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COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

Brussels, 30/06/2009
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COMMISSION DECISION

of 30/06/2009

**concerning the pilot project "Pan-European coordination of Roma integration methods"
to be financed under Article 13 03 21 of the general budget of the European
Communities**

COMMISSION DECISION

Of 30/06/2009

on the Pilot Project "Pan-European coordination of Roma integration methods" to be financed under Article 13 03 21 of the general budget of the European Communities

THE COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES,

Having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Community,

Having regard to Council Regulation (EC) No 1605/2002 of 25 June 2002 on the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the European Communities and in particular Article 49(6)(a) thereof¹,

Whereas:

- (1) The European Parliament has declared the final adoption of the General Budget of the European Union for the financial year 2009 which provides under Article 13 03 21 for a pilot project on the pan-European coordination of Roma integration methods.
- (2) The objectives pursued by the pilot project "*Pan-European coordination of Roma integration methods*" are to strengthen Roma population inclusion in Europe by: improving the quality and access of Roma children to early childhood education; facilitating self-employment through microfinance for marginalised communities; combating discrimination against Roma people through effective public awareness and information rising; improving evaluation methods and data collection methodologies to support evidence-based policy making for Roma inclusion projects/programmes.
- (3) Under Article 75 of Regulation (EC, Euratom) N° 1605/2002, the commitment of the expenditure should be preceded by a financing decision adopted by the institution or the authorities to which the powers have been delegated by the institution. Article 90 of Commission Regulation (EC, Euratom) N° 2342/2002 of 23 December 2002 laying down detailed rules for the implementation of Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) N° 1605/2002 on the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the European Communities² specifies that the financing decision shall set out the essential elements of an action involving expenditure of the budget.
- (4) In accordance with Article 110 of Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002 grants are subject to an annual work programme. Article 166 of Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 2342/2002 provides that the programme specifies the basic act, the objectives, the schedule of calls for proposals with the indicative amount and the expected results.
- (5) This Decision constitutes both a financing decision and a work programme.

¹ OJ L 248, 16.09.2002 p. 1.

² OJ L 357, 31.12.2002, p. 1.

- (6) According to Article 53d of Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002, where the Commission implements the budget by joint management, certain implementation tasks shall be delegated to international organisations wherever the Commission and the international organisation are bound by a long-term framework agreement laying down the administrative and financial arrangements for their cooperation.
- (7) For the purposes of the implementation of action 4 "Tools and methods for evaluation and data collection as a basis for evidence-based policy making", the World Bank and the United Nations (through the United Nations Development Programme) are "international organisations" within the meaning of Article 53d of Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002 and Article 43 of Regulation (EC, Euratom) N° 2342/2002. The Commission and the World Bank have signed a framework agreement on 20 March 2009. The Commission and the United Nations have signed a framework agreement on 29 April 2003.
- (8) The Decision should allow for any possible interest due for late payment on the basis of Article 83 of the Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002 and Article 106(5) of Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 2342/2002.
- (9) In accordance with Article 90(4) and Article 166(2) of Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 2342/2002 any substantial change in the Decision should follow the same procedure as the initial decision. It is therefore necessary to define the point beyond which any adaptation to this Decision is deemed to be substantial in character and is required to be adopted under the same procedure as this Decision,

HAS DECIDED AS FOLLOWS:

Article 1

The pilot project "***Pan-European coordination of Roma integration methods***", covering actions described in the work programme set out in Annex I is approved

Article 2

1. In the budget year 2009, a maximum amount of EUR 5 000 000 on budget line 13 03 21- Pilot Project "Pan-European coordination of Roma integration methods" may be committed.
2. This decision shall allow any possible interest due for late payment.

Article 3

Amendments amounting to less than 20% of the total cost of the pilot project referred to in Article 1 shall not be regarded as substantial, within the meaning of Article 90(4) and Article 166(2) of Commission Regulation (EC, Euratom) N° 2342/2002, provided that they do not significantly affect the nature and the objectives of the actions and that the maximum amount specified in Article 2 is not exceeded.

The authorising officer by delegation may adopt the amendments referred to in the first paragraph subject to the principle of sound financial management.

