COMMISSION DECISION
OF 1999

Establishing ACCESS as a co-financing mechanism aimed at developing civil society and preparing for accession of the candidate countries of the Central and Eastern Europe, by strengthening the operational capacities of non-governmental and non profit organisations, active in sectors of acquis relevance and basic social needs.

THE COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES,

Having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Community,

Having regard to Council Regulation (EEC) No 3906/89 of 18 December 1989 on economic aid to certain countries of Central and Eastern Europe, as last amended by Regulation (EC) No 1266/99 of 21 June 1999 and in particular Article 9 thereof,

Whereas Regulation No 3906/89 lays down the rules and conditions for the granting of economic aid to certain countries of Central and Eastern Europe,

Whereas the measures provided for by this Decision are in accordance with the opinion of the Committee on Aid for Economic Restructuring in certain countries of Central and Eastern Europe,

HEREBY DECIDES AS FOLLOWS:

Article 1

The programme described in the Annex to the present decision is hereby adopted.

Article 2

The maximum amount of Community assistance shall be 20 MEUR to be financed through Budget line B7-500.

Done in Brussels,

For the Commission
FINANCING PROPOSAL
- ACCESS -

1. IDENTIFICATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>All Phare accession countries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>ACCESS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost</td>
<td>20 M€</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementing Authority</td>
<td>European Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expiry date</td>
<td>31/12/2001 contracting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>31/12/2002 disbursement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sector</td>
<td>DE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budget line</td>
<td>B7-500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task Manager</td>
<td>Jari Haapala, Enlargement DG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(programming)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Delegations in the Phare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>accession countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(implementation)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. SUMMARY

ACCESS is an “Institution building” programme aimed at strengthening the Civil Society and preparing for accession of the ten candidate countries in Central and Eastern Europe. It replaces the LIEN and Partnership programmes which have been in operation between 1993 and 1999.

ACCESS will support initiatives and strengthen the operational capacity of non-governmental and non-profit organisations through co-financing grants for projects of relevance to acquis implementation and to certain social need priorities. In addition, participation costs in EU-wide NGO/NPO networks may be supported.

The programme implementation, including the preparation of detailed programme guidelines, calls for proposals, project selection, contracting and payments, will be at the responsibility of the Commission’s Delegations in their respective host countries. They may be assisted in this task by an external organisation selected through a call for tenders in their country.
3. BACKGROUND

3.1. CIVIL SOCIETY DEVELOPMENT IN THE PRE-ACCESSION PROCESS

Agenda 2000, the Opinions and the regular Progress Reports on the candidate countries provided the basis for the Accession Partnerships. These in turn set the priorities and objectives for Phare assistance within the reinforced pre-accession strategy. The continuing need to support non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and non-profit organisations (NPOs) is mentioned in the Accession Partnerships as an important pre-accession priority.

To meet the political criteria of Copenhagen, candidate countries are expected not only to formally subscribe to the principles of the rule of law, human rights and the respect for and the protection of ethnic minorities but to put them into daily practice and establish the necessary institutional framework that supports their sustainability. The development of a democratic society is intrinsically linked to the development of an open civil society, the so-called third sector which complements the activities of the state and market economy. Functioning NGOs and NPOs have a key role in articulating the demands of citizens through active participation and consciousness raising. Typically many elements of the \textit{acquis communautaire} are based on the existence of thriving and active NGOs/NPOs (such as consumer movements, environmental initiatives, social and health associations, etc.). Without the activities of these NGOs/NPOs, the \textit{acquis} could not find popular acceptance or be implemented fully.

ACCESS will address the priorities identified in the Commission Opinions and the Accession Partnerships by strengthening the institutional capacity of NGOs/NPOs in sectors relevant to acquis implementation, particularly so in the fields of consumer protection and environmental protection. NGO/NPO activities in the social and health field will also be supported.

3.2. EXPERIENCE WITH HORIZONTAL PROGRAMMES ON CIVIL SOCIETY DEVELOPMENT

ACCESS is developed on the basis of experience gathered with previous multi-country programmes on civil society development that operate since 1993, notably the LIEN, Partnership and Democracy programmes. Programme evaluation reports recommend continuing support to the third sector.

