



**The Secretariat of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States
(ACP Secretariat)**

ACP-EU Cooperation Programme in Higher Education (EDULINK)

Guidelines
for grant applicants
responding to the call for proposals
for 2006
Open Call for Proposals

9th European Development Fund

Reference: EuropeAid/124308/D/ACT/ACP

Deadline for receipt of applications: 15 January 2007

DISCLAIMER

The translations in French and Portuguese are based on the English original. In case of discrepancies, the English original is the only legally binding document.

NOTICE

Please note that the evaluation of your application will only be performed if your concept note is provisionally selected. Your application will then undergo the evaluation. The eligibility conformity check will only be performed for the proposals that have been provisionally selected according to the score obtained after the final evaluation, on the basis of the supporting documents which will be requested by the ACP Secretariat and the Declaration by the applicant signed and sent together with the application

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1. THE EDULINK PROGRAMME

1.1 BACKGROUND

The EDULINK Programme, rooted on the European Commission communication on “Strengthening Co-operation with Third Countries in the Field of Higher Education” adopted in July 2001, represents an harmonised approach for the implementation of Commission funded programmes in ACP countries with a view to improving the effectiveness, management, visibility and hence the impact of ACP-EU co-operation in the field of higher education.

The programme is open to all ACP countries, and will primarily benefit higher education institutions. The programme will contribute to building capacity through networks of institutions in the different ACP regions. Projects selected for funding under this programme will be identified through open calls for proposals. Applications will be considered for funding if submitted by networks of ACP institutions working closely around a joint project. Constituted institutional networks may solicit funding for one of the following modules: institutional policy and planning, academic quality and relevance, and capacity building in research and technology to improve academic and teaching excellence.

The EDULINK Programme purpose is to strengthen the capacity of ACP higher education institutions at their three naturally constitutive levels:

- Institutional/administrative,
- Academic, and
- Research and Technology strengthening

The EDULINK Programme aims at achieving the following results:

- Enhanced contribution to national and/or regional policies and implementation plans for regional co-operation in higher education,
- Increased inter-institutional networking between higher education institutions in the ACP regions and with institutions in the EU,
- Creation of better regional conditions for effective networking of higher education centres in research, science and technology innovation,
- Enhanced management and financial administration capacity of higher education institutions,
- ACP higher education institutions become regional and/or international poles of attraction as they deliver labour-market oriented study programmes, which satisfy quality standards,
- A suitable institutional framework is created to pursue academic excellence in higher education,
- ACP countries develop or reinforce their strategic expertise in fields linked to the socio-economic development of the country/region.

1.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAMME AND PRIORITY ISSUES

The overall objective is to foster capacity building and regional integration in the field of higher education through institutional networking, and to support a higher education system of quality, which is efficient and relevant to the needs of the labour market, and consistent with ACP socio-economic development priorities.

The programme purpose is to strengthen the capacity of ACP higher education institutions at institutional/administrative, academic and, research and technology levels.

In order to increase institutional capacity and the transfer of know-how, this Call for Proposals seeks proposals for consortia of networked higher education institutions that carry out the following types of activities:

- Institutional capacity building of ACP higher education institutions in support of policy, management, planning and administrative capacity at national and regional levels.
- Institutional co-operation to maximise academic quality and relevance in the regional or sub-regional context.
- Capacity building in research and technology

More details of the types of activities covered by these projects are given below under section 2.1.3 '*Eligible actions*'.

1.3 FINANCIAL ALLOCATION

The overall indicative amount made available under this call for proposals is EUR 5 000 000. The ACP Secretariat reserves the right not to award all available funds.

Size of grants

Any grant awarded under this programme must fall between the following minimum and maximum amounts:

- minimum amount: EUR 200 000
- maximum amount: EUR 500 000

Grants may be awarded up to the maximum percentage of 85 % of the total eligible costs of the action (see also section 2.1.4). The balance must be financed from the applicant's or partners' own resources, or from sources other than the European Community budget or the European Development Fund.

2. RULES OF THIS CALL FOR PROPOSALS

These guidelines set out the rules for the submission, selection and implementation of actions financed under this call, in conformity with the provisions of the Practical Guide (available on the Internet at this address: http://ec.europa.eu/comm/europeaid/tender/practical_guide_2006/index_en.htm).

2.1 ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

There are three sets of eligibility criteria, relating to:

- Organisations which may request a grant (2.1.1), and their partners (2.1.2);
- Actions for which a grant may be awarded (2.1.3);
- Types of cost which may be taken into account in setting the amount of the grant (2.1.4).

