

Call for proposals — Timely high-frequency indicators for global and regional trade

(2008/C 71/03)

1. CONTEXT

The European Commission is launching a call for proposals (ref. ECFIN/A/2008/002) for the construction and monthly production of timely indicators of global and regional trade developments. The global indicators are constructed bottom-up from regional indicators. The regional level includes all EU Member States, as well as the Candidate Countries.

The indicators of global trade will be essential elements in the timely assessment of the global cycle. The project will also improve the assessment and forecast of the trade and GDP forecasts of non-EU countries and regions in the Commission's full-fledged and interim forecasting exercises.

The regional indicators will be used by the Commission to calculate timely monthly measures of export performance for the EU, the euro area and each individual Member State. Such a high-frequency measure of export performance does not exist yet. Such measures will be very useful tools in the EMU economic surveillance process, for present as well as future euro-area Member States.

This co-operation shall take the form of a framework partnership agreement between the Commission and one institute over a period of four years.

2. PURPOSE AND SPECIFICATIONS OF THE ACTION

2.1. Objectives

The purpose is to construct a fairly homogenous and exhaustive set of regional trade variables, that together cover the whole world. The set needs to be available at short notice, in order to signal to European policy makers possible changes in the strength of the external environment or possible competitiveness problems of specific Member States. The set of variables are not statistics in a strict sense, as many missing data will need to be estimated.

2.2 Technical specifications

2.2.1. *Timing and reporting of results*

The results must be sent (by e-mail) to the Commission every month, at the latest on the 25th of the month. The results will be an updated set of monthly time series, which should start, preferably, in January 1991. The end date of the time series to be delivered on the 25th of the month t has to be the month $t - 2$. For example: results up to September must arrive at the Commission at the latest on 25 November.

2.2.2. *Content of the results*

The results should contain, for the countries and regions detailed below, the following variables:

- export and imports values (current euro),
- export and imports prices (euro prices),
- export and imports volumes (constant euro),
- an index of industrial production,
- (optional) GDP in volume.

When missing, trade values and prices will have to be estimated. Trade volumes have to be calculated on the basis of trade values and prices. On the use of price variables: when available, preference should be given to true price indices instead of unit value indices, which suffer from composition bias. All series have to be seasonally adjusted and, as much as possible, working-day adjusted.

The countries and regions to be included are:

- each EU Member State and each Candidate Country (a flexible definition must be used: upon a new admission as Candidate Country, that country has to be added to the sample),
- flexible aggregates for euro area and EU,
- the world,
- each third country or region as listed in Table 56 of the Statistical Annex of the Commission's forecast document

(http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/publications/european_economy/2007/economic_forecast_autumn2007.pdf).

To this list should be added:

- 'Other Asia' = Asia excluding Japan, Middle East countries, China, Hong Kong and Korea,
- 'Other Latin America' = Latin America excluding Brazil and Mexico.

3. ADMINISTRATIVE PROVISIONS AND DURATION

3.1. Administrative provisions

The institute is to be selected for a maximum period of 4 years. The Commission wishes to establish a long-term co-operation with the successful applicant. For this purpose a four-year framework partnership agreement will be concluded between the parties. Under this framework partnership agreement, which will specify the common objectives and the nature of the actions planned, four specific annual grant agreements may be concluded between the parties. The first of these specific grant agreements will concern the period from June 2008 to May 2009 (which implies delivery of the first set of results on 25 June 2008, and delivery of the last set of results on 25 May 2009).

3.2. Duration

Each grant agreement will cover the production of 12 monthly sets of indicators. The duration of the action may not exceed 12 months.

4. FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK

4.1. Sources of Community funding

The operations selected will be financed from budget heading 01 02 02 — Coordination and surveillance of economic and monetary union.

4.2. Estimated total Community budget for this call

The indicative total annual budget available for the period June 2008 to May 2009 for this action is EUR 50 000.

4.3. Percentage of Community co-financing

The Commission's share in the joint financing may not exceed 50 % of the eligible costs incurred by the beneficiary on the production of the data set. The Commission determines the percentage of the co-financing.

4.4. Funding of the action by the beneficiary and eligible costs incurred

The beneficiary will be requested to submit a detailed budget for year 1 containing an estimate of the costs and funding of the action, expressed in euro. A detailed budget, respectively for year 2, year 3 and year 4 under the framework partnership agreement will be provided on the basis of an invitation by the Commission.

