

III

(Notices)

COMMISSION

ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME AND CALL FOR PROPOSALS 2002

ARGO

(2002/C 195/05)

On 13 June 2002 the Council of the EU adopted a Decision, hereinafter referred as the ARGO Decision, establishing an action programme for administrative cooperation in the fields of external borders, visas, asylum and immigration ⁽¹⁾. This action programme covers the period 2002 to 2006. The 2002 budget is EUR 3 000 000 ⁽²⁾.

1. AIMS OF THE ACTION PROGRAMME

The main aim of the ARGO action programme is to promote administrative cooperation between national services responsible for implementing Community rules in the areas of Article 62 and 63 of the TCE. The general objectives as laid down in Article 3 of the ARGO Decision are the following:

- to promote cooperation between national agencies in implementing Community rules with special attention to the pooling of resources and coordinated and homogeneous practices,
- to promote uniform application of Community law in order to harmonise decisions taken by the national agencies of Member States, thereby avoiding malfunctioning likely to prejudice the progressive establishment of an area of freedom, security and justice,
- to improve the overall efficiency of national agencies in the carrying out of their tasks when implementing Community rules,
- to ensure that proper account is taken of the Community dimension in the organisation of national agencies contributing to the implementation of Community rules,
- to encourage transparency of actions taken by national agencies by strengthening their relations with the relevant national and international governmental and non-governmental organisations.

This action programme should also lead to a reinforcement of the mutual understanding between the national services and

the development of a shared working methodology that would facilitate the necessary bilateral contacts between them.

2. ACTIONS COVERED BY THIS PROGRAMME

Based on the responsible organisation and the way they are implemented, the actions foreseen by the ARGO programme are divided into three categories:

I. ACTIONS PROPOSED BY THE MEMBER STATES IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE ANNUAL CALL FOR PROPOSALS

The ARGO action programme supports different activities in the areas of external borders, visas, asylum and immigration laid down in Articles 4 to 7 of the ARGO Decision. The types of actions (see Article 8 ARGO Decision) are the following:

- training actions including, in particular, the elaboration of harmonised curricula and common core-training programmes to be organised by national agencies and complementary actions aimed at making national agencies receptive to the best working methods and techniques developed in other Member States,
- staff exchange ensuring that seconded staff participate effectively in the work of the host national agencies,
- actions promoting, on the one hand, the use of computerised handling of files and procedures, including use of the most up-to-date techniques for electronic data exchange and, on the other hand, the collection, analysis, distribution and exploitation of information making the fullest use of information technology, in particular, the establishment of information points and websites,
- evaluation of the impact of common rules and procedures based on Articles 62 and 63 of the Treaty,
- actions intended to promote the development of best practices with a view to improving working methods and equipment, simplifying procedures and shortening deadlines,

⁽¹⁾ Council Decision No 2002/463/EC (OJ L 161, 19.6.2002).

⁽²⁾ The financial reference amount for the total duration of the action programme is EUR 25 million.

- operational activities which might include setting up of common operative centres and of teams composed of staff drawn from two or more Member States,
- studies, research, conferences and seminars involving staff of the Member States and the Commission and, where appropriate, staff of the relevant national and international governmental and non-governmental organisations,
- mechanisms for consulting and associating the relevant national and international governmental and non-governmental organisations,
- Member States' activities in third countries, in particular fact-finding missions in countries of origin and transit,
- the fight against document fraud.

The actions proposed shall be in line with at least one of the specific objectives and thematic priorities established for each year (see point 3).

II. SPECIFIC ACTIONS PROPOSED BY THE MEMBER STATES IN CONFORMITY WITH ARTICLE 9 OF THE ARGO DECISION

The objective of this type of action is to deal with urgent situations derived for instance from unexpected political events or crisis situations exposing national administrations to exceptional circumstances when implementing a common policy in the areas of visas, control of external borders, asylum and international protection and management of migration flows. The co-financing request will be triggered by a spontaneous application of one national agency when such a situation arises.

These specific actions are therefore not covered by the annual call for proposals. However, the eligibility criteria as well as the selection criteria laid down in the ARGO Decision, except for the selection criterion regarding conformity with the annual work programme, shall apply. In accordance with Article 12 of the same decision the ARGO Committee shall be consulted previously.