Definitions:

“Partnership”	The grouping of applying institutions, i.e. the applicant and its partners;
“Applicant”	The lead institution within the partnership that submits the proposal;
“Partner”	Members institutions of the partnership other than the applicant;
“Associate”	Organisation that may have a real role in the action but may not receive funding;
“Beneficiary”	The applicant with whom a grant contract will be signed, if the proposal is selected;
"Action"	(or project) The set of activities the partnership proposes to carry out.

2.1.1 Eligibility of applicants: who may apply?

(1) IN ORDER TO BE ELIGIBLE FOR A GRANT, APPLICANTS MUST MEET ALL OF THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA:

- Be a legal person;
- Be directly responsible for the preparation and management of the action with their partners, not acting as an intermediary;
- Be a higher education institution¹ (or part of such an institution), registered in one of the following countries:

ACP countries:

Angola; Antigua and Barbuda; Bahamas, The; Barbados; Belize; Benin; Botswana; Burkina Faso; Burundi; Cameroon; Cape Verde; Central African Republic; Chad; Comoros; Congo, Dem. Rep. of the; Congo, Rep. of the; Cook Islands; Cote d'Ivoire; Djibouti; Dominica; Dominican Republic; Equatorial Guinea; Eritrea; Ethiopia; Fiji; Gabon; Gambia, The; Ghana; Grenada; Guinea; Guinea-Bissau; Guyana; Haiti; Jamaica; Kenya; Kiribati; Lesotho; Liberia; Madagascar; Malawi; Mali; Marshall Islands; Mauritania; Mauritius; Micronesia, Federated States of; Mozambique; Namibia; Nauru; Niger; Nigeria; Niue; Palau; Papua New Guinea; Rwanda; Saint Kitts and Nevis; Saint Lucia; Saint Vincent and the Grenadines; Samoa; Sao Tome

¹ A higher education institution is an institution which:

- provides courses at the undergraduate and/or graduate level of higher education, leading to a recognised qualification in its own country; it may be called a University, Polytechnic, College, Institute, or similar; **and**
- is recognised and its diploma accredited by the competent national authority in its own country.

and Principe; Senegal; Seychelles; Sierra Leone; Solomon Islands; Somalia; Sudan; Suriname; Swaziland; Tanzania; Timor-Leste; Togo; Tonga; Trinidad and Tobago; Tuvalu; Uganda; Vanuatu; Zambia; Zimbabwe.

EU Member States:

Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom.

Higher education institutions from South Africa and Cuba can participate in the projects but cannot be direct beneficiaries of the funds. All the activities implemented by the South African or Cuban partners have to be ACP related and consequently the final beneficiaries have to be the ACP countries mentioned above.

Are also eligible:

- Established networks of higher education institutions within the ACP and EU regions, provided that:
 - A majority of network members, and the network headquarters are located in eligible countries;
 - The network has a legal status (where a network acts as an applicant, it must be able to enter into contractual and financial obligations with the ACP Secretariat);
 - The network is applying in its own right;
 - The network has been registered for a minimum of two years.

Please note that a network may represent only one member within a partnership.

- Regional institutions of higher education not belonging to any national system, but formally recognised by one of the eligible countries;
- Private higher education institutions (complying with all other above criteria) that have been registered for a minimum period of three years, provided that the project does not produce any profit for the applicant or partners. Eligibility of such institutions will be assessed on a case-by-case basis and will be only accepted if fully justified by the applicants. In case a profit making institution is accepted as a partner within a selected proposal, the members of the partnership will have to sign a Memorandum of Understanding, where it is clearly stated that funds awarded by the EC can neither be used for profit making activities, nor for the purpose of paying taxes.

Are not eligible:

Institutions preparing students for foreign degrees (e.g. those operating as a branch or under a franchising agreement).

(2) Potential applicants may not participate in calls for proposals or be awarded grants 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 professional conduct by a judgement which has the force of *res judicata* (i.e., against which no appeal is possible);
- (c) they are guilty of grave professional misconduct proven by any means which the ACP Secretariat 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 those of the country where the action is to take place;

- (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) they have been declared to be in serious breach of contract for failure to comply with their contractual obligations in connection with a procurement procedure or other grant award procedure financed by the Community budget.

Applicants are also excluded from participation in calls for proposals or the award of grants if, at the time of the call for proposals, they:

- (g) are subject to a conflict of interests;
- (h) are guilty of misrepresentation in supplying the information required by the ACP Secretariat as a condition of participation in the call for proposals or fail to supply this information;
- (i) have attempted to obtain confidential information or influence the evaluation committee or the ACP Secretariat during the evaluation process of current or previous calls for proposals.

In the cases referred to in points (a), (c), (d), (f), (h) and (i) above, the exclusion applies for a period of two years from the time when the infringement is established. In the cases referred to in points (b) and (e), the exclusion applies for a period of four years from the date of notification of the judgment.

