Commission Decision
of .... 2001

Establishing a Phare multi-beneficiary networking facility programme in 2001

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 Europe¹, as last amended by Regulation (EC) No 2666/2000², and in particular Article 9 thereof,

Whereas:

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

(2) 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

HAS DECIDED 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 €16.3 million to be financed through Budget line B7-030 in 2001.

Done in Brussels,

For the Commission

¹ OJ n° L375 of 23/12/1989, p. 00110012
² OJ n° L306 of 07/12/2000, p. 0001–0006 and L 038, 08/02/2001, p. 0051-0051
FINANCING PROPOSAL 2001

NETWORKING PROGRAMME

1. IDENTIFICATION

Country: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovak Republic, and Slovenia
Programme: Networking Facility
Year: 2001
Phare contribution: €16.3 million
Implementing Authority: European Commission
Expiry Date: October 31, 2003 (contracting) October 31, 2004 (payments)
Sector: Group: Budget line: B7-030
Task Manager: Hendrik Van Maele / Henk Visser

2. SUMMARY

The Networking Programme will provide acquis-related assistance in priority areas where it is in the nature of the problems that country-specific action cannot cover the needs and meet the objectives. This is the case in particular where the targeted result itself implies communication and networking between the candidate countries or between these and the Member States.

In addition, the programme also reflects the idea that enlargement is a social project involving all citizens and proposes support to co-ordinators and beneficiaries of pre-accession assistance to publicise its impact. The output generated will be complementary to the Communication Strategy for Enlargement and can be fed into its dissemination channels. It will also enhance the effectiveness of assistance by providing project participants with the opportunity to learn from the successes (and failures) of their peers in other candidate countries.

The Networking Programme is composed of four components:

- **eEurope+ (€6.3 million)**
  This component will support monitoring and benchmarking the impact of eEurope+, the candidate countries’ initiative to join the Union’s efforts to turn Europe into the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world. It will thus allow the Phare candidate countries to become actively involved in the eEurope initiative launched by EU Heads of State and Government as part of the Lisbon Strategy.
- **Internal Market (€4.6 million)**
  This component addresses beneficiary administrations and bodies in the candidate countries relying on efficient communication and co-operation with partner organisations in the Member States and in other candidate countries. It will deal in particular with the problems of interconnectivity of taxation and customs IT systems on the one hand, and the quality infrastructure (metrology, accreditation, testing-certification-inspection, and market surveillance) on the other. EFTA has expressed its interest to participate in and co-finance the Quality Infrastructure project with an amount that is 5% of the Commission funding.

- **Civil Society (€3.0 million)**
  This component addresses the reduction of drug demand and the participation of disabled persons in the social and economic life, i.e. two areas in which the implementation of the *acquis* is to a large extent in the hands of civil society actors. In this context, networking with Civil Society organisations in the existing Member States is an important factor for the strengthening of Civil Society organisations in the candidate countries;

- **Dialogue and information dissemination (€1.7 million)**
  This component will enable beneficiaries and aid co-ordinators to provide the stakeholders with feedback about pre-accession assistance e.g. through the extension and maintenance of a Networking website (currently: www.multi-bene.org) and the production of Phare ‘Highlights’ brochures. It will also support the networking between the participants of projects under the Programme’s Civil Society component as well as between the beneficiaries of projects in favour of Roma communities set up under the national Phare programmes.

### 3. STRATEGY

The measures under this programme have been selected on the basis of the Lisbon Strategy, the Commission’s “Enlargement Strategy Paper 2000”, the Regular Reports and the Accession Partnerships. The lessons about the efficiency and effectiveness of technical assistance learnt from the implementation of previous Phare programmes have also been taken into account in defining the scope of the Networking Programme.

In particular:

**eEurope+**

The use of modern information and communication technologies and the advent of the Internet have put very powerful tools within the reach of citizens. These technologies have a considerable impact on the whole of the economy, and policies governing their use and implementation are decisive elements in the modernisation of economies.

To enable Europe to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, the eEurope Action Plan was launched by the EU Heads of State and Government as part of the Lisbon Strategy. At the June 2001 Göteborg Summit, the European Council invited the candidate countries to become involved in the sustainable development strategy and take on board the targets and objectives of the Lisbon strategy. The Heads of Government of the candidate countries recognised the strategic goal set by the Union and launched eEurope+ in order to accelerate the
reform and modernisation of their economies and accelerate the adoption of the acquis in the areas of telecommunications, electronic commerce, financial and transport services, and many other economic activities.

Currently available data are not sufficient to cover all the areas where eEurope+ is expected to have an impact. The quality of data that do exist, is sometimes difficult to assess, and often they are not comparable amongst the various countries. Therefore, there is a need to undertake specific surveys and studies to monitor and benchmark the impact of the eEurope+ Action Plan.

