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EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS DG

Social protection and social integration
Social protection and inclusion policies

Community Action Programme to Combat Social Exclusion 2002-2006

TRANSNATIONAL EXCHANGE PROGRAMME

Phase II - 2003-2005

RESTRICTED CALL FOR PROPOSALS - VP/2003/023

UNDER BUDGET LINE B3-4105

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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 (2002-2006), € 75 million programme of Community action to encourage co-operation between Member States to combat social exclusion¹. The Commission is responsible for implementing the programme and is assisted in this by a committee made up of representatives of the Member States. Most candidate countries are already participating in aspects of the action programme.

The Community action programme is intended as a key tool to support and advance the implementation of the Open Method of Co-ordination through supporting co-operation which will enable the Community and the Member States to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of policies to combat social exclusion. In particular the programme is intended to contribute in three ways. These are: first, by improving the understanding of social exclusion and poverty with the help in particular of comparable indicators; secondly, by organising exchanges on policies which are implemented 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 the 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 Community action programme on social exclusion, the Commission launched a **Transnational Exchange Programme**. Its objective is to promote and support the organisation of exchanges and promote mutual learning between Member States, candidate countries and EFTA and EEA countries. It 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. These guidelines outline the key features that will be applied in *Phase II* of the Transnational Exchange Programme.

2. A Phased Approach

The Transnational Exchange Programme is being implemented in two phases: an initial preparatory phase of 9 months followed by the main phase of up to 2 years. Following an open Call for Proposals (VP/2002/010) last year 64 transnational exchange projects were selected to take part in *Phase I*. Actions under this phase are for 9 months and most started in December 2003. During *Phase I* the selected projects are expected to concentrate on: taking stock of existing knowledge and policy developments in relation to the issue projects have chosen to investigate; fostering the development of a transnational and multisectoral partnership which will provide the basis for longer term co-operation and exchange; and defining objectives and developing proposals for a clear programme of further work for up to two years.

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

Phase I is thus intended to **both** allow for the preparation of an application for *Phase II* **and** to result in learning which will contribute to the implementation and further development by Member States of their National Action Plans. Projects are expected to produce concrete outputs such as seminars/short studies/literature reviews, whose results will have to be adequately disseminated already in the context of the first phase.

Phase II, the focus of this restricted call for proposals, will build on work undertaken in *Phase I*. **Only partnerships selected to participate in *Phase I* are eligible to apply for *Phase II*** of the programme. Under this call the partnerships can apply for funding for a maximum period of 2 years. However, subsidy agreements will be signed for one year and will be subject to an annual and conditional renewal.

Applicants should note that applications for *Phase II* will be due to be submitted by **20th June 2003**, that is **before** the end of *Phase I*. This will allow time for partnerships funded under *Phase I* to complete their work and to disseminate their outcomes more widely whether or not they are selected for *Phase II*. It is also intended to reduce the gap between *Phase I* and *Phase II* for partnerships whose applications to take part in *Phase II* are successful.

3. Priority Areas for Co-operation

A key factor in selecting projects to participate in *Phase I* was that they proposed policy co-operation and exchange on an aspect of poverty and social exclusion that is of importance for the implementation and further development of the Open Method of Co-ordination in general and the National Action Plans against poverty and social exclusion in particular. Especial priority was given to proposals addressing issues emerging from the first round of National Action Plans and identified in the *Joint Report on Social Inclusion*. Projects selected are concerned with fostering co-operation and exchange both on particular policy areas and on the development of institutional approaches which can underpin social inclusion policies. Applications for *Phase II* are expected to continue and build on the topic that they selected for *Phase I*. Applications that introduce a new and unrelated topic will not be considered.

Promoters should continue to 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 Equality². 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

² 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. This 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

asylum seekers, it will be essential to demonstrate what added learning the proposed actions will bring during *Phase II*.

Applicants 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 proposing.³ 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). Proposals must clearly add value to work that has been done in other programmes and also during *Phase I*.

4. 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 conduct of policy analysis and research
- joint development of strategies;
- common dissemination of information;
- field visits and exchanges of personnel;
- exchanges between national observatories or other similar recognised bodies.

5. Who Can Apply?

Only partnerships who have received funding under *Phase I* of the Transnational Exchange Programme may make an application for a further grant under *Phase II*. While applications must continue to be partnerships involving at least 3 Member States it is allowed and expected that many partnerships will involve additional partners in *Phase II*. This may be in order to involve partners from more Member States or EFTA and EEA countries or, especially, from candidate countries⁴, or in order to broaden the different sectors and the range of expertise which are involved. The Commission is particularly keen on partnerships which involve 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.