In part VI of the grant application form ("Declaration by the applicant"), applicants must declare that they do not fall into any of the above categories (a) to (f).

2.1.2 Partnerships and eligibility of partners

Applicants must operate within a constituted institutional network, involving at least three higher education institutions from at least 2 different countries within the ACP region. The optimum size of a network is one allowing for the achievement of the project objectives in the most cost-effective manner.

The participation of EU higher education institutions is not imperative, but will be welcomed. The number of institutions from different eligible ACP countries must always be greater than the number of EU, South African or Cuban institutions. Applications submitted by networks where the lead institution is an ACP entity or by networks involving partners from the least developed countries/territories and/or from regions with fewer traditional links among higher education institutions will be prioritised.

HEIs that have campuses in different countries are considered as one entity and cannot use their campuses as partners, but must create a network with other independent HEIs.

HEIs from Cuba and South Africa may participate in projects as applicants or partners but the activities implemented by the South African or Cuban partners have to be ACP related and consequently the final beneficiaries have to be the ACP countries mentioned in section 2.1.1.

The applicant will act as the lead organisation and, if selected, as the contracting party (the "Beneficiary").

Partners

Applicants' partners participate in implementing the action, and the costs they incur are eligible in the same way as those incurred by the grant Beneficiary. They must therefore satisfy the same eligibility criteria as shown in 2.1.1 above for applicants.

There is no upper limit on the number of members in a partnership. A partnership should be composed in such a way as to allow for the achievement of project objectives in the most efficient manner.

Each member of a partnership must have a precise and clearly identified role in the planning and implementation of the project. It is strongly recommended that the applicant and its partners draw up an agreement defining the technical and financial rights and obligations of each partnership member. A clear

written allocation of responsibilities and a balanced distribution of costs will contribute to the partnership's success.

The following are not partners and do not have to sign the "partnership statement":

Associates

Other organisations may be involved in the action. Such associates play a real role in the action but may not receive funding from the grant with the exception of *per diems* or travel costs. Associates do not have to meet the eligibility criteria referred to in section 2.1.1. The associates have to be mentioned in part IV of the Grant Application Form ("Associates of the Applicant participating in the Action").

Subcontractors

The grant beneficiaries have the possibility to award contracts to subcontractors. Subcontractors are neither partners nor associates, and are subject to the procurement rules set out in Annex IV to the standard grant contract.² This document sets out rules on nationality and origin, and determines the procedures to be followed when tendering, according to the value of the contract.

The amount of the subcontracted costs (including fees, travel and accommodation costs, etc.) must not exceed 10% of project total eligible costs (that is 10% of item 9. in the "Budget for the Action" table – Annex B). Overall project management, for which the Applicant will be responsible cannot be subcontracted. It is suggested that the involvement of subcontractors only take place if necessary for the implementation of the project and for services, which cannot be secured through the project partners. No projects should be controlled by subcontractors or be driven by commercial purposes.

Proposals, which fail to comply with these principles, will be rejected by the Evaluation Committee.

The costs for subcontracted services – including consultancy services – must be listed under item 5. in the "Budget for the Action" table (Annex B). In addition, financial details concerning the subcontracted activities (rates, number of days/months, outputs, etc.) must be developed as necessary in the budget justification section to be attached to the budget tables and highlighted in the "Budget for the Action" table (Annex B).

2.1.3 <i>Eligible actions: actions for which an application may be made</i>
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Duration

The planned duration of an action may not be less than 12 months nor exceed 36 months.

Location

Actions should mainly take place in one or more of the ACP States mentioned above in 2.1.1. If part of the action takes place in the 15 eligible EU Member States, South Africa or Cuba, the final beneficiaries³ must still be the ACP States (other than Cuba and South Africa).

Sectors or themes

² The document can be consulted on the Europe Aid Co-operation Office website:

http://ec.europa.eu/comm/europeaid/tender/practical_guide_2006/documents/annexes_grants/en/e3h_3awardproc_en.doc

³ "Final beneficiaries" are those who will benefit from the project in the long term at the level of the society or sector at large.

The Programme purpose is to strengthen the capacity of ACP Higher Education Institutions at their three naturally constitutive levels:

- Institutional/administrative:

Institutional capacity building of ACP higher education institutions in support of policy, management, planning and administrative capacity at national and regional levels.

- Academic:

Institutional co-operation to maximise academic quality and relevance in the regional or sub-regional context.

- Research and Technology:

Capacity building in research and technology that would enable higher education institutions to improve their academic and teaching excellence in priority sectors linked to the socio-economic development of ACP regions, consolidate their local research capacity and import, or adapt, scientific discoveries and innovations arising in various sectors of their domestic economies or originating outside their domestic economies.

