



**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**  
EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS DG

Social protection and social integration  
**Social protection and social inclusion : policy coordination**

## **Community Action Programme to Combat Social Exclusion 2002-2006**

### **SECOND TRANSNATIONAL EXCHANGE PROGRAMME**

#### **OPEN CALL FOR PROPOSALS - VP/2004/004**

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## 1. Introduction and Context

Following the introduction under Articles 136 and 137 of the Amsterdam Treaty of the fight against social exclusion among the social policy provisions, the European Parliament and the Council agreed on the establishment of a five year programme of Community action to encourage co-operation between Member States to combat social exclusion to run between 2002 and end 2006<sup>1</sup>.

The Community action programme is intended as a key tool to support and advance the implementation of the Open Method of Co-ordination on poverty and social inclusion (OMC), established by the Lisbon European Council in March 2000. It is expected to contribute to this goal in three essential ways: first, by improving the understanding of social exclusion and poverty; secondly, by organising exchanges on policies and promoting mutual learning in the context of national action plans; and, thirdly, by developing the capacity of actors to address social exclusion and poverty effectively, and to promote innovative approaches.

To these ends the Community action programme is divided into three strands. Strand 1 supports research and analysis, Strand 2 promotes policy co-operation and mutual learning and Strand 3 supports the participation of the various actors and networking at European level.

In 2002, under Strand 2 of the action programme, the Commission launched the **first Transnational Exchange Programme (TEP)**, aiming at promoting and supporting the organisation of exchanges and promoting mutual learning between Member States, candidate countries and EFTA and EEA countries<sup>2</sup>. The first Transnational Exchange Programme was developed in two phases with Phase I being a nine month preparatory phase with the aim of supporting the creation of solid partnerships and the development of projects, for which some 65 projects were selected. For Phase II of the TEP 31 projects were selected and are receiving support, in principle, for a two year period.

In the 2004 work plan for the Community action programme it has been envisaged that a new call for proposals to promote transnational exchanges on learning and best practice would be launched in the last semester of 2004. This will be the first call for proposals for transnational exchange projects to take place in the context of an enlarged Union while also covering the Candidate Countries (Bulgaria and Romania) and the EFTA/EEA countries. It will also be the last call for this kind of projects during the life of the current Community Action Programme.

This second Transnational exchange programme is part of a wider package aiming at accompanying and supporting more strongly the NAPs' process.

To complement this call the Commission intends to launch in early 2005 a specific call for proposals focused on encouraging transnational analysis and debate about policy measures that have emerged as of key importance in the NAPs/inclusion of Member States. Under this future call, the actions foreseen could take the forms of policy oriented research studies on topics of transnational relevance, once-off seminars and conferences for assessing the appropriateness of methods, instruments and indicators of the OMC on Poverty and Social Exclusion and impact assessments of specific policy measures or institutions carried out at national level.

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<sup>1</sup> Decision n° 50/2002/EC of the European Parliament and the Council of 7 December 2001 – OJ, L 10 of 12.01.2002.

<sup>2</sup> The TEP is one of the two main vehicles for promoting transnational exchange and co-operation under the Community action programme. The other main vehicle is a programme of peer reviews examining specific policies being implemented by Member States, which runs since 2004.

The purpose of promoting transnational exchanges as part of the Community Action Programme is to support the implementation of the Open Method of Co-ordination and in particular the development and implementation of the NAPs/inclusion. In this regard it is important to note that projects selected under this new call for proposals will coincide with the implementation of the 2003-2005 NAPs/inclusion of the EU-15 Member States, their one year extension to 2006 and the implementation of the 2004-2006 NAPs/inclusion of the new Member States. They will also overlap with the preparation of the 2006 NAPs/inclusion by all 25 Member States. These will be developed in the context of the new "streamlined" social protection and social inclusion process and taking into account the midterm review of the social inclusion and other Lisbon processes during 2004 and early 2005.

These guidelines outline the key features of the **second Transnational Exchange Programme**.