As in *Phase I* partnerships under *Phase II* must be co-ordinated by a single organisation designated by the other partners. However, the co-ordinating organisation may change between *Phase I* and *Phase II* if the partners so decide and providing there is continuity in terms of the policy area selected and the actors

³ 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."

⁴ Partnerships may involve organisations from the following candidate countries who have opted to join in this strand of the Community action programme: Bulgaria, Cyprus, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania and Slovakia. They may also involve partners from other candidate countries but in such cases any costs incurred will not be eligible expenditure until the date of accession.

involved. 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.

Organisations co-operating in the action in *Phase II* who are not the co-ordinating organisation will be expected to fill in and sign Part II of the application form and, in collaboration with the co-ordinating organisation, to clearly establish their tasks and responsibility during the implementation of the project in Part III of the application form.

6. Available Budget

The total budget for *Phase II* will be up to € 4.5 million per year depending on the quality of the proposals received. It is envisaged that funding will be not less than € 150,000 per project per annum. It is likely that in the region of 20-30 actions will be funded during this phase. 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 November 2003.

7. 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 submitted by the co-ordinating organisation of a partnership who has received funding under Phase I of the Transnational Exchange Programme or by an organisation who has been involved in such a partnership in Phase I but who has now taken over the co-ordinating role in Phase II, having regard to the conditions specified in section 5 above;
- 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 Member States;
- be made by organisations whose legal representative has signed a declaration on his honour⁵ 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)⁶ (see the quotation in the box below)

⁵ This declaration is included at the end of part 1 of the application form which must be dated and signed.

⁶ OJ, L 248 of 16.09.2002, p. 26

Article 93(1):

Candidates or tenderers shall be excluded from participation in a procurement procedure 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 judgement 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 in which they are established or with those of the country of the contracting authority or those of the country where the contract is to be performed;
- (e) they have been the subject of a judgement 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) following another procurement procedure or grant award procedure financed by the Community budget, they have been declared to be in serious breach of contract for failure to comply with their contractual obligations

Article 94:

Contracts may not be awarded to candidates or tenderers who, during procurement procedure:

- (a) are subject to a conflict of interest;
- (b) are guilty of misrepresentation in supplying the information required by the contracting authority as a condition of participation in the contract procedure or fail to supply this information.

Regarding the proposal

- be submitted by post by **20/06/2003** (their submission date will be taken as the date of despatch, as evidenced by the postmark or the express courier receipt date and proposals submitted after this date will not be eligible),
- complete all sections of the application form and provide all requested supporting documentation;
- provide full details of the complete budget as proposed: a complete detailed budget form for year 1 AND a global budget form for year 1 and 2;
- only seek funding for activities in or involving Member States, EFTA/EEA countries and the candidate countries mentioned above (see previous footnote 4) although proposals may involve activities in accession countries outside these countries provided that costs arising from these are not taken into account in calculating Community support under this call for proposals prior to the date of their accession;
- 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 preparatory actions or other programmes – applicants must declare any other applications which they have made for funding under the Community budget for 2003 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 15th November and 31st December 2003 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 3 above on "Priority areas for co-operation") and which build on the topic selected in *Phase I*;
- involve transnational exchange of learning and co-operation combatting 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).

8. 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 his 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 honour to respect all co-funding commitments included in the budget proposal⁷, as well as any other supporting documents, are requested;
- 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.

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

9. Award Criteria

The proposals who 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, 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 Member States;

Organisational Criteria

- the quality and appropriateness of the transnational partnership which will be judged by the extent to which it:
 - involves a good mix of eligible countries (N.B. all other things being equal the participation of organisations from Candidate Countries in a partnership will be a positive factor);
 - involves a broad range of relevant actors (i.e. multi-sectoral aspect of the partnership);
 - involves those who are experiencing poverty and social exclusion⁸;
 - 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 2 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.

⁸ 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.

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 year 1 and to the overall budget for the 24 months covering the all *Phase II*.
- the experience and track record of the proposers in financial management of projects.

Achieving Balance

In finalising its list of proposals to be supported under *Phase II* 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, eligible 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.

10. Duration

Under this call the partnerships can apply for funding for a maximum period of 2 years, starting between 15th November and 31st December 2003; However, subsidy agreements will be signed for one year. By the 15th september 2004, beneficiaries of a first year grant agreement should supply an interim report of activities carried out until then, a request for renewal for another year, and a 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.

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 available 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. How to Apply

The request must be drawn up in one of the official languages of the EU and accompanied by a signed official letter explicitly requesting the subsidy under the present restricted call for proposals.