EUR 300 000 corresponding to the annual budget for 2002 have been earmarked for this type of action, the amount not committed could be used for the benefit of the other actions.

III. ACTIONS PROPOSED BY THE COMMISSION

The Commission proposes in the annual work programme certain actions that it intends to undertake in order to promote and facilitate administrative cooperation pursuing the general objectives aforementioned and supporting activities in the areas of this action programme (see Articles 4, 5, 6 or 7 of the ARGO Decision). The

Commission actions for 2002 have been described under point 3.

Interested parties should not submit any tender, proposal or expression of interest of any kind in relation to these actions at this stage. If appropriate, the relevant call for tenders will be published in accordance with the procedures applicable thereto.

3. SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES, PRIORITIES AND COMMISSION ACTIONS FOR 2002

This chapter constitutes the core of the annual work programme indicating for each area (external borders, visas, asylum and immigration) the specific objectives and thematic priorities for the year 2002. The conformity with these objectives and priorities is one of the main selection criteria of the actions proposed in the framework of the annual call for applications. There is also a description of the actions that the Commission proposes for 2002.

When elaborating these objectives and priorities the Commission has, on the one hand, focused on existing practice in the areas of external borders and visas and, on the other hand, anticipated needs for preparing national agencies in the areas of asylum and immigration.

EXTERNAL BORDERS

Activities in the area of external borders covering in particular the Presidency Conclusions of the Seville Council, the Plan for the management of the external borders of the Member States of the EU and the Communication towards an integrated management of external borders including the development of a border management strategy, border management cooperation including common curriculum and training and surveillance and controls of maritime borders.

Specific objectives and priorities:

- follow-up of the plan for the management of the external borders of the Member States of the EU including the initiation of pilot projects, communication on border management, the feasibility study on a European border guard and of the workshop police and border security,
- joint operations at external borders,
- the development of a risk assessment system,
- development of a harmonised curriculum and training for border guards, e.g. elaboration of a common curriculum and training,
- harmonisation of instructions given to the authorities responsible for checks, e.g. elaboration of a handbook for border guards (practical instructions and legislation),

- activities addressed to the competent civil servants and judges (e.g. staff exchange, visits, conferences etc.),
- improvement of sea border controls and surveillance.

In this context the Commission will undertake the following action:

Feasibility study on maritime border controls

According to point 63 of the action plan on illegal immigration, adopted by the Council on 28 February 2002, the Commission is invited by the Council, to launch that study.

The main purpose of the study is to provide a complete analysis on the legislative and operational measures to be undertaken in order to improve maritime border controls, particularly with a view to combating illegal immigration by sea.

The study therefore shall cover two types of measures: on one hand, a description and analysis of the existing provisions in the area, as well as an evaluation of their effectiveness, and, on the other hand, measures intended to improve the existing provisions or to set up new structures on the basis of an analysis of the data collected.

VISAS

Activities in the area of visa policy covering in particular the improvement of document security, the strengthening and development of common consular cooperation, the feasibility of a visa information system (VIS) and the visa consultation network (VCN).

Specific objectives and priorities:

- improvement of document security following the technological developments, in particular biometrics,
- strengthening of consular cooperation, e.g. mutual assistance in the training of staff for information exchange, elaborating best practices and management for dealing with a huge amount of visa applications,
- creation of common administrative structures, e.g. feasibility study on the creation of joint consular offices, a project on using joint infrastructures,
- improvement of consultation procedures,
- activities addressed to the competent civil servants and judges (e.g. staff exchange, visits, conferences etc.),
- examining the feasibility of a visa information system.

In this context the Commission will undertake the following action:

Feasibility study on technical and financial aspects of a visa information system

According to points 36-38 of the action plan on illegal immigration, adopted by the Council on 28 February 2002, and the guidelines for the introduction of a 'common system for an exchange of visa data', adopted by the Council on 13/14 June 2002, the Commission is invited by the Council, to launch that study.

The purpose of the study is to examine the technical feasibility of a system for the exchange of visa data between Member States (visa information system (VIS)), consisting of a central visa information system (C-VIS) and national visa information systems (N-VIS) with a translation into necessary financial and human resources.