Types of action

Corresponding to these levels, the following actions may be financed under this call for proposals. This listing is not exhaustive but intends to give an indication of the types of eligible actions.

Policy development and planning and administrative capacity

Setting-up new, or strengthening already existing national, regional or inter-regional initiatives, such as:

- Training programmes for management and administrative staff
- Planning and evaluation units within higher education institutions
- International relations units within higher education institutions
- Credit transfer systems
- Quality assurance and academic accreditation bodies

Academic relevance in the regional or sub-regional context

Setting-up new, or supporting already existing inter-institutional agreements, such as:

- Joint development of curricula
- Joint degrees and diplomas
- Development or adaptation of training materials
- Linkages with public sector (e.g. traineeships)
- Postgraduate student training or exchanges
- Teacher training or exchanges

Research and technology development for the improvement of academic and teaching excellence

Setting-up new or supporting already existing:

- Research planning cells within higher education institutions
- Networks for know-how transfer to import, adapt and disseminate innovation related to ACP socio-economic development necessary to improve academic excellence

The following types of action are not eligible:

- Actions that conflict, either directly or indirectly, with the policies of the European Union or which may be linked with a prejudicial image.
- Actions concerned only or mainly with individual sponsorships for participation in workshops, seminars, conferences, congresses;
- Actions concerned only or mainly with individual scholarships for studies or training courses. Scholarships may be included in a project as long as they are essential to achieve the project results;
- Research activities *per se*. However, there may be a research component in projects, in particular:
 - Research into higher education systems and structure, including comparative aspects;
 - Thesis preparation and thesis supervision, including research and laboratory work contributing to it;
 - Research that is indispensable for curriculum development activities;
 - Research activities as an integral part of a programme of human resources development within the partner institutions.
- Language teaching *per se* including the teaching of European languages in ACP countries and of ACP languages in Europe. However, the following may be eligible for funding:
 - Language and cultural preparation at home and abroad for staff and students who plan to spend an extensive period of teaching or study/training abroad;
 - Translation for course material and joint curricular work.

Number of proposals and grants per applicant

Applicants may submit only one proposal with the same partner institutions under this call for proposals. Similarly, a partnership composed of the same HEIs may not introduce more than one proposal, even if the applicant (i.e. the lead HEI) is a different one in each case. However, applicants may submit more than one proposal, provided the majority of the partners are different and provided that the proposals pertain to projects that are clearly different in content, or in geographical coverage. Please note that in these cases, each proposal must be submitted individually and separately.

2.1.4 <i>Eligibility of costs: costs which may be taken into consideration for the grant</i>

Only "eligible costs" can be taken into account for a grant. These are detailed below. The budget is therefore both a cost estimate and a ceiling for "eligible costs". Note that the eligible costs must be based on real costs, not lump sums (except for subsistence costs and indirect costs).

Recommendations to award a grant are always subject to the condition that the checking process, which precedes the signing of the contract does not reveal problems requiring changes to the budget. The checks may give rise to requests for clarification and may lead the ACP Secretariat to impose reductions⁴.

EDULINK is not a unilateral development aid programme. Expenditure relating to investment in facilities or the purchase of equipment should therefore only account for a minor proportion of the total eligible costs, and in any case should represent no more than 15% of these.

Expenditure through subcontracting should represent no more than 10% of total eligible costs.

⁴ Please note that possible modifications of the budget may not lead to an increase of the amount of the grant requested nor of the percentage of the co-financing.

It is therefore in the applicant's interest to provide a realistic and cost-effective budget.

Eligible direct costs

To be eligible under the call for proposals, costs must:

- Be necessary for carrying out the action, be provided for in the contract⁵ and comply with the principles of sound financial management, in particular value for money and cost-effectiveness;
- Have actually been incurred by the beneficiaries or their partners during the implementing period for the action as defined in Article 2 of the Special Conditions in the contract, whatever the time of actual disbursement by the Beneficiary or a partner. This does not affect the eligibility of costs for preparing the final report and as the case may be, of the final expenditure verification and final evaluation. The costs incurred by the beneficiaries' associates are not eligible (with the exception of subsistence and/or travel costs).

Are considered to have been incurred during the implementation period of the action: the costs of goods/services/works used/provided/delivered during the implementation period of the Action. The relevant contracts may have been awarded by the Beneficiary or his partners before the implementation period of the action started, provided the provisions of Annex IV to the contract were respected. Such costs must be paid for before the final report is finalised;

- Be recorded in the Beneficiary's or the Beneficiary's partners' accounts or tax documents, be identifiable and verifiable, and be backed up by originals of supporting documents.