Done at Brussels,

For the Commission
Danuta Hübner
Member of the Commission

ANNEX

COMMISSION REGULATION (EC) No .../..

Pilot project: "Pan-European coordination of Roma integration methods" (Budget article 13 03 21)

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Budget line: 13 03 21

1.2. Basic Act:

Pilot project within the meaning of Article 49(6)(a) of Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002 of 25 June 2002 on the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the European Communities (OJ L 248, 16.9.2002, p. 1).

1.3. Policy context

The situation of Europe's largest minority group, the Roma, has received increased attention by European and national policy-makers in recent years. Despite a number of policy initiatives launched, there is a widespread assumption that the living and working conditions of the Roma have not improved considerably during the last two decades. It is particularly evident recently, as the Roma are disproportionately negatively affected by the world economic crisis. The Roma remain socially, economically and geographically marginalised in a number of European countries.

1.4. In addition to the general policy agenda of non-discrimination and social inclusion, through the Cohesion policy, the European Commission is contributing to financing a range of projects to support Roma inclusion, particularly in the countries with high percentage of Roma population. The European Commission envisages building on these projects, best practices, and policy initiatives which have proved to be effective in promoting Roma inclusion. The pilot project will complement these activities and projects in priority areas for the inclusion of Roma population (pre-school education, microfinance, public awareness raising and education campaign, evaluation and data collection methods and tools). The pilot project will be complemented with official bilateral visits in individual Member States to carry out a policy dialogue on Roma inclusion with a view to mainstreaming the policy initiatives in the operational programmes under Cohesion policy. The main policy results will present recommendations for evidence-based policy making in the area of Roma inclusion. This pilot project is without prejudice to other instruments and policies on integration of nationals of third countries. General objectives of the pilot project

The overall objective of the pilot project is to strengthen Roma inclusion in Europe.

The pilot project will contribute to identifying policies and effective good practices, which aims at:

- Improving the quality of access of Roma children to early childhood education

- Facilitating self-employment through access to finance for marginalised communities
- Combating discrimination against Roma people through public awareness and information raising
- Improving evaluation methods of Roma inclusion projects/programmes

The pilot project will support innovative and integrated approaches to tackle the multidimensional problems faced by Roma communities. It will promote Roma inclusion through educational, social, and economic activities, cross border cooperation and exchange of best practices while building on existing instruments.

The pilot project will be implemented in Member States and candidate countries with high proportion of disadvantaged Roma communities. It will build on projects and policy initiatives which have proved to be effective in strengthening Roma inclusion and it will be implemented in close co-operation with other EU institutions, Roma stakeholders, Member States and other international organisations. The Roma population will be involved throughout all stages of the project cycle, from project design to implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

Particular attention will be given to the dissemination of project results, knowledge transfer and sharing of best practice models. The project will explore the scope for expanding effective interventions on a broader scale through different financing mechanisms, including innovative financing instruments and incentive schemes.

2. DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES /TYPE OF FINANCIAL INTERVENTION

The pilot project will be implemented through the following five actions:

- (1) Early childhood care and education
- (2) Self-employment and microcredit
- (3) Effective public awareness and information raising
- (4) Tools and methods for evaluation and data collection as a basis for evidence based policy making
- (5) Technical assistance

Actions 1, 2 and 3 will be part of a call for proposals with three separate independent lots, one per action. The total maximum amount of the call for proposals is €4 500 000.

Action 4 will be implemented through a contribution agreement - joint management with the World Bank and/or United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the European Commission. The total maximum amount of the joint management agreement is €400 000.

Action 5 will be implemented through procurement procedure. The total maximum amount of the procurement procedures is €100 000.

2.1. Grants through calls for proposals.

2.1.1. ACTION 1: Early childhood care and education (ECCE)

The long-term social and economic benefits of interventions that aim to promote early childhood development are well-established. This period in the life cycle provides a window of opportunity to break the vicious intergenerational cycle of low human development of disadvantaged Roma children. Focus on Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) has recently attracted attention in various European countries with high proportion of disadvantaged Roma communities. The limited data available suggests low provision of early childhood care and education services to Roma in a number of countries, resulting in a lifelong disadvantage. Despite the existence of several projects and activities funded by various donor institutions, there is a limited overall understanding of the barriers of access of disadvantaged Roma children to quality early childhood education and of necessary policy steps needed to overcome them.

