III
(Notices)

COMMISSION

CALL FOR PROPOSALS 2003
on General activities of observation, analysis and innovation
(actions 6.1.2 and 6.2 of the Socrates programme)
EAC/87/02
(2003/C 81/07)

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

On the basis of the Decision of the European Parliament and the Council adopting the second phase of the Community programme Socrates (1) the Commission is inviting proposals for the implementation of both ‘General activities of observation and analysis’ (sub-action 6.1.2 points (c) and (d) and ‘innovatory initiatives responding to emerging needs’ (action 6.2).

Sub-action 6.1 is part of the action ‘Observation of education systems, policies and innovation’ and provides for a series of steps to improve and facilitate the exchange of information and experience in education among the countries participating in the Socrates programme. The action 6.2 supports transnational projects and studies aimed at helping to develop innovations in one or more specific sectors of education.

For the period between 2000-2006 participation in the Socrates programme is open to the Member States, the EFTA/EEA countries under the Agreement on the European Economic Area (2) and the applicant countries (3). Applications for support may include, or be made by, establishments in any of these countries. In the case of countries outside the European Union, financial support for the participation of these establishments will be granted providing that national contributions have been settled.

With this in mind, this call for proposals, has as its objectives:

1. to facilitate the implementation of the ‘Report on the future objectives of education and of training systems’ (4) according to the conclusions of the Education Council (5) and of the ‘Detailed work programme on the follow-up of the objectives of education and training systems in Europe’ (6). This could be done by using, in particular, the exchange of experience between establishments working on the priority themes (see point 2 below) as well as other methods generally applied within the framework of international cooperation;

2. to give financial support to educational, lifelong learning and research institutions that mobilise their innovation potential around the key issues related to the implementation of the abovementioned ‘Detailed work programme on the follow-up of the objectives of education and training systems in Europe’.

In this context, the participation of institutions from the candidate countries will make it possible not only to widen the European dimension of the activities concerned, but also to prepare the future association of these countries with the open method of coordination and the application of measuring instruments for its implementation.

2. PRIORITY THEMES

The three priority themes for this call for proposals have been determined by the Council on the basis of the Commission’s proposal. They are therefore considered as ‘matters of common policy interest’ in accordance with the Decision adopting the Socrates programme. The three priority themes are:

— making best use of resources,

— opening up the education and training systems to the wider world,

— education and training for teachers and trainers.


(2) Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.

(3) Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia and Turkey.


(6) This Work programme was adopted by the Council and the Commission at the meeting of the Council on 14 February 2002 Ref 6365/02 then submitted to the European Council in Barcelona (15 and 16 March 2002).
These priorities themes coincide with the areas specified in the Council conclusions of 13 July 2001 (1) with a view to beginning the implementation of the Objectives Report.

Innovative proposals in other areas of the ‘Detailed work programme on the follow-up of the objectives of education and training systems in Europe’ as well as proposals concerning the development of methodologies in view of improving the quality of comparative studies in the field of education and training can however also be considered for funding.

2.1. Making best use of resources

The European Commission recently adopted a Communication on Education and Training Benchmarks (2). It also adopted a Communication on ‘investing efficiently in education and training’ (3). Both documents are underlining the need of investment in education as a prominent issue, as stated by the ‘Report on the future objectives of education and training’. In order to support European policies on making best use of resources in the field of education and training the activities supported under this priority theme will focus on the following main aspects:

— optimal allocation of resources: identification of good examples and innovative ideas for monitoring resource needs and for flexible reallocation of resources to areas where they are most needed,

— analysis of examples of private — public co-financing schemes in the field of education,

— analyses of social and economic returns to investment (especially in lifelong learning) on different levels (individual, company, national and European level),

— private funding: identification of innovative ideas and good practices for providing incentives for private funding in key areas of the knowledge economy such as higher education, adult education and vocational training,

— application of methodologies that could compare input of financial resources to output from the system/impact on growth.

The activities supported under this priority theme will be followed by the working groups on ‘making best use of resources’ and on ‘indicators’ recently set up by the Commission in the frame of the follow-up of the objectives of education and training systems in Europe.