## **2. Priority Areas for Co-operation**

Applications may be submitted proposing policy co-operation and exchange on any aspect of poverty and social exclusion that is covered under the Common Objectives agreed at Nice. However, given the emphasis in this programme on supporting the implementation and further development of National Action Plans against poverty and social exclusion, special priority will be given to proposals addressing issues emerging from the second round of National Action Plans by the EU15 and identified in the *Joint Report on Social Inclusion* and the first round of National Action plans by the EU10.

The 2004 Joint Report on Social Inclusion and the Commission Communication on Social Inclusion in the new Member States (based on an analysis of the JIMs) provide recent important assessments of the state of the social inclusion process and identify both clear policy priorities and important institutional and organisational issues in relation to tackling poverty and social exclusion.

The Commission is keen to receive applications which aim to foster co-operation and exchange both on particular policy areas and on the development of institutional approaches which can underpin social inclusion policies. Proposals may be concerned with more than one policy area or institutional mechanism or may combine an interest in both a particular policy area and institutional approach or mechanism.

Applications shall be specifically focussed on contributing to the implementation and the development of the NAPs/inclusion.

The following areas are of particular interest in this call for proposals:

### **Key policy issues:**

- strengthening active labour market policies for the most excluded
- ensuring adequate and accessible social protection systems for all while ensuring incentives to work
- increasing access to decent services (housing, health, lifelong learning, financial services & transport)
- preventing early school leaving and fight against illiteracy
- preventing and tackling homelessness
- preventing and tackling over-indebtedness
- eliminating child poverty

- promoting inclusion of people with disabilities
- promoting inclusion of immigrants and ethnic minorities, including Roma, Gypsies and Travellers, and other groups experiencing extreme poverty and exclusion
- supporting families and social networks
- taking account of serious regional differences in poverty and exclusion and between urban and rural areas

**Main institutional issues:**

- strengthening the mainstreaming and coordination of social inclusion policies, especially their link to budgetary decisions and Structural Funds
- developing regional and local NAPs
- deepening the participation of those experiencing poverty, NGOs and social partner organisations in the process
- increasing political leadership and public debate and awareness of the process
- improving the quality and timeliness of data and ensuring that indicators used capture the multi-dimensionality of social exclusion and the reality of life on very low incomes (e.g. deprivation indicators)
- developing appropriate targets
- improving the evaluation and monitoring of policies

Such priority areas are indicative. Other topics or themes will also be considered provided there is a clear justification to what extent they fit the overall political priorities of the social inclusion process and link to the NAPs/incl process.

Promoters should also ensure that their projects cannot be appropriately funded by other Community instruments, such as the Structural Funds including the EQUAL programme, the action Programme to Combat Discrimination or the action Programme to Promote Gender Equality<sup>3</sup>. In considering proposals the Commission will give priority to those concerned with issues not already covered under such programmes. When a proposal addresses an issue which is already the subject of policy exchanges and learning under another programme, for example disability or asylum seekers, it will be essential to demonstrate what added learning the proposed actions will bring. Proposals must also clearly add value to work that has been done during the first Transnational Exchange Programme.

Whatever the particular policy area or institutional mechanism for which applicants are submitting a proposal they are requested to make sure that they pay close attention to mainstreaming equality between men and women at all stages of the work they are

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<sup>3</sup> The EQUAL initiative tests new ways of tackling discrimination and inequality experienced by those in work and looking for a job. Its thematic priorities are employability, entrepreneurship, adaptability, equal opportunities for women and men and asylum seekers. The Programme to Combat Discrimination supports transnational partnerships to contribute to the development of policy to prevent and combat discrimination based on racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation. The programme also contributes to eliminating inequalities and to promoting equality between men and women. The Programme to Promote Gender Equality aims to develop the capacity of players to promote gender equality effectively, in particular through support for the exchange of information and good practice and networking at Community level. Further information on these programmes is available on DG Employment and Social Affairs' web site at:

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

proposing.<sup>4</sup> They are also asked to take into account as appropriate the needs of disabled people in terms of the accessibility of activities they will be undertaking and results they will be disseminating when developing their proposal.

