

## **Work programme for 2009 as regards grants intended for financing the host structures of the EUROPE DIRECT information centres across the European Union**

### **1. BUDGET LINE**

16.03.01 – Information Outlet

### **2. LEGAL BASIS**

Tasks resulting from the Commission's prerogatives at institutional level, as provided for in Article 49(6) 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), as amended by Regulation (EC) No 1995/2006 (OJ L 390, 30.12.2006, p. 1).

### **3. DESCRIPTION OF MEASURES FINANCED FROM THE BUDGET LINE<sup>1</sup>**

#### Subject matter and scope

In providing information for citizens in the EU Member States, the Commission relies on networks that provide decentralised local information having particular regard for specific social, cultural, political, and economic aspects at local level.

The EUROPE *DIRECT* information network is one of the main tools of the European Commission to offer information to citizens at local level and to give feedback to the European Institutions.

#### Tasks of the information centres set up by the host structures

The EUROPE *DIRECT* information centres set up by the host structures will provide citizens with information about the EU and act as pro-active communication actors stimulating debate and dialogue, thus contributing to the Commission's outreach at local level.

The centres will provide information services tailored to local needs through:

- offering citizens information, advice, assistance and answers to queries about the European Union's legislation, policies, programmes, and funding opportunities;
- promoting public awareness of the EUROPE *DIRECT* Contact Centre, Europa website, and other information networks and contact points of the European Institutions, acting as a first-entry point for citizens.

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<sup>1</sup> Without prejudice to any Commission decision regarding possible streamlining of several of its information and assistance networks.

Under the guidance of the European Commission through its Representations, the centres will help create a European Public Sphere, stimulating an informed debate of the Union's objectives, policies and programmes through carrying out communication and awareness-raising activities such as:

- organising events and developing information products for the general public or specific target groups;
- collaborating with local and national institutional stakeholders;
- cooperating and networking with local media.

The centres will be the Commission's partners at local level for its initiatives, campaigns and actions throughout the Member State. Dissemination of specific information tailored to local needs will be based on cooperation and synergies with other Commission's networks. The centres will report regularly to the European Commission Representations on local trends and issues of interest to the citizens.

### Geographical coverage

The call for proposals aims at ensuring the maximum level of proximity of European Union information provision to the citizens of the Community. The selection of the host structures shall ensure an equitable spread of centres at national level and adequate representativeness across the Community.

Upon presentation of Member State specific shortlists of eligible proposals, the Commission will proceed with a screening aimed at ensuring the optimal level of geographical coverage and continuity with the first term ending in December 2008. The number of grants awarded per Member State will be subject to budget availability and the number of submitted proposals eligible for funding.

### Conditions for financial support to the host structures

The action grant for the host structure per centre, in form of a lump sum, shall range from a minimum of EUR 12,000 per year to a maximum of EUR 25,000 per year, representing no more than 50% of the eligible expenses.

The grant shall cover the following:

- a) a basic set of information services for the general public and support services for the Commission Representation
- b) communication and awareness raising activities, comprising organisation of events and development of information products for the general public, specific target groups, media and multipliers.

The grant shall be awarded, in accordance with the Financial Regulation, on the basis of the description of the action and estimate budget submitted by the host structure for a specific year.

For the sake of the stability of the network and the continuity of its information and communication activities, the action grant award shall be covered by a multi-annual

framework agreement of four years, to be implemented through specific annual agreements.

#### **4. IMPLEMENTATION**

The direct centralised management method will be applied.

##### **4.1. Call for proposals**

Calls for proposals will be launched in parallel in all 27 Member States to select the host structures for the EUROPE *DIRECT* information centres for the period 2009-2012.

- Envisaged publication date: mid 2008
- Selection of beneficiaries: November 2008
- Awarding of grants: early 2009

##### **4.2. Criteria**

###### *4.2.1. Potential beneficiaries*

Public or private bodies with a public-service mission that have already developed solid skills in communicating with the public.

###### *4.2.2. Eligibility criteria*

The following eligibility criteria must be met:

- a) the applicant organisation must be legally constituted and registered in one of the EU 27 Member States,
- b) the applicant organisation must be a proven public sector body or private law body with a public service mission,
- c) the proposal must comply with the aim of the call, *i.e.* to select host structures for EU information centres,
- d) the requested contribution must not be lower than the minimum allowed (12,000 EUR), not higher than the maximum allowed (25,000 EUR) and must not exceed 50% of the total eligible action costs.