The budgeted grant amount requested from the Commission should be rounded to the nearest ten. The budget will be incorporated as an annex to the specific grant agreement. The Commission may subsequently use these figures for auditing purposes.

Eligible costs can be incurred only after signature of the specific grant agreement by all the parties, save in exceptional cases and, under no circumstances, before submission of the application for a grant. Contributions in kind are not regarded as eligible costs.

4.5. Payment arrangements

A request for an interim payment of not more than 40 % of the maximum grant amount can be submitted by the beneficiary after four months of delivery of results. This request shall be accompanied by an interim financial statement of actual costs incurred and a detailed list of the costs for the period June-September.

A request for payment of the balance together with a final financial statement of actual costs incurred and a detailed list of costs for the period October-May will be submitted within two months after the closing date of the action.

Both the request for an interim payment and the request for payment of the balance shall be preceded by the timely submission of the required set of data.

The amount of the interim and final payment shall be determined on the basis of the eligible costs actually incurred. Only costs which are traceable and identifiable in the beneficiary's cost accounting system will be considered as eligible costs.

4.6. Subcontracting

No subcontracting is allowed.

4.7. Joint proposals

In all cases of joint proposals, the tasks and financial contribution of all members participating in the proposal must be clearly identified. All members must provide all the necessary documents for assessing the proposal as a whole with regard to the exclusion, selection and award criteria (see points 5, 6 and 7 below) related to their tasks.

One of the participating members will take the role of co-ordinator and shall:

- assume the overall responsibility for the partnership *vis-à-vis* the Commission,
- monitor the activities of the other participating member(s),
- ensure the overall coherence and timely submission of the data set,
- centralise the signature of the agreement and deliver the agreement duly signed by all participants to the Commission (proxy is possible),
- centralise the Commission's financial contribution and disburse payments to participants,
- collect supporting documents of expenditure incurred by each participant and present them in a single submission.

5. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

5.1. Legal status of applicants

The call for proposals is open to bodies and institutes (legal entities) with legal status in one of the EU Member States. Applicants must show that they exist as a legal entity and provide the required documentation by means of the standard legal entity form.

5.2. Grounds for exclusion

Applications will not be considered for a grant if the applicants are in any of the following situations (in compliance with Articles 93 and 94 of the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the European Communities):

- (a) they are bankrupt or being wound up, are having their affairs administered by the courts, have entered into an arrangement with creditors, have suspended business activities, are the subject of proceedings concerning those matters, or are in any analogous situation arising from a similar procedure provided for in national legislation or regulations;
- (b) they have been convicted of an offence concerning their professional conduct by a judgment which has the force of *res judicata*;
- (c) they have been guilty of grave professional misconduct proven by any means which the contracting authority can justify;
- (d) they have not fulfilled obligations relating to the payment of social security contributions or the payment of taxes in accordance with the legal provisions of the country in which they are established or with those of the country of the contracting authority or those of the country where the agreement is to be performed;
- (e) they have been the subject of a judgment which has the force of *res judicata* for fraud, corruption, involvement in a criminal organisation or any other illegal activity detrimental to the Communities' financial interests;
- (f) following another procurement procedure or grant award procedure financed by the Community budget, they have been declared to be in serious breach of contract for failure to comply with their contractual obligations;
- (g) they are faced with a conflict of interest;
- (h) they have been guilty of misrepresentation in supplying the information required or have failed to supply this information.

Applicants must certify that they are not in one of the situations listed under point 5.2 by means of the standard declaration form on eligibility.

5.3. Administrative and financial penalties

1. Without prejudice to the application of penalties laid down in the agreement, candidates or tenderers and contractors who have been guilty of making false declarations or have been found to have seriously failed to meet their contractual obligations in an earlier procurement procedure shall be excluded from all contracts and grants financed by the Community budget for a maximum of two years from the time when the infringement is established, as confirmed after an adversarial procedure with the contractor.

That period may be extended to three years in the event of a repeat offence within five years of the first infringement.

Tenderers or candidates who have been guilty of making false declarations shall also receive financial penalties representing 2 % to 10 % of the total value of the contract being awarded.

Contractors who have been found to have seriously failed to meet their contractual obligations shall receive financial penalties representing 2 % to 10 % of the total value of the contract in question. That rate may be increased to 4 % to 20 % in the event of a repeat offence within five years of the first infringement.