These evaluation findings have been taken into account in the programming of ACCESS: the programme has been kept as flexible as possible, guided by a decentralised bottom-up approach, providing for a variety of co-operative ventures, a mixture of sectors and differing allocation levels.
4. **OVERALL PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES**

4.1. The wider objectives of ACCESS are as follows:

a) to promote the implementation of the *acquis communautaire* in policy areas in which governmental activities are absent or are complementary to those of the third sector, and to raise popular awareness and acceptance in these areas;

b) to encourage the inclusion and participation of individuals and groups who risk being economically, socially or politically marginalised in the transformation process.

4.2. The specific and immediate objectives are as follows:

a) to provide financial support on a co-financing basis for activities of NGOs/NPOs that address the relevant priorities identified in the Accession Partnerships;

b) to strengthen the institutional and operational capacity of NGOs/NPOs through the support of sustainable trans-national or interregional partnerships with a view to exchanging relevant knowledge, know-how and skills and through direct support for activities;

c) to allow the NGOs/NPOs of the candidate countries to get involved in the activities of the European-wide NGO/NPO platforms and networks.

5. **PROGRAMME DESCRIPTION**

5.1. **ALLOCATIONS BY COUNTRY**

ACCESS is set up on a single country basis so as to achieve its specific acquis and social policy objectives. Attention will be paid to regional and country-specific priorities. On the basis of criteria including the population, status of NGO/NPO development and social sector needs, the following country allocations are foreseen:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Grants (€)</th>
<th>Management (€)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>1,900,000</td>
<td>100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>1,585,000</td>
<td>85,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonia</td>
<td>850,000</td>
<td>50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>1,585,000</td>
<td>85,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latvia</td>
<td>1,060,000</td>
<td>60,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lithuania</td>
<td>1,165,000</td>
<td>65,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>5,575,000</td>
<td>275,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>4,105,000</td>
<td>205,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Multi-country programmes are admissible as well. For the sake of administrative facility they will be managed under the responsibility and the budget of the Delegation in charge of the country of the applicant lead NGO/NPO.

### 5.2. Eligible Partners

The partner organisations must be:

- non-governmental and non-profit organisations that are officially registered in their country of establishment;
- established and run in a candidate country of the Central and Eastern Europe or in an EU country;
- non ‘exclusive’ organisations, i.e. organisations which do not condition their support or actions to ideological, doctrinal or religious adherence.

Local and regional authorities may be associated as partners or co-financers to projects. They may not apply as lead applicants in projects.

### 5.3. Eligible Sectors

The ACCESS programme will support the NGO/NPO activities in two main sectors:

a) Activities related to the adoption and implementation of the *acquis communautaire* in the following fields:

- environmental protection
- socio-economic development (such as promotion of workers’ rights and Social Dialogue; promotion of consumer interests and strengthening of associations representing co-operatives, mutuals and other organisations with a socio-economic role)

b) Activities in the social sector, which aim at contributing to the social reintegration and/or to promote sustainable health and social support for marginalised groups of the population (such as members of minority groups, handicapped, elderly, homeless, street or abused children, illiterate, unemployed, victims of addictions, of AIDS, victims of cruelty, etc.).
Within the parameters of these two broad sectors, the Delegations will be asked to identify the specific priorities for support in their host countries in relation to the priorities expressed in the Accession Partnerships. This will be reflected in the detailed programme guidelines per each country.

5.4. SUPPORTED TYPES OF ACTIVITIES

Through its Delegations, the Commission will award co-financing grants to support two types of projects: transnational ‘macroprojects” and local ‘microprojects”. In addition, networking of NGOs/NPOs is supported. It will be up to each Delegation to determine how they subdivide their total grant allocation among macroprojects, microprojects and the networking facility.

Macroprojects

The basic conditions to apply under the macroproject facility are as follows:

- Projects must be coherent with the programme objectives. Projects should be self contained operations designed in response to the situation of the country(ies) concerned and to the specific needs of the beneficiary country or beneficiary target group. They should indicate a coherent set of activities with clearly defined operational objectives.

- The financial EC contribution for projects will be up to 200,000 €. Depending on country needs and on staffing resources, each Delegation is free to define a suitable minimum size for admissible projects. The Phare contribution will cover up to 80% of total project costs where one or more Community partners are involved, and up to 90% of total project costs where all partners are established in central and eastern Europe. Project promoters will therefore have to secure a matching contribution covering, respectively, min. 20% or min. 10% of total project costs; matching contributions may come from the partners themselves or from other public or private sources, but not from any other Community programme. However, a higher share of co-financing will be positively assessed in the evaluation process.