In drawing up their proposals, promoters should also take into account the wealth of information already available at EU level, especially the work carried out under the preparatory measures to combat social exclusion (1998-2001) and the activities carried out under the action programme (European networks, thematic studies, Peer Review exercise, etc.).

### **3. Types of Co-operation and Exchange**

Providing they contribute to the overall objective of transferring information and good practice between Member States exchanges and co-operation may take different forms.

These may include, for instance:

- meetings/workshops/seminars on benchmarks or on policies and practices;
- joint development of strategies;
- common dissemination of information;
- field visits and exchanges of personnel;
- exchanges between national observatories or other similar recognised bodies.

Proposals willing to carry out policy oriented research studies on topics of transnational relevance, once-off seminars and conferences for assessing the appropriateness of methods, instruments and indicators of the OMC and impact assessments of specific policy measures or institutions carried out at national level shall not be eligible under the present call for proposals as they will be the object of a future specific call for proposals to be launched in Spring 2005.

### **4. Who Can Apply?**

Access to this programme shall be open to all public and/or private bodies, and institutions involved in the fight against social exclusion. These can include national, regional and local authorities, bodies responsible for combating social exclusion, social partners, social service providers, non governmental organisations, universities and research institutes, national statistical offices and the media.

The Second Transnational Exchange Programme is open to the participation of candidate countries (Bulgaria and Romania) as well as to the EFTA/EEA countries. Applications must be submitted by partnerships involving, in the first instance, partners based in at least 3 Member States. Exchanges shall involve, as far as possible, a good mix of existing and new Member States as well as candidate and EFTA/EEA countries.

The Commission is particularly keen to receive applications which involve actors from several different sectors and which combine partners who are both involved in policy making at national, regional or local level with those who have direct experience of combating poverty and social exclusion on the ground. Applications will be expected to demonstrate how the proposers expect to go about ensuring the involvement of a range of relevant actors during the development of their project.

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<sup>4</sup> Article 3 par. 2 of the EC Treaty: In all its activities, the Union shall aim to eliminate inequalities and to promote equality between men and women.

Partnerships must be co-ordinated by a single organisation designated by the other partners as the lead applicant. This co-ordinating organisation will act as the Commission's only discussion partner for administrative matters and will submit a single overall application and will assume full responsibility for the implementation of the work programme.

## 5. Available Budget

The total budget for the programme will be up to € 4.5 million per year depending on the quality of the proposals received. It is envisaged that Community funding will be between EUR 200,000 and EUR 300,000 per project per annum. It is likely that in the region of 15-20 projects will be funded during the programme.

The Community's financial contribution to any partnership will not exceed 80% of the total eligible costs. The partnership must guarantee co-financing in cash of the remaining 20%. Contributions in kind are not accepted. Funding for projects selected will be available from July 2005.

## 6. Eligibility Criteria

In order to be considered for funding under this call, proposals will have to meet the following eligibility criteria:

### *Regarding the lead applicant*

- be made by properly constituted and registered organisations (legal persons) with an established administrative and financial management structure;
- must involve partner organisations from at least three eligible countries;
- be made by organisations whose legal representative has signed a declaration on his/her honour<sup>5</sup> that he is not in one of the situations listed in Article 93(1) and Article 94 of the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the European Communities (Council regulation (EC, Euratom) n° 1605/2002 of 25 June 2002)<sup>6</sup>.