Subject to these conditions and, where relevant, to the respect of the contract award procedures, eligible direct costs borne by the Beneficiary and his partners include:

The cost of staff assigned to the action, corresponding to actual salaries plus social security charges and other remuneration-related costs. Salaries and costs must not exceed those normally borne by the Beneficiary or his partners, unless justified by showing that it is essential for carrying out the action;

Travel and subsistence costs for staff and other persons taking part in the action, provided they do not exceed those normally borne by the Beneficiary or his partners. Any flat-rate reimbursement of the subsistence costs must not exceed the rates published by the European Commission at the time of signing the contract;⁶

Purchase or rental costs for equipment and supplies (new or used) specifically for the purposes of the action, and costs of services, provided they correspond to market rates;

The cost of consumables;

Subcontracting expenditure (provided it does not exceed 10% of the total eligible cost);

Costs arising directly from the requirements of the contract (dissemination of information, evaluation specific to the action, audit, translation, printing, insurance, etc.) including financial service costs (in particular the cost of transfers and financial guarantees).

⁵

http://ec.europa.eu/comm/europeaid/tender/practical_guide_2006/documents/annexes_grants/en/e3h_1specond_en.doc

⁶ See: http://ec.europa.eu/comm/europeaid/perdiem/index_en.htm

Contingency reserve

A contingency reserve not exceeding 5% of the direct eligible costs may be included in the budget of the action. It can only be used with the prior written authorisation of the ACP Secretariat.

Participation in stakeholder meetings

For stakeholder meetings that may be organised by the ACP Secretariat, an amount of € 5,000 per year of duration of the project may be entered under the budget line 'Travel costs'.

Eligible indirect costs (overheads)

A lump sum not exceeding 7% of the total amount of eligible costs of the action may be claimed as indirect costs to cover the administrative overheads incurred by the Beneficiary for the action.

Indirect costs are ineligible if the Beneficiary receives in other respects an operating grant from the European Commission.

Contributions in kind

Any contributions in kind made by the Beneficiary or the Beneficiary's partners or any other source, which must be listed in Section I.4 of the application form, do not represent actual expenditure. They are not eligible costs, nor may they be treated as co-financing by the Beneficiary. The cost of staff assigned to the action is not a contribution in kind and may be considered as co-financing in the Budget for the action when paid by the Beneficiary or his partners.

However, the Beneficiary must undertake to make such contributions as stated on the application form if the grant is awarded.

Ineligible costs

The following costs are not eligible:

- Debts and provisions for losses or debts;
- Interest owed;
- Items already financed in another framework;
- Purchases of land or buildings, except where necessary for the direct implementation of the action, in which case ownership must be transferred to the final beneficiaries and/or local partners, at the latest by the end of the action;
- Currency exchange losses;
- Taxes, including VAT, unless the Beneficiary (or the Beneficiary's partners) cannot reclaim them and the applicable regulations do not forbid coverage of taxes;
- Credits to third parties

2.2 HOW TO APPLY AND PROCEDURES TO FOLLOW

2.2.1 *Application form*

Applications must be submitted using the application form annexed to these Guidelines (Annex A). **It includes a concept note, which must also be completed.** Please note that, in conformity with the procedure (see notice on page 2), the second step of the evaluation process will concern concept notes. On the basis of the technical evaluation of the concept note, it will be decided which proposals will undergo a full technical evaluation. Therefore, it is strongly recommended to fill in carefully and clearly this section of the application form.

Applicants must keep strictly to the format of the application and fill in the paragraphs and the pages in order. Applicants may apply either in English or French.

Please complete the application form carefully and as clearly as possible so that it can be assessed properly. The applicant should provide enough detail to ensure the application is clear, particularly as to how the aims of the action will be achieved, the benefits that will flow from it and the way in which it is relevant to the EDULINK Programme's objectives.

Any error related to the points listed in the checklist (section V of the grant application form) or any major inconsistency in the application form (e.g. the amounts mentioned in the budget are inconsistent with those mentioned in the application form) may lead to the immediate rejection of the proposal.

Clarifications will only be requested when information provided is unclear, thus preventing an objective assessment.

Hand-written applications will not be accepted.

Please note that only the application form and the annexes, which have to be filled in (budget, logical framework) will be transmitted to the evaluators and assessors. It is therefore of utmost importance that these documents contain ALL relevant information concerning the action. No supplementary annexes will be accepted.

2.2.2 *Where and how to send the applications*

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

Postal address (as well as for hand delivery or by private courier service)
EDULINK Programme Management Unit
c/o GOPA-Cartermill
Rue de Trèves 45
B-1040 Brussels
BELGIUM

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

What to send:

Paper version - one (1) original and one (1) copy of:

- Concept Note;
- Full Application Form;

- Budget (Annex B) and Budget Justification;
- Logical Framework (Annex C);

To facilitate the processing of applications, please present the original dossier and the copy in two separately bound dossiers in A4 size.