- In the interest of sustainability co-funding by national and local authorities is particularly encouraged.

- All projects must be submitted by at least two partner organisations from different countries. A partnership is a relation of substance involving an active exchange of skills, experience, knowledge and/or finance. All partners must be involved from the start in the elaboration of this project and actively participate in its implementation.

- One of the partners will act as lead organisation, which means that it must demonstrate enough experience and capability to assume the financial and legal responsibility of the project. The
lead applicant organisation must be based in one of the Phare accession countries. Partners may equally be based in a Phare accession country or in the European Union.

- Each project should provide for at least the two following components:

  (a) activity related component: concrete actions implemented for the benefit of the sector or target group

  (b) capacity related component: training activities targeted at the beneficiary NGO’s staff (e.g., management, bookkeeping, human resources, marketing, fund-raising etc.) in order to ensure viability and sustainability of the organisation. Applicants should clearly demonstrate the positive organisational impact of the projects and their sustainability.

- The administrative costs of the organisations involved may be covered under the EC contribution (up to a maximum of 7% of the total cost of the project concerned) insofar as they are directly related to the implementation of the activities.

- One-Off conferences, academic research and feasibility studies not followed by an implementation phase will not be accepted for funding. EC financial participation in amortisation, capital endowment, or deficit financing will be equally refused. Emergency relief projects, those having already started and those of a partisan nature will not be supported.

- The matching contribution for projects may be partly secured by contributions in kind, up to a ceiling of 10% of total project costs.

- The project duration may not exceed 24 months.

Microprojects

The above provisions related to the macroprojects apply also to microprojects, with the following exceptions:

- Projects may be submitted by a single CEEC-based eligible organisation without necessarily involving a partner.

- The EC contribution will not exceed 90% of each project’s costs (the remainder being provided in cash or in kind by the applicant NGO/NPO).

- The maximum size of the EC grant is 50,000 €. The Delegations will define the minimum grant size for their countries.

- The projects should be implemented within a year.
Networking facility

This facility will provide support allowing NGOs, NPOs and other civil society bodies to participate in activities organised at EU level. This would mainly cover travel and subsistence costs for attendance at ad hoc events organised by bodies such as the EU-wide NGO/NPO platforms operating in the eligible sectors of the ACCESS programme.

Co-financing by the NGOs/NPOs is not required for this type of support.

5.5. PROJECT EVALUATION AND SELECTION PROCESS

Delegations will launch calls for proposals and list the priorities of eligible activities they have selected for their country. An open and widely publicised call for proposals allows maximum publicity and thereby a stimulation of project generation and encourages competition and the improvement of project quality.

The responsibility for the final selection of projects lies with the Commission. Projects will be selected by the Delegations following (a) an independent technical evaluation and (b) an assessment of evaluation results by an Evaluation Group composed of at least three Brussels based Delegation officials and/or ALATs (EU citizens) (voting), advised by a government representative of the beneficiary country, local experts and, as appropriate, representatives of the NGO and donor community (non-voting). The Evaluation Group proposes a list of projects to be financed by the Commission for approval of the Head of Delegation, after review by the Financial Officer.

5.6. PROGRAMME REVIEW

The programme may be subject to a review at the request of the European Commission during the course of its implementation in order to assess its appropriateness with regard to the pre-accession process and to its social and civic objectives.

6. OTHER DONORS’ ACTIVITIES AND COORDINATION

Close attention will be paid to ensuring that the project activities do not duplicate those funded by other Community sources, such as the Phare national programmes, other horizontal programmes (in particular the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights) and the Community programmes open to the participation of the candidate countries. Similarly, coordination will be sought with activities financed by the candidate countries themselves as well as by other international donors.
7. COST AND FINANCING PLAN

The Phare contribution to ACCESS will be 20 M€ for 1999.

ACCESS will expire on 31 December 2002 (disbursements).