2. In the cases referred to in points 5.2(a), (c) and (d) the candidates or tenderers shall be excluded from all contracts and grants for a maximum of two years from the time when the infringement is established, as confirmed after an adversarial procedure with the contractor.

In the cases referred to in points 5.2(b) and (e), the candidates or tenderers shall be excluded from all contracts and grants for a minimum of one year and a maximum of four years from the date of notification of the judgment.

Those periods may be extended to five years in the event of a repeat offence within five years of the first infringement or the first judgment.

3. The cases referred to in point 5.2(e) shall be the following:

- (a) cases of fraud as referred to in Article 1 of the Convention on the protection of the European Communities' financial interests drawn up by the Council Act of 26 July 1995;
- (b) cases of corruption as referred to in Article 3 of the Convention on the fight against corruption involving officials of the European Communities or officials of Member States of the European Union, drawn up by the Council Act of 26 May 1997;
- (c) cases of participation in a criminal organisation, as defined in Article 2(1) of Joint Action 98/733/JHA of the Council (OJ L 351, 29.12.1998, p. 1);
- (d) cases of money laundering as defined in Article 1 of Council Directive 91/308/EEC (OJ L 166, 28.6.1991, p. 77).

6. SELECTION CRITERIA

Applicants must have stable and sufficient sources of funding to maintain their activity throughout the period during which the action is being carried out. They must have the professional competences and qualifications required to complete the proposed action or work programme.

6.1. Financial capacity of applicants

Applicants must have the financial capacity to complete the proposed action and must provide their balance sheets and profit and loss accounts for the last two financial years for which the accounts have been closed.

This provision does not apply to public bodies and international organisations.

6.2. Operational capability of applicants

Applicants must have the operational capability to complete the proposed action and should provide the appropriate supporting documentation.

The following criteria will be used to assess the applicant's ability:

- at least three years of proven experience in preparing a similar set of indicators,
- proven experience in the construction of international trade indicators and addressing methodological questions (seasonal adjustment, working-day adjustment, aggregation, estimation methodology for missing values and missing deflators, ...).

7. AWARD CRITERIA

The following criteria will be used to award the agreement to successful candidates:

- the candidate's degree of expertise and experience in the construction of international trade indicators,
- the effectiveness of the proposed methodology including aspects of seasonal adjustment, working-day adjustment, deflation, aggregation and estimation methodology for missing values and missing deflators,
- the efficiency of the candidate's work organisation, in terms of flexibility, infrastructure, qualified staff and facilities for carrying out the work, reporting the results and liaising with the Commission.

The criteria above have the following respective weights: 40 %, 40 % and 20 %.

8. PRACTICAL PROCEDURES

8.1. Drawing-up and submission of proposals

Proposals must contain the completed and signed standard grant application form and all supporting documents referred to in the form.

The proposals must be presented in three sections:

- administrative proposal,
- technical proposal,
- financial proposal.

The following standard forms can be obtained from the Commission:

- standard grant application form,
- standard budget statement,
- standard financial identification form,
- standard legal entity form,
- standard declaration form on eligibility,

as well as documentation regarding the financial aspects of the grant:

- model of the framework partnership agreement,
- model of the specific annual grant agreement,

(a) by downloading them from the following Internet address:

http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/procurements_grants/call4proposals11919_en.htm

(b) in case the previous option is not possible, by writing to the Commission at:

European Commission
Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs
Unit ECFIN-A-4 (Forecasts and economic situation)
Call for Proposals — ECFIN/A/2008/002
BU-1 — 3/183
B-1049 Brussels
E-mail: ECFIN-A4-CALL-TRADE-INDICATORS@ec.europa.eu

Please mention 'Call for proposals — ECFIN/A/2008/002'

Proposals must be submitted in one of the official languages of the European Community together with a translation in English, French or German, where appropriate.

One signed original proposal and three copies, preferably not stapled must be supplied by the applicant. This would facilitate the administrative work when preparing all the necessary copies/documents for the selection committee(s).

Proposals must be sent in a sealed cover contained in another sealed envelope.

The outside envelope should bear the address given at point 8.3 below.

The sealed inner envelope containing the proposal must be marked 'Call for Proposals — ECFIN/A/2008/002, not to be opened by the internal mail department'.

The Commission will notify candidates that their proposal has been received.

