.
- (c) The proposal clearly addresses an EU legislative or decision-making process or cross-border issue and contributes to improving the process concerned and to increasing the participation of the public.
- (d) Clear understanding and definition of the institutional environment concerned and the civil society actors involved.

A2) Implementation potential

- (a) Novelty and applicability of the technical solution, tools and approaches concerned, as well as an innovative approach in using state-of-the-art technologies and applications.
- (b) Completeness of the activity in terms of operational and institutional requirements, including multi-lingual and multi-cultural issues.
- (c) Demonstrated capability and commitment of the consortium to deploy the tool, application or service and sustain its operation. Attention should be given to the involvement of all relevant stakeholders (including decision-makers) and appropriate support from public entities.
- (d) Potential for wider deployment and scalability beyond the scope of the proposal (e.g. cross-institutional or within the same European Institution).

A3) Contribution to relevant EU policies

- (a) Inclusiveness and accessibility of the tool, application or service, for all types of users, in terms of both its nature and the way it is to be provided.
- (b) EU dimension of the tool, application or service(s) (e.g. EU-level legislation, cross-regional or cross-national relevance).
- (c) c) Appropriate attention to security and privacy issues; appropriate use of interoperable platforms; open standards and open-source components.

A4) Planning

- (a) Adequacy of the chosen methodology and effectiveness of the management approach to achieve the goals of the proposed project.
- (b) Clear work plan with well-defined work packages, schedules, partner roles, deliverables, validation and built-in success criteria and measures.
- (c) Effectiveness of the dissemination plan, especially in terms of the impact at European level, including ways to attract a wider audience to participate.

A5) Use of resources

- (a) Appropriateness of the financial package, including the allocation of resources, for achieving the objectives of the proposal.
- (b) Credibility and justification of project cost estimates based on realistic prices and labour costs.

Scoring and thresholds for award criteria

A score will be given for each of the five award criteria. If a proposal fails to achieve one or more of the threshold scores (see below), it will be nevertheless be evaluated against all the criteria in order to provide feedback to the consortium, should they wish to respond to a subsequent call for proposals.

For each award criteria, a score from 0 to 5 is given:

(0) - The proposal fails to address the criterion under examination or cannot be judged against the criterion due to missing or incomplete information.

(1) - Inadequate

(2) - Fair

(3) - Good

(4) - Very good

(5) - Excellent

The respective thresholds for the award criteria are:

Criterion	Threshold
A1	3
A2	3
A3	3
A4	3
A5	3

Selection criteria

Selection criteria are initially applied on the basis of the information supplied in the proposal.

Successful proposals accepted for negotiations will be the subject of a formal legal and financial validation as a requirement for the issuing of a grant agreement. If at that stage financial weaknesses are identified (e.g. in terms of financial capacity), compensating actions such as financial guarantees or other mitigating measures may be required.

S1) Financial and operational capacity to carry out the project

Applicants must have stable and sufficient sources of funding to maintain their activity throughout the period during which the action is being carried out. They must have the:

- (a) Capacity to co-finance the proposed project as demonstrated by the organisation's accounts;
- (b) Capacity to allocate adequate human resources to carry out the project in question. In particular, proposals where any of the partners envisage

subcontracting of the main parts of the work, or subcontracting that does not appear justified with regard to the nature of the project and what is necessary for its implementation, will risk rejection on this criterion.

S2) Professional competences and qualifications

Applicants must demonstrate the professional competences and qualifications required to complete the proposed project. They must provide:

Documented relevant experience in the field of the proposed action (e.g. technical, commercial and financial expertise or references to previous or ongoing projects).

III.7 CALL FOR TENDERS

2008 is the final year of the eParticipation Preparatory Action. A call for tenders, using an existing Framework Contract, is included for a study (service contract) to assess the implementation and achievements of the eParticipation Preparatory Action and recommendations for future activities.

III.8 CONSULTATION AND DISSEMINATION ACTIVITIES

It is envisaged that a number of consultation and dissemination activities will be supported in 2008 with a view to showcasing results of trial projects, stimulating the involvement of key stakeholders and raising awareness of the potential of eParticipation.

Through targeted workshops and expert seminars, future requirements for tools and applications can be defined based on the exchange of experiences and the needs and opportunities identified.

IV. TIMETABLE

1. The Commission plans to launch one Call for Proposals under the eParticipation Work Programme 2008 with a timetable as outlined below:

- The Call for Proposals is to be published in June¹¹ in the Official Journal. It will be open until the 29 August 2008, 17.00 hours, Brussels time.
- The Commission, assisted by independent experts, will evaluate the proposals in the month after the closure of the call.
- The Commission aims to finalise grant agreement negotiations within 5 months after the closure of the call.

The implementation of the projects will start after finalisation of the negotiations.

2. The Commission plans to initiate the Call for Tenders, Consultation and dissemination activities from April 2008 onwards.

¹¹ The Director-General responsible may open the call for proposals up to one month before or one month after this date.

V. INDICATIVE BUDGET

The programme budget for 2008 is set at €5 million. The indicative budget break-down per activity is as follows:

Trial projects	4.300.000 EUR
Support Action	400.000 EUR
Call for tenders to assess the Preparatory Action	60.000 EUR
Procurement related to consultation and dissemination activities	80.000 EUR
Costs for operations, included external experts	160.000 EUR

The experts who are chosen to assist the Commission and accept this task may claim, in addition to the reimbursement of travel and subsistence expenses, a payment of €450.00 in the form of a lump sum for each full working day spent assisting the Commission's services. These experts will be chosen for their experience in the field from DG INFSO's relevant lists of registered experts

VI. FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information on this Work Programme see: <http://ec.europa.eu/eparticipation>