The Checklist (Section V of the grant application form) and the Declaration by the applicant (Section VI of the grant application form) must be stapled separately and enclosed in the envelope.

Electronic version

A copy of the complete application form must be provided in electronic format (floppy disc or CD-Rom). The electronic format must contain **exactly the same** information as the paper version. Each component of the application (concept note, application form, budget and logical framework) must be submitted in a separate and unique electronic file. Do not split the application form into several different files.

Where an applicant submits more than one proposal, each one must be sent separately.

NOTE:

The outer envelope must bear the following labels:

TO:

EDULINK Programme Management Unit
 c/o GOPA - Cartermill
 Rue de Trèves 45
 B-1040
 BELGIUM

Call for Proposals name and publication number:

FROM:
 [Insert full name and address of the Applicant...]

“Not to be opened before the opening session”

Applicants must verify that their application is complete by filling in the checklist (section V of the application form) and signing the Declaration by the applicant. Incomplete applications will be rejected.

2.2.3 *Deadline for receipt of applications*

The deadline for the receipt of applications is 15 January 2007 **at 16:00 Brussels time**. Any application received after the deadline will automatically be rejected even if the postmark indicates a date preceding the deadline or if the delay is due to the private courier service.

2.2.4 *Further information*

Questions related to the completion of the application form may in addition be sent by e-mail, post or fax no later than 21 days before the deadline for the receipt of proposals to the addresses and number below:

info@acp-edulink.eu

**EDULINK Programme Management Unit
c/o GOPA - Cartermill
Rue de Trèves 45
B-1040 Brussels
BELGIUM**

Fax nr: 00 32 2 280 1 406

Replies will be given no later than 11 days before the deadline for the receipt of proposals.

In the interest of equal treatment of applicants, the ACP Secretariat cannot give a prior opinion on the eligibility of an applicant, a partner or an action.

Questions that may be relevant to other applicants, together with the answers, will be published on the EDULINK website.

Please note: No information about the examination, clarification, evaluation or decisions about the grant award can be disclosed. Any attempt by an applicant to influence the evaluation process in any way (whether by initiating contact with the members of the Evaluation Committee or otherwise) will result in the immediate exclusion of its proposal from further consideration and in its exclusion from participating in calls for proposals for a period of two years.

However, applicants, whose proposals are rejected at different phases of the evaluation process, will be informed of the reasons for that decision.

2.3 EVALUATION AND SELECTION OF APPLICATIONS

Applications will be examined and evaluated by an Evaluation Committee assisted by the EDULINK Project Management Unit and possibly external assessors. All actions submitted by applicants will be assessed according to the following steps and criteria:

(1) STEP 1: OPENING SESSION AND ADMINISTRATIVE CHECK

The following will be assessed:

- Has the deadline been respected?

If the deadline has not been respected the proposal will automatically be rejected (see paragraph 2.2.3).

- Does the application form satisfy all the criteria mentioned in the Checklist? (Section V. of the grant application form)

If any of the requested information is missing or is incorrect, the proposal may be rejected on that sole basis and the proposal will not be evaluated further.

Following the opening session and the administrative check, a letter will be sent to all applicants, indicating whether their application was received prior to the deadline, informing them of the reference number they have been allocated, whether their application has satisfied all the criteria mentioned in the checklist and whether their concept note has been recommended for evaluation. ⁷

A list of the proposals received will be published on the same webpage where all the documents of the call have been published (under the “closed” section).

(2) STEP 2: EVALUATION OF THE CONCEPT NOTE

The concept notes having respected the deadline and satisfied the criteria mentioned in the checklist will undergo an evaluation of the relevance of the action, its methodology and sustainability, as well as of the operational capacity and expertise of the applicant.

The concept note can receive a maximum score of 50 as shown in the Evaluation grid below. This first evaluation will lead to a provisional selection. Only applicants, who have passed this first selection will see their full application assessed.

Please note that the scores awarded to this concept note are completely separate from those given in the second phase.

1. Summary of the action	<u>NO SCORE</u>	
2. Relevance		25
2.1 How relevant to the needs and constraints of the target country(ies) or region is the proposal? (5)		
2.2 How appropriately are the problems and the needs identified? (5)		
2.3 How clearly defined and strategically chosen are those involved (final beneficiaries, target groups)? (5)		

⁷ Please note that the length of period between the opening session and the sending of this letter will depend on the number of proposals received.