Allocation for 1999 is planned as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>€ million</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grants</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the programme will be managed by the Delegations, associated management costs to hire experts (ALAT) will be borne as necessary by the separate STAP/ATA programme. Should the Delegations need to have recourse to a local Technical Assistance Office (BAT), the costs will be borne by the Management allocation (1 M€), which will be subdivided among the Delegations in proportion to the size of their grant allocations (as indicated in the table in Chapter 5.1.).

See expected commitment and disbursement schedule in annex 2 and 3

8. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

The Commission will have overall responsibility for the programme. Actual management responsibility and operational decisions for each country support scheme lies with the Commission’s Delegations. For financial management of the programme, the Delegations will use the Sincom2 system.

Delegations are entitled to hire experts (ALAT) financed from the separate STAP/ATA programme for the administration of project selection, contracting, administration, grant and for the monitoring of the selected projects. If necessary, they may have recourse to a Technical Assistance Office (BAT) which will:

- provide technical assistance to the programme at all levels as required and appropriate;
- negotiate contracts with the selected organisations and make payments under the supervision of the Delegation;
- organise the technical evaluation and supervision of contracted projects;
- act as the Evaluation Group secretariat;
• manage programme relevant data, information and publication.

The Enlargement DG, in cooperation with the SCR, will be responsible for preparing the general programme guidelines to the Delegations. For the administration of the grant award the principles set out in the Commission’s “Vademecum on Grant Management” apply. If necessary, the SCR will provide guidance on the financial management of the grants to the Delegations. On the basis of the general guidelines, the Delegations will prepare detailed programme guidelines and application forms for their countries.

General publicity (e.g. when announcing the call for proposals, the award of projects and their successful conclusion), the distribution of application and the replies to general enquiries from the country’s public will also be the responsibility of the Delegations.

Project proposals will be submitted in the local or in any Community language to the Delegations following a call for proposals. After initial screening against quality and eligibility criteria only eligible projects presented in accordance with the programme guidelines will be retained for evaluation. Proposals placed on a reserve list or rejected will be duly notified without delay with reasons stated in a transparent fashion.

The Delegation will carry out an independent evaluation of all retained proposals in accordance with the criteria and priorities outlined in the programme guidelines. The Evaluation Group will, wherever possible, ensure a reasonable spread of projects across country’s regions, ethnic groups, sectors and organisations. Projects will not be accepted where they are seen to directly duplicate ongoing or planned Phare assistance, or where they conflict with other Phare priorities or activities. Overall, the highest quality projects operating in priority areas of assistance and which fit in the best with the programme objectives will be selected for support. Selected projects must indicate visibly their Phare support in all publicity.

The Delegations will report at regular intervals about the major developments in the implementation of the programme to the Enlargement DG and the SCR. The Delegations should also keep the other Delegations in the candidate countries informed about the programme activities.

The SCR will be responsible for providing general information about the programme on its Internet site, including contact information in the Delegations, information on the programme guidelines, timetables for calls for proposals, project selection, etc. The Delegations will provide the necessary input to the SCR so that is able to maintain and update the information regularly.

The network of national contact points for the old Partnership programme can be used as an information relay for the programme in the EU Member States. The SCR will provide them with appropriate information, in co-operation with the Delegations.
9. AUDIT, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

9.1 The accounts and operation of any contractor will be checked at regular intervals by the Delegation’s staff, by an outside auditor contracted by the Delegation or by the Commission and financed under the present programme, without prejudice to the responsibilities of the Commission and the Community’s Court of Auditors as referred to in the General Conditions.

9.2 The Delegation shall:
- monitor the implementation of the programme on the basis of regular reports prepared by the individual project managers and by the programme management and support organisation;
- undertake monitoring visits in order to gain better insight into the performance of contractors and the impact of the activities;
- contract independent experts to follow the progress of the programme and its components and carry-out an ex-post evaluation after completion of the programme or parts thereof.

10. RISKS

The predominant risks relate to: co-ordination between the various bodies involved in the programme; effective programme management; and the timely availability of co-financing resources.