Internal Market

In the area of customs and taxation, candidate countries are expected to implement full computerisation of the customs and taxation administrations well before accession. This includes the setting up of both the national customs and taxation IT applications and of the Common Communication Network and Common System Interface (CCN/CSI), which would allow the candidate countries to connect their own systems to those of the EC and the Member States. This part of the process, known as “interconnectivity” must be in place at least one year before accession to proceed to the necessary tests. This issue will be contained in the 2001 Accession Partnership and discussed in the relevant chapters of the 2001 Regular Reports.

Another precondition for the smooth functioning of the internal market is the efficiency of the quality infrastructure. In this context, it is particularly important to broaden the base for mutual confidence between the existing and future Member States and to improve co-operation between the candidate countries themselves. The Accession Partnerships and National Plans for the Adoption of the Acquis of all candidates include references to the issues at stake, and the Enlargement Strategy Paper notes that the candidate countries have not yet made sufficient efforts in the area of market surveillance.

Civil Society

A specific reference to drugs is made in Article 152 of the EC Treaty, which stipulates that a high level of human protection shall be ensured in the definition and implementation of all Community policies and activities, and adds that the Community shall complement the Member States’ action in reducing drug related harm, including through information and prevention. One of the main objectives of the EU Drugs Strategy 2000-2004 adopted by the Helsinki European Council is to give greater priority to drug prevention and demand reduction, particularly new recruitment to drug use, as well as to the reduction of the adverse consequences of drug use. The strategy also refers to the paramount role the citizens are playing in drug related action. The “Community Action Programme on the Prevention of Drug Dependence 1996-2000 recognised that co-operation and participation of non-governmental organisations are key for the development of drug related programmes.

As to disabled people, these are directly affected by a growing part of the EU acquis (Article 13 of the EC Treaty, European Employment Strategy, eEurope etc.). Disability organisations and national councils of disabled people in the Member
States and the European Disability Forum (EDF) as their major umbrella organisation play an important role in the related policy dialogue in the Union. A functioning civil society in the candidate countries should be built on similar mechanisms. The creation and strengthening of such structures will also enable the candidate countries to take full advantage of the European Year of Disabled People 2003.

**Dialogue and information**

The impact of pre-accession assistance will grow if aid beneficiaries and aid co-ordinators learn from their own mistakes of the past. The effectiveness of assistance will be enhanced even further if they are given the opportunity to learn also from the successes (and failures) of their peers in other candidate countries. To this end, a Networking Team set up under this Programme component provides project beneficiaries and aid co-ordinators with easy access to targeted and tailor-made information in printed and electronic form.

Past assistance activities in the civil society show that interaction and exchange of experiences between beneficiaries and other project participants is a crucial element for the success and sustainability of the activities. The Networking Team therefore supports networking between the beneficiaries of activities under the Civil Society Component.

In the Enlargement Strategy Paper, the Commission has noted that the Roma continue to face widespread discrimination and difficulties in social and economic life. The Commission has called for the implementation of assistance activities in a more sustained manner, in close co-operation with Roma representatives. This Programme component adds the networking aspect to the efforts made in the context of the individual national Phare programmes.

### 4. OBJECTIVES, DESCRIPTION & CONDITIONALITY

**eEurope+**

eEurope+ Action Plan launched by the Prime Ministers of all the 13 Candidate Countries at the EU Summit held in Göteborg in June 2001 is similar to the action plan for the Member States, but with additional objectives, and modified actions and timetables that reflect the economic and social situation in the candidate countries. The objective of the assistance is to monitor the impact of the eEurope+ Action Plan.

It comprises the following activities:

- data collection in line with the methodology defined for the purposes of eEurope;
- surveys and studies as the basis for the reporting of progress in the 14 target priority areas identified by the candidate Countries in the eEurope+ Action Plan;
- exchange of information and best practice amongst the eEurope+ country co-ordinators appointed as members of the Joint High Level Committee (JHLC), representatives of the statistical offices of the candidate countries, and members of the eEurope Indicators Working Groups.
**Internal Market - Customs and Taxation**

The objective of the assistance is to enable the exchange and processing of data between the Candidate Country Customs and Indirect Taxation Administrations and the EC and Member States (VIES, TARIC, QUOTA, NCTS, etc.) within the framework of the Common Communication Network and Common System Interface (CCN/CSI) infrastructure developed by the Commission.

It comprises the following activities:

- study to develop draft generic specifications for the VIES and TARIC systems in the Candidate Country Customs and Indirect Taxation Administrations.
- support and advice on the implementation of the IT systems to enable interoperability with the EC systems.
- coherent preparation of the deployment and of the integration of the CCN/CSI infrastructure.
- acceptance test activities associated with the CCN/CSI.
- CCN/CSI maintenance and central help desk services.