### *Regarding the proposal*

- be submitted by post at the latest on **28/01/2005** (their submission date will be taken as the date of dispatch, as evidenced by the postmark or the express courier receipt date and proposals submitted after this date will not be eligible); the application form **shall also be submitted by electronic mail** by 28/01/2005.
- complete all sections of the application form and provide all requested supporting documentation;
- provide full details of the complete budget as proposed: two complete detailed budget forms: one for the first year, and another for the second year ;
- only seek funding for activities in or involving Member States, EFTA/EEA countries and the candidate countries (Bulgaria and Romania);

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<sup>5</sup> This declaration by the applicant is annexed to the Part I of the application form of the present call for proposals

<sup>6</sup> OJ, L 248 of 16.09.2002, p. 26

- demonstrate that the proposed actions are not being financed twice from two different sources within the Community budget (particularly in cases where promoters are already participating in the first transnational exchange programme or other programmes applicants must declare any other applications which they have made for funding under the Community budget for 2005 and any funding already received under previous calls or programmes in the course of the three preceding accounting periods);
- and not seek funding for the operating costs of organisations, nor for their general ongoing activities, nor for profit-making purposes.

***Regarding the action/work programme***

- have a start date between 15<sup>th</sup> July and 15<sup>th</sup> September 2005 and actions must not exceed 24 months;
- have clear objectives which address a key aspect of poverty and social exclusion relevant to the Open Method of Co-ordination and the NAPs/inclusion (see section 2 above on "Priority areas for co-operation");
- involve transnational exchange of learning and co-operation combating social exclusion and must not consist of direct action to combat social exclusion;
- be consistent with other Community policies and, in particular, take due account of the Community's commitment to eliminating inequalities and promoting equality between men and women pursuant of articles 2 and 3 of the EC Treaty;
- not seek funding for services or supports which would normally be funded by Member States or which should be more appropriately funded by other Community instruments (such as the Structural Funds in particular the EQUAL initiative, the Programme to Combat Discrimination or the Programme on Gender Equality).

## **7. Selection criteria**

In order to be allowed to receiving funding under this call, partnerships will have to meet the following selection criteria:

- have stable and sufficient sources of funding to maintain its activity throughout the period during which the action is being carried out and to help finance the project for at least the remaining 20% of the total eligible costs; applicant shall demonstrate the ability to provide the necessary matching funding in cash; for that purpose, a signed declaration from the potential beneficiary on his/her honour to respect all co-funding commitments included in the budget proposal<sup>7</sup> is requested, as well as any other supporting documents, such as:
  - the lead applicant's Profit and loss accounts and the balance sheet in euros for the last two financial years for which the accounts have been closed;
  - where necessary, letters of commitment produced by partner beneficiaries and external sponsors.

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<sup>7</sup> This declaration is included at the end of part 1 of the application form which must be dated and signed.



- have the professional competencies and qualifications required to complete the proposed action or work programme: organisational and management experience, track record in relation to the issue they propose to exchange information on and the ability to implement the proposed work programme; to this end, the proposal must include any supporting documents requested as evidence of the partnership's operational capacity, such as:
  - most recent activity report or annual report from the lead applicant's organisation;
  - a list of the main projects carried out in the last three years relating to the objective of the call. In the case of work done for the Commission, applicants must also indicate the reference number of the contract and the department for which the contract was performed;
  - the curriculum vitae of the persons who will perform the main tasks (project manager/coordinator from the lead applicant's organisation and the partner organisations).

## **8. Award Criteria**

The proposals which satisfy the above eligibility and selection criteria will then be assessed against the following award criteria:

### ***Policy Criteria***

- the extent to which there is a clear cut and well-supported diagnosis of the issue to be addressed and a clear indication of its importance and urgency in relation to eradicating poverty and social exclusion;
- the extent to which the application has a clear policy focus and demonstrates the relevance of the issue selected to advancing the Open Method of Co-ordination in general and the National Action Plans against poverty and social exclusion in particular;
- the extent to which the proposal clearly takes stock of existing knowledge, including the activities carried out under the action programme (First Transnational exchange programme, European networks, thematic studies, Peer Review exercise, etc.), clarifies the issues concerned and has clear objectives which have the potential to add to existing knowledge and work on the selected issue and to enhance the transfer of knowledge and best practice between eligible countries;