8.2. Content of proposals

8.2.1. Administrative proposal

The administrative proposal must include:

- a duly completed and signed standard grant application form,
- a duly completed and signed standard legal entity form and the requested supporting documentation proving the legal status of the institute,
- a duly completed and signed standard financial identification form,
- a duly signed standard declaration form of the applicant's eligibility,
- the organisation chart of the institute, showing the names and positions of the management and of the operational service responsible for the construction and delivery of the required results,
- proof of sound financial situation: balance sheets and profit and loss accounts from the previous two financial years for which the accounts have been closed, should be attached.

8.2.2. Technical proposal

The technical proposal must include:

- a description of the activities of the institute, enabling the assessment of its qualifications and the scope and duration of its experience in the requested areas under point 6.2. This should mean any relevant studies, service contracts, consultancy work, surveys, publications or other work previously carried out, indicating the name of the client and stating which, if any, were done for the European Commission. The most relevant studies and/or results should be attached,
- a detailed description of the operational organisation for producing the data set. Relevant documentation should be attached regarding the infrastructure, facilities, resources and qualified staff (concise CV's of the staff the most involved in producing the data set) at the applicant's disposal,
- a detailed description of the methodology: sources of the data, seasonal adjustment, working-day adjustment, deflation, aggregation, estimation methodology for missing values and missing deflators.

8.2.3. Financial proposal

The financial proposal must include:

- a duly completed and detailed standard budget statement (in euro), covering a period of 12 months, containing a financing plan for the action and a detailed breakdown of the total and unit eligible costs for producing the data set,
- a certificate of non-liability for VAT, if applicable,
- a document certifying the financial contribution from other organisations (co-financing), if applicable.

8.3. Address and closing date for submission of proposals

Applicants interested in these grants are invited to submit their applications to the European Commission.

Applications may be submitted:

- (a) either by registered post or private delivery service postmarked no later than **11 April 2008**. The evidence of the date of dispatch shall be constituted by the postmark or the date of the deposit slip of the delivery service at the following address:

By registered post:

European Commission
Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs
For the attention of Mr Johan VERHAEVEN
Call for Proposals — ECFIN/A/2008/002
Unit R2, Office BU-1 — 3/13
B-1049 Brussels

By private delivery service:

European Commission
Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs
For the attention of Mr Johan VERHAEVEN
Call for Proposals — ECFIN/A/2008/002
Unit R2, Office BU-1 — 3/13
Avenue du Bourget, 1-3
B-1140 Brussels (Evere);

- (b) or by delivery to the central mail service of the European Commission (personal delivery or delivery by any authorised representative of the applicant, including private delivery services) at the following address:

European Commission
Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs
For the attention of Mr Johan VERHAEVEN
Call for Proposals — ECFIN/A/2008/002
Unit R2, Office BU-1 — 3/13
Avenue du Bourget, 1-3
B-1140 Brussels (Evere)

no later than **11 April 2008** by 16.00 (Brussels time). In this case, proof of submission will be by means of a dated and signed receipt issued by the receiving official in the above mentioned department.

9. WHAT HAPPENS TO THE APPLICATIONS RECEIVED?

All applications will be checked to assess whether they meet the formal criteria of eligibility.

Proposals considered eligible will be evaluated according to the award criteria specified above.

The process of selecting the proposals will take place during April/May 2008. A selection committee is to be set up for this purpose under the authority of the Director-General for Economic and Financial Affairs. It will be made up of at least three persons representing at least two different specialised units with no hierarchical link between them and will have its own secretariat responsible for handling communication with the successful candidate following the selection procedure. Unsuccessful candidates will also be notified individually.

10. IMPORTANT

This call for proposals does not constitute any sort of contractual obligation on the part of the Commission towards any institute submitting a proposal on the basis of it. All communication regarding this call for proposals must be in writing.

Applicants should take note of the contractual provisions which will be obligatory in the event of award.

For the purposes of safeguarding the financial interest of the Communities, your personal data may be transferred to internal audit services, to the European Court of Auditors, to the Financial Irregularities Panel and/or to the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF).

Data of economic operators which are in one of the situations referred to in Articles 93, 94, 96(1)(b) and 96(2)(a) of the Financial Regulation may be included in a central database and communicated to the designated persons of the Commission, other institutions, agencies, authorities and bodies mentioned in Article 95(1) and (2) of the Financial Regulation. This refers as well to the persons with powers of representation, decision making or control over the said economic operators. Any party entered into the database has the right to be informed of the data concerning it, up on request to the accounting officer of the Commission.