Objectives, expected results

The proposals will focus on aspects of integration of early childhood development, inclusion of outreach and intensive work with families. Activities envisaged will be designed and conducted in a way that would facilitate the mainstreaming, scaling up and international transfer of effective policies and practices.

Among others, the proposals' major components would be the identification of policies and dissemination of good practices in the following fields:

- Assessment of the main barriers to access to quality, early childhood care and education for disadvantaged Roma children.
- Increase of enrolment of Roma in high quality early childhood education, supporting successful transition to primary school and including provision of early childhood care services.
- Mainstreaming of project results by capitalizing on knowledge and intelligence generated in the other two components and influence policies development.

Geographical coverage

The projects will be implemented in at least 3 member states with high proportion of disadvantaged Roma communities.

Indicative budget /financing and timetable

Indicative budget foreseen depending on the quality of proposals submitted: €2 000 000.

The EU contribution (up to €2 000 000) will represent no more than 95% of eligible project costs. Contributions in kind are not accepted.

Indicative timetable

The call for proposals will be launched during the second semester of 2009.

2.1.2. ACTION 2: Self-employment and microcredit

The situation of the Roma in Europe can only worsen with increasing exclusion and rapid demographic growth. In a situation of high unemployment, the Roma have little chance to find a job. Self-employment is often an easier way to enter the labour market for communities which have been frequently victims of discrimination in employment. This requires access to credit, business development services and a more favourable institutional environment.

Objectives, expected results

The proposals will focus, among others, on the following objectives:

- Identifying policy and practices in microcredit addressed to vulnerable population including Roma,
- expand existing microcredit projects addressed to a vulnerable population including Roma, in order to increase substantially the number of Roma who would become self-employed,
- draw lessons from this Pilot phase in order to develop this type of projects on a larger scale, with the support of the structural funds.

Among others, the proposals major components would provide:

- Financial and technical support to the Micro Finance Institutions (MFI) in order to progress towards sustainability,
- Financial and entrepreneurship education, business development services and marketing support to clients,
- Recommendations to the governments for bridging the gap between welfare and self-employment.

Geographical coverage

Applicants should establish partnership with Micro Finance Institutions carrying out similar projects with at least two other countries and with the institutions providing technical assistance. Although credit resources are not funded under the Pilot project, the applicants should also establish a partnership with a financial partner who would provide them with credit resources.

The projects proposed will be implemented in at least two member states and candidate countries with high proportion of disadvantaged Roma communities.

Indicative budget /financing and timetable

Indicative budget: €1 500 000. The EU contribution (up to €1 500 000) will represent no more than 90% of eligible project costs.

Indicative timetable

The call for proposals will be launched during the second semester of 2009.

2.1.3. ACTION 3: Effective awareness and information raising

Prejudice against and discrimination of minority racial or ethnic groups in general, and the Roma in particular, has been documented in many European countries, be they old or new Member States or even candidate countries.

The action includes public awareness and information raising. Interaction between reality, its perception, interpretation through cognitive mechanisms including stereotypes and prejudices and the actual behaviour is exceedingly complex and works both at the conscious and unconscious levels. It is also not always clear what is the mechanism through which such actions can contribute to learning and behaviour modification.

Objectives, expected results

The proposals will pursue, among others, the following objective:

- Identify policy and practices in the field of awareness and information raising,
- Pilot effective public awareness and information raising actions focusing on diminishing anti-Roma racism and social distance. In this context, Roma culture should be valorised and intercultural dialogue should be fostered and promoted.

Among others, the proposals major components would provide:

- Project methodology, including identification of target groups and nature of messages to be conveyed.
- Effective awareness and information raising, including recommendations.
- Dissemination of knowledge generated in the project, both with regard to nature of stereotypes and prejudices faced by the Roma and potential awareness raising and education remedies.

Geographical coverage

The public awareness and information raising would be implemented in at least 1 old and 1 new Member State, both with significant numbers of Roma population.