### ***Organisational Criteria***

- the quality and appropriateness of the transnational partnership which will be judged by the extent to which it:
  - o involves a good mix of eligible countries (N.B. all other things being equal the participation of organisations from new Member States and Candidate Countries in a partnership will be a positive factor);
  - o involves a broad range of relevant actors (i.e. multi-sectoral aspect of the partnership);

- involves those who are experiencing poverty and social exclusion<sup>8</sup>;
- seeks a balanced participation of women and men.
- the extent to which the partnership appears capable of influencing change particularly through the links it has developed to the policy making process as demonstrated by the degree of support and active involvement the proposal has from the national, regional or local authorities of the Member States concerned;
- the quality of the organisational and management experience of the proposers, their track record in relation to the issue they propose to exchange information on and their ability to implement the proposed plan;
- the quality and feasibility of the proposed two year work plan and in particular its capacity to achieve the planned objectives through well-identified and well-planned activities with clear and attainable time-lines and a clear allocation of tasks and responsibilities among the partners.
- the quality and relevance of the planned monitoring and evaluation strategy.

#### ***Financial Criteria***

- the financial quality of the proposal including its likely value for money and cost-effectiveness; applicants are informed that equal attention shall be given to the detailed budget for the first year and to the detailed budget for the second year.
- the experience and track record of the proposers in financial management of projects.

#### ***Achieving Balance***

In finalising its list of proposals to be supported the Commission will take into account:

- the need to ensure a balance in the range of issues to be supported;
- the importance of making sure that as many Member States, candidate countries and EFTA/EEA countries as possible are involved in the exchange programme;
- the need to achieve the involvement of a broad range of actors in the programme.

## **9. Duration**

Under this call the partnerships can apply for funding for a maximum period of two years, starting between 15<sup>th</sup> July and 15<sup>th</sup> September 2005. However, subsidy agreements will be signed for one year. Beneficiaries of a first year grant agreement shall ask for the renewal of the grant agreement for a second year after the first 6 months of the action and at the latest by the 8<sup>th</sup> month. For this purpose, the beneficiary shall supply an interim report of activities carried out until then and an updated detailed work programme and budget for year 2. Renewal of the grant for year 2 will be subject to the Commission's approval of these documents.

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<sup>8</sup> Proposals may come from public, private, NGO or other organisations but the more they involve or propose to develop partnerships involving a wide range of players and the more they allow for the participation of persons experiencing poverty and social exclusion the better they will meet the objectives of the Exchange programme.

## 10. Arrangements for Community financing

The Community's financial contribution to any project will not exceed 80% of the total eligible costs. See the "Applicant's guide" for the rules governing eligible and ineligible costs.

The promoters must guarantee co-financing in cash of the remaining 20%. Contributions in kind are not accepted.

## 11. Participation in Commission Events

It is important for applicants to recognise that this exchange programme is more than just a source of funding and is part of the wider EU social inclusion process. Thus partnerships whose applications for support are successful will be expected to be invited to participate in any meetings or events organised by the Commission for participants in the Co-operation and Exchange Programme or in other events organised as part of the Social Exclusion Programme or as part of the Open Method of Co-ordination if so requested.

## 12. Arrangements for submitting the application

The **application form** (available in English, French and German and made up of four separate parts) and the **Applicant's guide** can be obtained:

By downloading them from the following address:

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

By sending an e-mail to [empl-e2@cec.eu.int](mailto:empl-e2@cec.eu.int)

(Please include "Call for proposals VP/2004/004-Info" in the subject of your e-mail)

By writing to:

Unit E2: Call for proposals VP/2004/004-Info

European Commission

DG Employment and Social Affairs

J27 1/33

B-1049 Brussels

Belgium

Applicants are invited to fill in the application form and present the project proposal preferably in English, French or German, in order to facilitate the treatment of the proposals and carry through the evaluation as soon as possible. However, it should be noted that proposals in other Community languages will be accepted.