The feasibility study should aim to assess the volume of information to be stored and the point in time or stage of the process at which it is possible to incorporate the required data into the visa information system. Following information should be stored and processed in the system: visas issued, visas formally refused, visas requested, visas annulled, revoked, extended. Furthermore the study should examine the possibility of entering and research for digitised photographs and other biometric data as well as the possibility of including supporting documents.

ASYLUM

Activities in the area of asylum covering temporary protection, reception conditions for asylum applicants, determination of the Member State responsible for examining an asylum application, asylum procedures and qualification for refugee and/or subsidiary protection status.

Specific objectives and priorities:

- assistance to actions designed to promote the adoption of the Dublin II Regulation by the end of 2002 and its implementation,
- management of cases of mass influx of displaced persons,
- running of accommodation centres, organisation of material reception conditions and reception granted to persons with special needs,
- jurisprudence concerning the interpretation of the inclusion, cessation and exclusion clauses of the 1951 Refugee Convention and regarding the granting, cessation or exclusion from subsidiary protection status,

- decision-making in first instance of asylum procedures including among others legal assistance and detention,
- follow-up of the Commission working document on the relationship between safeguarding internal security and complying with international protection obligations and instruments (e.g. identification of individuals covered by the exclusions clauses who do not deserve international protection),
- activities addressed to the competent civil servants and judges (e.g. staff exchange, visits, conferences etc.).

IMMIGRATION

Activities covering both, legal and illegal immigration.

Specific objectives and priorities:

- programmes for reception and integration of newly arrived immigrants,
- activities addressed to the competent civil servants and judges (e.g. staff exchange, visits, conferences etc.),
- to combat the employment of illegal residents and to confiscate financial gains arising from such employment,
- follow-up of the Green Paper on a Community return policy on illegal residents in particular rapid joint work on return to Afghanistan,
- development of common return practices, in particular guidelines for escorts and the use of restraints while ensuring the person's safety and dignity,
- analysis of the mobility of third country nationals between the Member States in the framework of the proposal for a Council Regulation extending the provisions of Regulation (EEC) No 1408/71 to nationals of third countries who are not already covered by these provisions solely on the ground of their nationality,
- creation of a network of Member States' immigration liaison officers.

4. GENERAL FINANCING RULES AND 2002 BUDGET

4.1. Eligible applicants

Proposals must be submitted by national agencies meaning the administrative and judicial authorities of the Member States or other bodies delegated by those authorities to implement Community legislation founded on Articles 62 and 63 of the Treaty and on Article 66 of the Treaty insofar as it concerns cooperation between national agencies in the areas covered by the said Articles 62 and 63.

4.2. Eligible proposals

Proposals submitted by a national agency of one Member State must:

- (a) involve:
 - at least two other Member States, or
 - another Member State and a candidate country, where the aim is to prepare for its accession, or
 - another Member State and a third country, where this would be beneficial for the purpose of the action proposed;
- (b) pursue one of the general objectives referred to in Article 3 of the ARGO Decision;
- (c) implement one of the activities in the respective policy area referred to in Articles 4, 5, 6 or 7 of the ARGO Decision; and
- (d) be in line at least with one of the of the specific objectives and thematic priorities established for each year (see point 3).

4.3. Budgetary rules

A maximum of 60 % of expenditure directly chargeable to the implementation of an action and incurred during the period laid down in the agreement can be co-financed. In exceptional circumstances the level of co-financing could be raised to a maximum of 80 %. As far as the sequence of operations is concerned, it is important to note:

- owing to the payment procedures applied by the Commission, the pre-financing of actions will fall on the applicants,
- any action co-financed under the 2002 budget must have started before the end of 2002,
- actions have to be completed, at the latest, a year after the decision to grant the subsidy. Any possible request for extension must be submitted officially in writing.

Applications, which do not comprise a detailed forward budget, which makes it possible to appreciate the adequacy of expenditure in relation to the different contents of the action, will not be examined. A budget form is accessible on the Internet (see below).

The budget foreseen for the ARGO action programme for 2002 is EUR 3 million leaving technical and administrative assistance support expenditure apart.