###### *4.2.3. Exclusion criteria*

Applicants shall be excluded from participation to the Call 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 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 action is to be implemented,
- 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 a 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 obligations.

Action grants may not be awarded to applicants who, during the call procedure:

- a) are subject to a conflict of interest,
- b) are guilty of misrepresentation in supplying the information required by the contracting authority as a condition of participation to the grant procedure or fail to supply this information.

#### 4.2.4. *Selection criteria*

##### a) Financial capacity

Applicants must prove they have sufficient and stable financial resources to enable them to host the EUROPE *DIRECT* centre(s) throughout the whole four year period.

##### b) Operational capacity

Applicants must demonstrate their operational ability to host the centre and to adapt its mission to the policy developments, communication priorities and any decision by the Commission concerning the streamlining of its networks. In particular, they must have:

- i. at least two years' proven experience in communicating with the public preferably on issues relevant to EU policies,
- ii. human resources whose competencies and qualifications include good communication skills, project management and sound knowledge of European affairs,
- iii. technological and physical infrastructure allowing for successful implementation of the action, with due regard to location and accessibility of premises.

#### 4.2.5. *Award criteria*

The award criteria, which will be given a weighting in the call for proposals, shall be as follows:

- a) Relevance of the prospective host structure's application,
- b) Profile, potential outreach and impact of the information centre in the region,
- c) Quality of the set of mandatory information services,
- d) Quality of the communication and awareness raising activities,
- e) Quality and cost-effectiveness of the budget.

#### 4.2.6. *Geographical balance*

Proposals will be ranked in order of merit, on the basis of the award criteria. In order to ensure a geographically equitable spread of centres, the scores of proposals with the same geographical coverage that are compliant with the award criteria will be compared against each other and only the better or best will be deemed eligible for award.

### **5. RESULTS EXPECTED**

The grants are intended to support the network of *EUROPE DIRECT* information centres. The host structures to be selected shall set up and manage the centres with the aim of providing a local service that:

- enables citizens of the European Union to obtain information, advice, assistance and answers to queries about the European Union's legislation, policies, programmes, schemes and funding opportunities,
- contributes to stimulating debate and awareness amongst citizens on the most sensitive EU issues, achievements and goals while at the same time providing feedback to the Institutions,
- enables the EC Representations to have a valid partner at local level for its initiatives, campaigns and actions throughout the Member State,
- allows the Commission to improve the dissemination of specific information tailored to local needs and characteristics.

### **6. WRITTEN AGREEMENT**

The grants awarded shall be covered by a written agreement signed between the European Commission and the host structures.

## **7. BUDGETARY IMPACT**

The budget available for the implementation of this work programme forms part of the appropriations in line 16 03 01 – Information outlets.

### **7.1. Overall figures**

The Commission foresees for 2009 a total of EUR 11 400 000 for the co-financing of selected host structures through action grants.

The commitment appropriations presented below are subject to their adoption by the budgetary authority.

### **7.2. Allocations per Member State**

The allocation of budget per Member State will be based on the distribution of Member State seats in the European Parliament, geographical area of each Member State, as well as ensuring continuity with the first term of the *EUROPE DIRECT* centres network which comes to an end in December 2008. The maximum indicative share of available budget per Member State is defined below.

In case the indicated maximum ceiling will not be reached by one or more Member States, the Commission reserves the right to re-allocate remaining funds in order to enable maximum and optimal use of available funding.

Country	Indicative allocation for 2009 (EUR)
Austria	250 000
Belgium	225 000
Bulgaria	250 000
Cyprus	50 000
Czech Republic	250 000
Denmark	175 000
Estonia	100 000
Finland	525 000
France	1 200 000
Germany	1 300 000
Greece	350 000
Hungary	325 000
Ireland	200 000
Italy	1 075 000
Latvia	150 000
Lithuania	175 000
Luxembourg	50 000
Malta	50 000
Netherlands	300 000
Poland	625 000
Portugal	325 000
Romania	600 000
Slovakia	175 000
Slovenia	125 000
Spain	1 100 000
Sweden	625 000
United Kingdom	825 000
Total	11 400 000

## 8. OTHER INFORMATION

The Commission will undertake contractually to provide the host structures selected via the call for proposals with an action grant, as well as information products, documentation and trainings.

Membership of the EUROPE *DIRECT* network will also be feasible for organisations that comply with the requirements of the call but do not apply for financial support to carry out EU information and communication activities.