Indicative budget /financing and timetable

Indicative budget: €1 000 000. The EU contribution (up to €1 000 000) will represent no more than 90% of eligible project costs.

Indicative timetable

The call for proposals will be launched during the second semester of 2009.

Evaluation criteria for the call for proposals, applicable to each of the three independent themes:

Exclusion

- Not be in one of the situations referred to in Articles 93(1), 94 and 96(2) (a) of the Financial Regulation.

Eligibility of action

To be eligible, actions must:

- Be linked to the objectives of at least one of the 3 actions mentioned above;
- Comply with the maximum percentage of European Community co-financing;
- Be fully carried out in the member states of the European Union and candidate countries;

Selection

The applicant must have the financial and operational capacity to complete the activity for which funding is requested. Thus the applicant must have access to solid and adequate funding to maintain activities for the period of the project and to help finance it as necessary and must have the operational resources (technical, management) needed to successfully complete the activity.

Award

- The extent to which the proposal meets the objectives and priorities of action.
- The methodology
- The sustainability strategy
- The added value i.e. the lasting impact and/or multiplier effect of the proposal etc.
- The cost-effectiveness of the proposal.
- The arrangements to publicise the action and dissemination methods envisaged.
- The overall quality, clarity and completeness of the proposal and budget explanation

2.2. Contribution agreement– Joint management

2.2.1. ACTION 4: Tools and methods for evaluation and data collection as basis for evidence-based policy making

The component foresees the improvement of evaluation methods (tools and methods for data collection) for Roma inclusion policies, with specific focus on impact evaluation.

The action, among other, would incorporate the following components: conducting an impact evaluation of pilot projects on early childhood development and micro-credit interventions; and advising on data collection on Roma and improved monitoring and impact evaluation of Roma inclusion interventions for Structural and Social Funds.

Objectives and expected results

- (6) Impact evaluation

The impact evaluations of the Roma pilot projects can draw on ample international experience. The impact evaluation of the early childhood development action would make use of specific indicators for early childhood development and school readiness (including cognitive, memory and motor skills) which has been utilized in similar impact evaluations around the world. The impact evaluation for the microcredit action could look at the impact of microcredit advisory services on project success and sustainability.

The scope of activities on impact evaluation for the Roma pilot projects would comprise a full package of evaluation design, implementation and analysis.

(7) Advice on data collection, monitoring and impact evaluation

The design of policies that promote the social inclusion of Roma in Europe remains hamstrung by the widespread absence of regularly collected data on Roma – be it education, employment, health status or other.

The action will be implemented through a contribution agreement to be signed with the World Bank and/or the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the European Commission (one or two separate agreements may be signed). The World Bank and the UNDP have a long lasting, well recognised experience on evaluation and data collection tools and methods, in particular for Roma inclusion.

Indicative budget

Indicative budget: €400 000. The EU contribution will represent a maximum of 92%.

2.3. Public procurement

2.3.1. ACTION 5: Technical assistance

This action is aimed at funding experts, meetings and dissemination activities of individual components and actions of the pilot project results.

Objectives and expected results

Experts groups, meetings, conferences, seminars, etc. will be funded along the duration of the pilot project. Publication of reports, including final recommendations, projects results, impact assessment will be also included in this action.

Components of technical assistance action will capitalize on knowledge and intelligence generated in the other actions of the pilot project, influence development of evidence-based policies on Roma inclusion.

Indicative budget

Indicative budget: €100 000

Indicative calendar for procurement procedures

All procurement procedures will be launched during the second semester of 2009.

3. TOTAL BUDGET: €5 000 000

4. INDICATIVE CALENDAR FOR PROCEDURES

The Community contribution to the actions described in the work programme will be covered by commitment appropriations for 2009 for which an amount of €5 000 000 is available.

All specific, direct contracts and grant agreements are expected to have been signed by end 2009.

All the actions will start on the 1st quarter of 2010.

Within the indicative budget, changes not exceeding 20% of the maximum contribution of the Community are not considered to be substantial, provided that they do not significantly affect the nature and objective of the work programme.