<i>beneficiaries, target groups)? (5)</i>		
2.4 <i>How relevant is the proposal to the objectives and guiding principles of the call for proposals? (5)</i>		
2.5 <i>Does the proposed action have an added value by reference to other interventions? (5)</i>		
3. Methodology and Sustainability		15
3.1 <i>Are the activities proposed appropriate, practical, and consistent with the objectives and expected results? (5)</i>		
3.2 <i>Is the partners' level of involvement and participation in the action satisfactory? (5)</i>		
3.3 <i>Are the expected results of the action likely to have a sustainable impact on the target groups? Will it have multiplier effects? (5)</i>		
4. Operational capacity and expertise.		10
4.1 <i>Does the applicant have sufficient experience in project management? (5)</i>		
4.2 <i>Do the applicant and partners have sufficient technical expertise (notably a knowledge of the questions to be addressed)? (5)</i>		
TOTAL SCORE		50

Please note:

Scoring:

The evaluation criteria are divided into sections and subsections. Each subsection will be given a score between 1 and 5 in accordance with the following guidelines:

1 = very poor; 2 = poor; 3 = adequate; 4 = good; 5 = very good.

Following the Concept Note evaluation, a list is drawn up of the projects

- that have been given a minimum total score of 30 points and
- for which the grant requests total no more than three times the amount available for the Call for Proposals (i.e. EUR 15 million).

Only the projects on this list will have their full application forms evaluated.

A letter will be sent to the applicants whose concept note has been evaluated, indicating whether their full application form will be evaluated.

(3) STEP 3: EVALUATION OF THE APPLICATION FORM

An evaluation of the quality of the proposals, including the proposed budget, and the capacity of the applicant and its partners, will be carried out in accordance with the evaluation criteria set out in the Evaluation Grid included below. There are two types of evaluation criteria: selection and award criteria.

The selection criteria are intended to help evaluate the applicants' financial and operational capacity to ensure that they:

- Have stable and sufficient sources of finance to maintain their activity throughout the period during which the action is being carried out and to participate in its funding;
- Have the management capacity, professional competences and qualifications required to successfully complete the proposed action. This also applies to any partners of the applicant.

The award criteria serve to evaluate the quality of the proposals submitted in relation to the objectives and priorities set, and grants to be awarded to actions which maximise the overall effectiveness of the call for proposals. They enable the selection of proposals which the ACP Secretariat can be confident will comply with its objectives and priorities and guarantee the visibility of the EDF financing. The award criteria cover such aspects as the relevance of the action, its consistency with the objectives of the call for proposals, quality, expected impact, sustainability and cost-effectiveness.

Please note:

Scoring:

The evaluation criteria are divided into sections and subsections. Each subsection will be given a score between 1 and 5 in accordance with the following guidelines:

1 = very poor; 2 = poor; 3 = adequate; 4 = good; 5 = very good.

The Evaluation Committee will reject the proposal:

- If the total average score is less than 12 points for section 1 (Financial and operational capacity);
- If the total average score is less than 16 points for section 2 (Relevance).

Provisional selection

Following the evaluation, a table listing the proposals ranked according to their score and within the available financial envelope will be established as well as a reserve list following the same criteria.

Note: The scores awarded in this phase are completely separate from those given to the concept note of the same application.

Evaluation Grid

Section	Maximum Score	Application form
1. Financial and operational capacity	20	
1.1 Do the applicant and partners have sufficient experience of project management ?	5	II.4.1 and III.1
1.2 Do the applicant and partners have sufficient technical expertise ? (notably knowledge of the issues to be addressed.)	5	II.4.1 and III.1
1.3 Do the applicant and partners have sufficient management capacity ? (including staff, equipment and ability to handle the budget for the action)?	5	II.4.2 and III.1
1.4 Does the applicant have stable and sufficient sources of finance ?	5	II.4.2
2. Relevance	25	
2.1 How relevant is the proposal to the objectives and one or more of the priorities of the call for proposals? <i>Note: A score of 5 (very good) will only be allocated if the proposal specifically addresses at least one priority or contains specific added-value elements, such as promotion of gender equality and equal opportunities.</i>	5 x 2	I.1.6.1
2.2 How relevant to the particular needs and constraints of the target country/countries or region(s) is the proposal? (including synergy and avoidance of duplication with other EC initiatives.)	5	I.1.6.2
2.3 How clearly defined and strategically chosen are those involved (final beneficiaries, target groups)? Have their needs been clearly defined and does the proposal address them appropriately?	5 x 2	I.1.6.3 and I.1.6.4
3. Methodology	25	
3.1 Are the activities proposed appropriate, practical, and consistent with the objectives and expected results?	5	I.1.7 and I.1.8.5
3.2 How coherent is the overall design of the action? (in particular, does it reflect the analysis of the problems involved, take into account external factors and anticipate an evaluation ?)	5	I.1.8
3.3 Is the partners' level of involvement and participation in the action satisfactory?	5	I.1.7 and I.1.8.5
3.4 Is the action plan clear and feasible?	5	I.1.9
3.5 Does the proposal contain objectively verifiable indicators for the outcome of the action?	5	Logframe
4. Sustainability	15	
4.1 Is the action likely to have a tangible impact on its target groups?	5	I.2.1
4.2 Is the proposal likely to have multiplier effects ? (including scope for replication and extension of the outcome of the action and dissemination of information.)	5	I.2.2 and I.2.3
4.3 Are the expected results of the proposed action sustainable : - financially (<i>how will the activities be financed after the funding ends?</i>) - institutionally (<i>will structures allowing the activities to continue be in place at the end of the action? Will there be local "ownership" of the results of the action?</i>) - at policy level (where applicable) (<i>what will be the structural impact of the action — e.g. will it lead to improved legislation, codes of conduct, methods, etc?</i>)?	5	I.2.4
5. Budget and cost-effectiveness	15	
5.1 is the ratio between the estimated costs and the expected results satisfactory?	5	I.3
5.2 Is the proposed expenditure necessary for the implementation of the action?	5 x 2	I.3
Maximum total score	100	