The problems that could interfere with effective implementation of the programme are as follows:

- Interference of government or public authorities in NGO projects.
- The weak institutional and professional capacity of the NGO/NPO to develop and implement projects satisfactorily.
- The absence of a real partnership between NGOs/NPOs involved in a project.
- NGOs/NPOs with fraudulent objectives; misappropriation of grants.
## ANNEX 1 - LOGFRAME MATRIX - PROGRAMME IDENTIFICATION
### 1999 ACCESS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WIDER OBJECTIVES</th>
<th>INDICATORS OF ACHIEVEMENT</th>
<th>SOURCES OF INFORMATION</th>
<th>ASSUMPTIONS AND RISKS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• to implement the acquis in areas of NGO/NPO activity</td>
<td>• Increased number of active NGOs/NPOs</td>
<td>• National reports and statistics</td>
<td>• Political and economic stability;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• to strengthen civil society by developing the institutional capacity of NGO/NPO through partnership and cooperation with sister organisations</td>
<td>• Increase in partnership and co-operation between NGOs/NPOs</td>
<td>• Studies by international institutions (EBRD, World Bank, EU)</td>
<td>• Continuous government commitment to the aims of the programme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• to encourage the participation of individuals at risk of being socially, economically or politically marginalised due to culture, social misfortunes or ethnic origin</td>
<td>• Increased participation in society of targeted groups</td>
<td>• Commission reports</td>
<td>• Existence of appropriate NGO/NPO Legislation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Improved acquis implementation record</td>
<td>• CEC press and media</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IMMEDIATE OBJECTIVES</th>
<th>INDICATORS OF ACHIEVEMENT</th>
<th>SOURCES OF INFORMATION</th>
<th>ASSUMPTIONS AND RISKS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• to stimulate initiatives from NGO/NPO in favour of acquis objectives</td>
<td>• Increase in number and quality of applications for funding</td>
<td>• Contracting organisations reports and statistics</td>
<td>• Co-operation and co-ordination between the relevant authorities/organisations involved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• to stimulate initiatives from NGO/NPO in sectors where governments are not active</td>
<td>• Number of projects/activities meeting the objectives</td>
<td>• National reports and statistics</td>
<td>• Continuous commitment of each parties involved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• to provide financial support on a cofinancing basis to those NGO/NPO which tackle the candidate country’s civil society and acquis priorities identified in the Opinions</td>
<td>• Increased number of NGOs/NPOs which received a training</td>
<td>• Commission reports</td>
<td>• Availability of domestic financial resources for co-financing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• to strengthen the institutional and operational capacity of those organisations, through among other things transfer of know-how and training, seminars, provision of technical assistance</td>
<td>•</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Availability of qualified technical assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• to set up and organise networking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Existence of real partnership</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESULTS</th>
<th>INDICATORS OF ACHIEVEMENT</th>
<th>SOURCES OF INFORMATION</th>
<th>ASSUMPTIONS AND RISKS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Contracting organisations reports and statistics</td>
<td>• Co-operation and co-ordination between the relevant authorities/organisations involved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• National reports and statistics</td>
<td>• Continuous commitment of each parties involved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Commission reports</td>
<td>• Availability of domestic financial resources for co-financing</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Availability of qualified technical assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Existence of real partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Relevant capacity of selected NGOs/NPOs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• Projects selected and implemented
• Implementation of horizontal activities.

• Structures set-up/operating according to (realistic) timetables and plans
• Projects selected according to transparent, fair and clearly specified procedures
• Project implementation initiated according to timetable

• Progress monitoring reports
• Project managers' reports
• Contractors’ reports

• Efficient programme management (implementation, monitoring and assessment)
• Co-ordination between the implementing authorities, contracting organisations and other institutions involved
• Timeliness of co-financing funds

INPUTS: 20 M€ EU budget, comprising: project funding, programme management structures, monitoring and studies, etc

CONTRACTING SCHEDULE - ANNEX 2

Project Title: ACCESS
Implementation Agency: European Commission
Year: 1999
Expiry: 31/12/2002
Total EU Contribution: 20 M€
Date of drafting: 23/9/99

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-projects</th>
<th>Expected Contractual Commitments (quarterly)</th>
<th>Budget allocation</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Fund</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 depending on timetable of possible calls for tender for Technical Assistance Offices
Project Title: ACCESS  
Implementation Agency: European Commission  
Year: 1999  
Expiry: 31/12/2002  
Total EU Contribution: 20 M€  
Date of drafting: 23/09/99

### Expected Disbursement (quarterly)\(^2\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Fund</th>
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<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
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<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
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\(^2\) depending on timetable of call for tender for the Technical Assistance Office