An indicative distribution could be the following:

Areas	Amount
Actions proposed by the Member States in the framework of the annual call for proposals	2 000 000
Earmarked for Commission actions	700 000
Earmarked for specific actions (see point 3)	300 000
Total	3 000 000

5. HOW TO SUBMIT APPLICATIONS IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE ANNUAL CALL FOR PROPOSALS

5.1. Application form and supporting documents

Applications **must** be submitted with the **application form** and **budget form**, which are available on the Europa website:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/justice_home/jai/prog_en.htm

Applicants must carefully respect the application and budget format and follow the page order. Applicants must apply in one of the eleven official EU languages. When possible, English or French should be used.

Please complete the application form carefully and as clearly as possible in order to facilitate its evaluation. Be precise and provide sufficient details to ensure clarity, particularly concerning how the aims of the action will be achieved and the benefit that will flow from the action. Handwritten applications will not be accepted.

5.2. Where and how to send the applications

Applications must be received in a sealed envelope by registered mail, by express messenger or by hand-delivery (a signed and dated certificate of receipt will be given to the deliverer) to the address indicated below:

Postal address:

European Commission
DG Justice and Home Affairs
Unit A2 — Immigration and Asylum
Mr J-L De Brouwer (LX-46, 6/54)
B-1049 Brussels.

Address for hand-delivery:

European Commission
DG Justice and Home Affairs
Unit A2 — Immigration and Asylum
Attention: Mr J-L de Brouwer
Rue du Luxembourg/Luxemburgstraat 46
B-1050 Brussels.

Applications sent by any other means (e.g. by fax or by e-mail) or delivered at any other address will be rejected.

Applications (application form and annexes) must be submitted in one signed original and two copies.

The envelope must bear the reference number of the notice of publication for the call for proposals, the full name of the applicant, the address of the organisation, and the words 'Not to be opened by the internal mail service'.

Applicants must verify that the application is complete.

5.3. Deadline

The deadline for receipt of applications is:

- either by registered mail, posted not later than **Friday 4 October 2002** (postmark).
- either by delivery (in person or by an authorised representative or private courier service) not later than **Friday 4 October 2002 at 16.00 central European time**, in which case a receipt must be obtained as proof of submission, signed and dated by the official who took delivery.

Any application received after the deadline will be automatically rejected.

5.4. Further information

Questions may be sent by e-mail or by fax to the address listed below, indicating clearly the reference of the call for proposals.

E-mail address: JAI-ARGO@cec.eu.int

Fax (32-2) 299 80 53.

Regarding the outcome of the call for proposals, no further information will be given to applicants until the selection committee has reached a final and formal decision.

The 'Vade-mecum on grant management' is available at:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/secretariat_general/sgc/info_subv/vm_gm.htm

All applicants are assumed to have taken note of the rules in this vade-mecum.

5.5. Acknowledgement of receipt

Following the opening of proposals, the European Commission will send an acknowledgement of receipt to all applicants, indicating whether or not the application was received prior to the deadline and informing them of the reference number of their application.

6. SELECTION AND EVALUATION OF PROPOSALS

Proposals meeting the eligibility requirements set out in point 4 will be evaluated and selected against the following criteria:

- (a) conformity with the annual work programme, the general objectives set out in Article 3 and the activities in the respective policy area set out in Articles 4, 5, 6 or 7 of the ARGO Decision;
- (b) the European dimension of the proposed action and/or scope for participation by the candidate countries;
- (c) compatibility with the work undertaken or planned within the framework of the Community's political priorities in the areas covered by Articles 62 and 63 of the Treaty;
- (d) complementarity to other past, present or future administrative cooperation actions;
- (e) the ability of national agencies to implement the proposed action;
- (f) the inherent quality of the proposed action in terms of its conception, organisation, presentation and expected results;
- (g) amount of the support requested under the ARGO programme and proportionality with the expected results;

- (h) impact of the expected results on the general objectives set out in Article 3 and on the activities in the respective policy area set out in Articles 4, 5, 6 or 7 of the ARGO Decision.

Proposals will be ranked on the basis of points. The maximum allocation of points for each of the abovementioned criterion is described below:

Criteria	Maximum number of points
A	15
B	10
C	5
D	10
E	10
F	30
G	5
H	15
Total	100