The approval of this project is conditional on the adoption of all relevant legislation and regulations by the beneficiary countries and their commitment to co-operate with external project experts and providing them with all relevant information. In addition, the candidate countries have to provide and operate the “national domain” of the CCN/CSI infrastructure, to adopt the security policy of CCN/CSI and to implement the related measures, to sign contracts with two pre-identified, official contractors for the delivery, installation and operation of the gateways and telecommunication equipment, and to pay CCN/CSI maintenance fees following the implementation of the project.

**Internal Market - Quality infrastructure**

The objective of the assistance is to raise the efficiency of quality infrastructure bodies in the candidate countries to the same high levels as those prevailing in the equivalent structures in the Union.

It comprises the following activities:

- providing the candidate countries with information required for benchmarking and peer group comparisons through annual assessments of progress in metrology, accreditation, testing-certification-inspection, and market surveillance;
- organisation and supervision of joint proficiency tests in candidate countries and, where appropriate, Member States as an instrument of benchmarking testing laboratories;
- an analysis of the joint use of some candidate country laboratories and expertise;
- joint traineeship of experts from different candidate countries in Member State laboratories and market surveillance organisations.

The approval of this project is conditional on the commitment of the beneficiary countries to participate in the benchmarking assessments.
Civil Society – Drug Demand Reduction

The objective of the assistance is to promote networking and co-operation on drug demand reduction between NGOs of the candidate countries and in the EU Member States.

It comprises the following activities:

- participation of candidate country NGOs in training schemes, work experience placements and other collaborative actions organised by experienced EU NGOs;
- management training provided by experts from EU NGOs;
- preparation of partnership agreements between EU and candidate country NGOs that provide for follow-up advice and support beyond the end of the project.

In addition, the Networking Team set up under the Programme’s Dialogue and Information component will support

- workshops and seminars on issues of common interest to candidate country and EU NGOs;
- the production of newsletters;
- the collection of information and its dissemination between the participating NGOs and on the Networking website.

Civil Society – Disabled People

The objective of the assistance is to establish and strengthen national councils of disabled people in the candidate countries, to prepare the disability organisations in these countries for full membership in European Disability Forum and to ensure that disabled people in the candidate countries benefit from the European Year of Disabled People 2003.

It comprises the following activities:

- production of country reports and a synthesis report that will allow benchmarking between the disability organisations in the candidate countries. Items covered will include the structure of the disability movement and its involvement in civil dialogue, the national policy in the field of employment for disabled people and the participation of disabled peoples in policies to combat exclusion, and the preparation of a European Year action plan;
- information seminars in the candidate countries on issues such as the European Employment Strategy, Article 13 of the EC Treaty and the new employment directive, the EU social inclusion strategy and the eEurope 2002 action plan;
- study visits to EU institutions and other bodies;
- study visits to organisations of disabled people in EU in order to strengthen the networking and create partnership links (twinning);
- production and translation of documents with information directly relevant to disabled people.

In addition, the Networking Team set up under the Programme’s Dialogue and Information component will support the production of a newsletter and the dissemination of information on the Networking website.
Dialogue and Information

The objective of the assistance is threefold:

- to enable beneficiaries and aid coordinators to provide civil society with feedback about specific projects and assistance activities financed under the Phare programme;
- to support networking and the dissemination of information between the participants in the projects for Drug Demand Reduction and Disabled People described above;
- to support the representatives of the governments of Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia and of the Roma communities in these countries by collecting information, facilitating the exchange of experiences and preparing reports on the implementation of national Phare projects in favour of Roma communities.

It comprises the following activities:

- extension and maintenance of interactive website containing up-to-date information on pre-accession assistance (programmes, projects, address books, calendar, news, archives, etc.);
- production of printed material in journalistic language (“National Highlights” with journalistic and eyewitness contributions, background information and photography as a principal element of reporting);
- production of “footage and file” material for the printed and electronic media;
- production of newsletters and reports for Drug Demand Reduction and Disabled People projects (see above) and for projects in favour of Roma communities under the national Phare programmes;
- organisation of meetings for beneficiaries, project participants and aid coordinators in the context of the Drug Demand Reduction and Disabled People projects (see above) and of projects in favour of Roma communities under the national Phare programmes.
5. **BUDGET**

The following table specifies the budget for the Networking Programme components (amounts in million):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Institution Building</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>eEurope+</td>
<td>Support to eEurope+ Surveys</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conferences</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>6.3</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal Market</td>
<td>Customs and Taxation Telecommunications services</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CCN/TC help desk</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interconnectivity support</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>3.0</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quality Infrastructure Benchmarking assessments</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Proficiency tests</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Training and meetings</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>1.6</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil Society</td>
<td>Drug Demand Reduction Grant scheme</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Technical assistance</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>2.0</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disabled People</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialogue and Information</td>
<td>Website</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Newsletter and reports</td>
<td>0.8</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Network meetings</td>
<td>0.6</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>1.7</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation and audit</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contingencies</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>16.3</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. **IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS**


In relation to the individual programme components the following special arrangements shall apply:

**eEurope+**

The eEurope+ initiative requires a monitoring and benchmarking activity to follow-up and report on eEurope+ priority area progress based on the set of eEurope+ indicators) selected by the Candidate Countries themselves.