2.2. Opening up the education and training systems to the wider world

The activities supported under this priority theme will encourage a comparative analysis, where relevant based on indicators, in the following fields:

— establishing partnerships between all types of education and training institutions, firms and research facilities for their mutual benefit,

— promoting the role for stakeholders in developing training, including initial training, and learning at the work place,

— monitoring the volume, directions, participation rates as well as qualitative aspects of mobility flows across Europe.

The activities supported under this priority theme will especially be followed by the working groups on ‘making learning attractive, strengthening links with working life and society’ on ‘indicators’, and on ‘mobility’ recently set up by the Commission in the frame of the follow-up of the objectives of education and training systems in Europe.

2.3. Teachers and trainers education

Improving education and training for teachers and trainers is one of the key objectives of education and training systems in Europe. This applies both at the level of school education and in higher education. The objective of the projects in this field is to highlight innovative initiatives, on the basis of comparative and prospective studies which can contribute to a reflection on policy development, covering in particular the following aspects where relevant:

— projects focusing on the continuum of teacher education – initial training, induction and inservice education and the linkages between each phase of career development, in a context of lifelong learning,

— projects focusing on the attractiveness of the teaching profession (addressing issues such as recruitment, retention, diversity of intake, multicultural working environments),

— projects which examine the role of the teacher in promoting the European dimension and increasing learners’ sense of themselves as Europeans,

— projects which examine the development of appropriate indicators relating to quality of teacher education, teacher competence and professional development which are relevant across a number of education systems.

The activities supported under this priority theme will be followed by the working group recently set up by the Commission on ‘teachers and trainers education’.

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3. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

3.1. Eligible activities

The following activities will be considered eligible under this call for proposals: studies, analyses, pilot projects, seminars, exchanges of experts and other appropriate actions aimed at improving knowledge and facilitating an innovative exchange of expertise and experience relating to the priority themes listed in point 2.

3.2. Eligible establishments

Organisations and institutions from within the participating countries with the qualifications and experience needed to carry out the proposed action are eligible under this call for proposals. For this purpose, application forms should include detailed information on previous experience in the fields necessary for the implementation of the project.

3.3. Eligible proposals

To be considered eligible under this call for proposals, proposals must:

— use the application forms specifically designed for this action (see heading 7),

— respect the deadline established for this call for proposals (see heading 7),

— relate to the priority themes described in heading 2,

— actively involve establishments from at least five countries taking part in Socrates and at least one institution from a Member State,

— include a balanced budget that respects the maximum percentage of community cofinancing established to 75% of the total amount of eligible expenditure.

4. SELECTION CRITERIA

The applicant must have stable and sufficient sources of funding to maintain his activity throughout the period during which the action is being carried out or the year for which the grant is awarded and to participate in its funding. The applicant must have the professional competencies and qualifications required to complete the proposed action or work programme unless specifically provided otherwise in the basic act.

Financial and operational capacity shall be verified in particular on the basis of an analysis of the supporting documents.

Candidates or tenderers shall be excluded from participation in a procurement procedure if:

(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 judgement 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 contract is to be performed;

(e) They have been the subject of a judgement 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.

5. AWARD CRITERIA

Eligible proposals will be assessed on the following criteria:

— the extent to which the project is justified and necessary in relation to identifiable needs,

— quality and accuracy of the description of the methodology to be applied,

— the clarity and consistency of the overall design of the project, and the feasibility of attaining the objectives within a reasonable time frame,

— the quality of the material organisation of the project (commitment and involvement of the different partners, work plans and budget defined in accurate terms, clearly established co-ordination, etc.).

During the selection process, preference will go to proposals which:

— are based on studies and data already available in this area, and aim to carry out a comparative summary (clearly establishing the level of knowledge achieved in this area) and describe in detail how they envisage the subsequent stages of the work,

— involve a corpus of fresh data, clearly describe — the methods and systems to be used to evaluate the reliability of the data collected,
— contain, where appropriate, prospective aspects, i.e. projects which seek to identify and anticipate trends, potential innovations in the area and their future development,

— set out explicitly their added value in relation to activities already completed. In particular, it is recommended that due account be taken of results available from projects funded under Action III.3.1 during the first phase of the Socrates programme. Applicants are also advised not to repeat working programs of projects funded under previous calls for proposals for Action 6 http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/socrates/observation/call.html,

— clearly demonstrate their European added value as well as their potential multiplier effects, particularly concerning the potential impact in terms of how the experience will be shared with a significant number of countries participating in the programme,

— include measures to monitor and externally evaluate the quality of the anticipated results of the project with a view to wider dissemination.