The application must be accompanied by a signed official letter explicitly requesting the subsidy.

Proposals must be submitted on the prescribed application form and be sent together with all supporting documents as listed in the Applicant's guide by post to the address below by **28/01/2005** (their submission date will be taken as the postmark date or the express courier receipt date and proposals submitted after this date will not be eligible).

European Commission

DG Employment and Social Affairs

Unit E2: Call for Proposals VP/2004/004

Archives-Courier service J27 0/115

B-1049 Brussels

Belgium

The application form in four parts must also be sent to the Commission service by e-mail to [empl-e2@cec.eu.int](mailto:empl-e2@cec.eu.int) stating VP/2004/004 by **28/01/2005** without fail.

**The Applicant's guide** annexed to the present guidelines forms a separate document which sets out the way in which the application form should be completed with:

- Guidelines for presenting the proposal's provisional budget along with the rules governing which categories of expenditure are eligible and which are not;
- Main provisions of the grant agreement;
- A check-list of the required documents to accompany your application.

The information contained herein together with the Applicant's guide provides all the information you require to submit an application. Please read them carefully before doing so paying particular attention to the priorities that have been set for the programme.

However, if you should have any further queries, please contact us quoting the reference "VP/2004/004 - query" at the contact points below and allow a reasonable time for a reply.

Please note that we can only answer questions related to the requirements of the call for proposals and the application process. We cannot prejudge the assessment process by offering any opinion on the merit of a particular application.

Our contact points are:

- By post at the above address
- By fax to + 32 2 29 98076
- By e-mail to [empl-e2@cec.eu.int](mailto:empl-e2@cec.eu.int)

### **13. Notification procedure**

Receipt of applications will be confirmed to the applicants within three weeks following the deadline of submission. All applications received will be registered. A reference number will be allocated to each application and shall be quoted in any further correspondence regarding the proposal.

No new complementary documents sent by the applicant by post, by fax or by electronic mail after 28/01/2005 will be considered for evaluation.

No information regarding the award procedure shall be disclosed until the award decision has been sent to the beneficiaries.

All applications will be examined. Only the proposals that satisfy the eligibility and selection criteria will be assessed against the award criteria. An evaluation committee specific to this call for proposals will be set up to oversee the evaluation process and select the proposals to be co-financed. This evaluation committee will be made up of at least three persons representing at least two organisational entities of the Commission with no hierarchical link between them and subject to the obligations laid down in Article 52 of the Financial Regulation relating to conflict of interests. It will be assisted by independent experts recruited through a restricted call for tender whose role will be advisory. The selection and final decisions on funding will be taken by the Commission.

Upon completion of its work, the evaluation committee will draw up a list of proposals recommended for funding under the Second Transnational Exchange Programme, sorted by order of merit. In finalising its list of proposals to be supported, the Commission will take into consideration the criteria set for achieving balance.

The whole selection procedure will be submitted for the opinion of the Committee of the Programme to Combat Social Exclusion and then for approval of the financial unit of the Directorate General Employment and Social Affairs.

Applicants whose proposals have not been accepted will be informed of the results of the selection process in writing, probably in July 2005. Reasons for the rejection of the application, with reference in particular to the selection and award criteria announced, shall be mentioned.

Proposals recommended for funding shall be subject to a *budgetary analysis* with the purpose of ensuring that the expenditure in the estimated budget of the action conforms to the financial provisions laid down in the guidelines of the call and in the applicant's guide.

Successful applicants will receive two copies of a grant agreement for their approval, signature and return to the Commission. Grant agreements will be signed by the Commission between July and September 2005. The Commission will return to the beneficiary one of the copies signed by the two parties.

The Commission will publish, on the Internet site of the Directorate General Employment and Social Affairs, probably in November 2005, the list of the awarded proposals with the beneficiary's name and the address, the subject and purpose of the grant, the amount granted and the proportion of the action's total cost covered by the funding.