The monitoring and benchmarking activity should be undertaken at three levels:

- monitoring the progress of the eEurope initiative itself, in terms of progress to achieve its concrete targets
- monitoring with high level benchmarks, progress of Candidate Countries towards the knowledge economy (ie. internet penetration in homes and businesses)
• benchmarking progress in each action line of eEurope+ (ie. health on-line, e-government, etc)

These tasks would require close collaboration amongst the Candidate Countries as well as the involvement of a number of EC services. The eEurope+ data management function would require collection of benchmarking data, relations with information sources, data collection and validation. This may require contracting with external information providers and experts, according to EC External Aid tendering procedures.

**Internal Market - Customs and Taxation**

The roles and responsibilities of the current CCN network operator (provider of telecommunications services) place the contractor in a unique position. End-to-end responsibility, equal quality of service guaranteed in all sites, overall visibility on the security and traffic evolution, would not be possible if the CCN network were shared between several operators.

The maintenance and help desk services (CCN/TC) acts as a reference centre for all software, documentation and information about CCN/CSI. Sharing knowledge, maintenance tasks and responsibilities between several service providers would lead to different hardware/software implementations and would generate interoperability issues. Consequently, the Commission would lose control over the quality of service and evolution of CCN/CSI.

The existing contractors for telecommunications services (Global One Communications S.A.of Belgium) and the maintenance and help desk (ATOS Integration of France) have been selected under open tender procedures. In view of the operational constraints, these companies will be awarded contracts under private treaty in the context of the Networking Programme.

The contract for the interconnectivity support function shall be awarded after restricted invitation to tender.

**Internal Market - Quality infrastructure**

A single contract covering all project aspects shall be awarded after restricted invitation to tender.

**Civil Society – Drug Demand Reduction**

Grant contracts shall be awarded following the publication of a call for proposals. Technical assistance contracts shall be awarded after restricted invitation to tender.

**Civil Society – Disabled People**

In view of the project’s objective and technical characteristics, a grant contract shall be awarded to the European Disability Forum without a call for proposals.

The European Disability Forum is an independent European interest organisation of disabled people, composed of 17 national councils of disabled peoples’ organisations from each EU Member State and Norway and Iceland. EDF also has 70 European
non-governmental member organisations representing various kinds of disabilities. It represents all categories of disable people as well as parents’ organisations for disabled people unable to represent themselves.

**Dialogue and Information**
Technical assistance contracts shall be awarded after restricted invitation to tender.

7. **MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT**
The accounts and operations of all activities carried out under the programme may be checked at regular intervals by an outside auditor contracted by the Commission without prejudice to the responsibilities of the Commission and the Court of Auditors. Also, the Commission may carry out any necessary audits and on-the-spot checks in accordance with the Practical Guide to EC external aid contract procedures.

To facilitate this, the Commission will keep accounting, financial and operational documents concerning all activities financed under this Programme, and will make available to the competent bodies of the European Commission and the European Court of Auditors on request all relevant financial information.

The Commission will monitor the implementation of the Programme on the basis of reports from the selected contractors and independent assessments.

The Commission services shall ensure that an ex-post evaluation is carried out after completion of the Programme.

8. **ANTI-FRAUD MEASURES, AUDIT AND EVALUATION**
The Financing Decision for the Networking Programme as well as the resulting contracts are subject to supervision and financial control by the Commission (including the European Anti-fraud Office, OLAF), and the Court of Auditors. This includes measures such as ex-ante verification of tendering and contracting carried out by the Commission. In order to ensure efficient protection of the financial interests of the Community, the Commission can conduct check-ups and inspections on site, in accordance with the procedures foreseen in Council Regulation (Euratom, EC) n°. 2185/96, concerning on-the-spot checks and inspections carried out by the Commission in order to protect the European Communities’ financial interests against fraud and other irregularities.

The procedures foreseen in Art. 15 para 3 of the Commission Regulation N°2222/2000 of 7 June 2000 on the communication in case of irregularities and the putting in place of a system to administrate the information in this field shall apply.

The Commission services shall ensure that an ex-post evaluation is carried out after completion of the Programme.

9. **VISIBILITY/PUBLICITY**
In implementing this Programme, the Commission shall provide for the maximum visibility of EU actions in the Phare candidate countries. In this line, the Commission shall consistently apply the note “Information and publicity for the Phare Programmes of the European Communities” (see Annex 4).