6. CONTRACTS AND FINANCIAL AID

Applicants may propose projects lasting one or two years.

Payment shall be made on production of proof that the relevant action is in accordance with the provisions of the basic act or the contract and shall cover payment of the amount due in any of the following ways:

— pre-financing, which may be divided into a number of payments,

— one or more interim payments and payments of the balance of the amounts due on the condition of receipt and approval of interim reports and final report and financial statement.

The Commission's financial support may be up to EUR 200 000 yearly. This ceiling will nevertheless be reached only in exceptional circumstances. The amounts paid will be calculated so that they cover a maximum of 75 % of eligible expenditure.

If, under exceptional circumstances, pre-financing is more than 80 %, then the authorising officer responsible may require the beneficiary to lodge a guarantee in advance in order to limit the financial risks connected with the payment of pre-financing.

A grant may be awarded for an action, which has already begun only when the applicant can demonstrate the need to start the action before the agreement is signed. In such cases, expenditure eligible for financing may not have been incurred prior to the date of submission of the grant application.

The award of grants shall be subject to the principle of transparency and equal treatment. They may not be cumulative or awarded retrospectively and they must involve co-financing.

The beneficiary shall supply evidence of the co-financing provided, either by way of own resources, or in the form of financial transfers from third parties. One action may give rise to the award of only one grant from the budget to any one beneficiary.

The grant may not have the purpose or effect of producing a profit for the beneficiary.

Applications shall be made on the form distributed by the authorising officers responsible and in accordance with the criteria laid down in the basic act and the call for proposals.

The application shall show that the applicant exists as a legal person and has the financial and operational capacity to complete the proposed action or work programme. For that purpose the authorising officer shall request a declaration from potential beneficiaries on their honour. The profit and loss account, the balance sheet for the last financial year for which the accounts have been closed and any other supporting documents requested in the call for proposals shall, depending on the analysis of management risks conducted by the authorising officer responsible on his own responsibility, also be attached to the application.

The budget for the action or the operating budget attached to the application must have revenue and expenditure in balance and show clearly the costs which are eligible for financing from the Community budget given that general expenditures (office supplies, photocopies, telephone, fax, post and telecommunication charges, data processing) must not exceed 7 % of the total cost.

The applicant shall indicate the sources and amounts of any other funding received or applied for in the same financial year for the same action or for any other action and for routine activities.

For eligible cost see the general conditions for grants annexed to the model agreement.

The total available budget for activities covered by this call for proposals is approximately EUR 1 700 000. As an indication, in 2002, financial support was given to 6 projects.

In the event of the Commission's approving a proposal, a funding agreement in Euro setting out the conditions and the level of funding will be signed by the Commission and the beneficiary.
7. SUBMITTING PROPOSALS

Further information on the procedure for submitting proposals will be included in the information pack obtainable by faxing or mailing the following address:

For the attention of Mr Anders Hingel
European Commission
DG Education and Culture, Unit A4
Office: B-7 07/24
B-1049 Brussels.
Fax (32-2) 299 22 31
e-mail: UNITE-A4@cec.eu.int

The request for an information pack must contain the following details: name, full address, post code and language version desired. The request must refer explicitly to this call for proposals and to Actions 6.1 and 6.2 of the Socrates programme. Only one copy of this information package per request will be sent.

The information pack, along with this call for proposals and other information, is also obtainable from the following Internet address:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/socrates/observation/call.html

If requested, a model of the agreement could be sent to the applicants.

All applications for funding must be submitted by **28 May 2003** by registered post to the abovementioned address. Proposals sent after this deadline will not be taken into consideration. The postmark will be taken as proof of submission. Applications may not be sent by fax and/or in several parts. They should not be longer than 20 pages. Incomplete applications will not be accepted. Applicants will receive an advice of receipt. Unsuccessful applicants will be informed in writing.

The award procedure should be completed during October 2003. In any event, the contract period should begin no earlier than 20 October 2003. The Commission undertakes to publish on the appropriate website the names and addresses of beneficiaries and the financing rate and the object of the grant.