Proposals must be submitted on the prescribed application form (no other format would be accepted) and be sent together with all documents forming part of the application by **20/06/2003** (their submission date will be taken as the date of despatch, as evidenced by the postmark or the express courier receipt date, and proposals submitted after this date will not be eligible),

- a) by post to the **following postal address:**

**European Commission
Employment and Social Affairs DG
Archives Department, J37 – 0/26 (Courier Service)
Unit E2 : Call for proposals VP/2003/023 - application
B-1049 Brussels
Belgium**

- b) or by **personal delivery against a signed and dated receipt** (direct or through any authorised representative of the applicant, including private messenger service etc.) by **16.00 Hours** on **20/06/2003** at the latest to the following address:

**European Commission
Employment and Social Affairs DG
Unit E2 : Call for proposals VP/2003/023 - application
CAD Archives Department (Courier Service)
Rue Joseph II, 37 (office 0/20)
B-1000 Brussels**

The application form in four parts **must** also be returned to the Commission' service by **e-mail** stating "**VP/2003/023 - application**" by **20/06/2003** without fail, to this address:

empl-e2@cec.eu.int

13. How to obtain the application form and its instructions

As this is a restricted call for proposals open only to partnerships selected for the *Phase I*, the complete set of documents necessary to submit their application shall be sent directly to them by e-mail.

However, the Guidelines of the restricted call and the instructions to the applicant will also be issued on the web site of the Employment and Social Affairs DG and may be downloaded from the following internet address:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/soc-prot/soc-incl/...

- The application form (available in English, French, German⁹) is made up of four separate parts:
 1. Part I (Excel format): Details of the main applicant organisation, including a summary of the project (main objectives). This part includes the Bank identification form and the declaration on honour which must be dated and signed by the legal representative.
 2. Part II (Word format): Details of co-applicant/partner organisations (partners based in at least two Member states different from the main applicant's country).
 3. Part III (Word format): Proposal description and justification.

⁹ Please note that the application set shall be sent to the promoters of Phase I projects in the language for correspondence chosen in their previous application. Any other available language version may be sent upon request.

4. Part IV (Excel format): Proposal provisional budget, including four sheets:

- 1) the Annex II (summary page of the budget),
- 2) the detailed provisional budget,
- 3) the global conference budget and
- 4) the Conference detailed budget.

Applicants should note that an overall budget (sheet 1: Annex II) is required for the two years but that a more detailed budget (sheets 1-4) will be required for the first year. Please use a separate copy of Part IV for year 1 budget and years 1-2 budget.

- The instructions for the applicant on how to apply form a separate document which presents:
 1. A check-list of the documents to accompany your application
 2. Guidelines for presenting the proposal's provisional budget
 3. Main provisions of the grant agreement

The information in these guidelines together with the instructions for completing the application form should provide all the information you require to prepare your 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/2003/023 - 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 restricted 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 :
European Commission
Employment and Social affairs DG
Unit E/2: Social protection and social integration - Social protection and inclusion policies
Office: J27 1/22
B-1049 Brussels
- by fax : + 32 2 295 65 61
- by e-mail : empl-e2@cec.eu.int

14. What happens to the applications received?

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.

Applications will be evaluated at first against the eligibility and selection criteria set out in item 7 and 8 above by an internal evaluation committee. 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.

The proposals who satisfy the above eligibility and selection criteria will then be assessed against the award criteria as laid down in item 9 above.

Upon completion of its work, the evaluation committee will draw up a list of proposals recommended for funding under the Phase II of the Transnational Exchange programme, sorted by order of merit.

The whole selection procedure will be submitted for the opinion of the Committee of the Programme to Combat Social Exclusion at its meeting of 23rd september 2003 and then for approval of the financial unit of the Directorate General Employment and Social Affairs.

Applicants will be informed of the results of the selection process in writing, probably early October 2003. If the grant requested is not awarded, 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 then subject to a *budgetary commitment* with the purpose of ensuring that the expenditure in the provisional budget conforms to the provisions specified in the 'Instructions for the applicant' pursuant to *the Financial Regulation to the general budget of the European Communities* (Council Regulation (EC, Euratom), n° 1605/2002 of 25/06/2002) and its *detailed Rules for the implementation* (Commission regulation (EC, Euratom) N° 2342/2002 of 23/12/2002). To this end, selected applicants shall be contacted by the Commission during October 2003.

Upon completion of the budgetary commitment, the *legal commitment* will be proceeded with: 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, probably between 15th November **and 31st December 2003 at the latest**. 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 February 2004, the list of the awarded proposals with the following information:

- 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.