(4) STEP 4: ELIGIBILITY OF THE APPLICANT AND PARTNERS

The eligibility verification will only be performed for the proposals that have been provisionally selected according to their score and within the available financial envelope. It will be based on the requested supporting documents (see 2.4).

- The Declaration by the applicant (Section VI of the grant application form) will be cross-checked with the supporting documents provided by the applicant. Any missing supporting document or any incoherence between the Declaration by the applicant and the supporting documents may lead to the automatic rejection of the proposal on that sole basis.
- The eligibility of the applicant, the partners, and the action will be verified according to the criteria set out in sections 2.1.1, 2.1.2 and 2.1.3.

Following the above analysis any rejected proposal will be replaced by the next best placed proposal in the reserve list that falls within the available financial envelope. This proposal will then be examined for the eligibility of its applicant and the partners.

2.4 SUBMISSION OF SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS FOR PROVISIONALLY SELECTED PROPOSALS

Applicants who have been provisionally selected or listed under the reserve list will be informed in writing by the ACP Secretariat. They will be requested to supply the following documents in order to allow to verify the eligibility of the applicants and their partners:

1. The statutes or articles of association of the applicant institution and of each partner institution.⁸
2. A document by the competent national authorities (e.g. Ministry of Education) that certifies that the HEI and its partners are recognised and their diplomas accredited.
3. For private higher education institutions, where the grant requested exceeds EUR 300 000, an external audit report produced by an approved auditor, certifying the accounts for the last financial year available and giving an assessment of the viability of the applicant. The auditor does not have to analyse the applicant's future financial viability, but to find out any worrying elements concerning its financial health, which is a normal part of the annual audit of the applicant's accounts. This obligation does not apply to public bodies.
4. Copy of the applicant's latest accounts (the profit and loss account and the balance sheet for the previous financial year for which the accounts have been closed)⁹.
5. Legal entity sheet (see annex D) duly completed and signed by the applicant, accompanied by the justifying documents that are requested therein.
6. A financial identification form conforming to the model attached at Annex E, certified by the bank to which the payments will be made. This bank must be located in the country where the applicant is registered. If the applicant has already signed a contract with the European Commission, a copy of the previous financial identification form may be provided instead, unless a change in its bank account occurred in the meantime.

The supporting documents requested must be supplied in the form of originals or photocopies of the said originals.

A translation of these documents, when in other languages than the official languages of the programme, (EN, FR, PT¹⁰) must be provided in English or French by the applicant and/or partner(s)."

If these documents are not provided before the set deadline, the application will be rejected.

⁸ Where you and/or (a) partner(s) is/are a public body created by a law, a copy of the said law must be provided

⁹ This obligation does not apply to Member States public bodies. It does not apply either when the accounts are in practice the same documents as the external audit report already provided pursuant to point 2.4.2.

¹⁰ Please note that although these guidelines are available in Portuguese, the application forms have to be completed in English or French only.

2.5 NOTIFICATION OF THE ACP SECRETARIAT'S DECISION

2.5.1 *Content of the decision*

Applicants will be informed in writing of the ACP Secretariat's decision concerning their application.

A decision to reject an application or not to award a grant will be based on the following grounds:

- the application was received after the closing date;
- the application was incomplete or otherwise non-compliant with the stated administrative conditions;
- the applicant or one or more of its partners was not eligible;
- the action was ineligible (e.g. the action proposed is not covered by the programme, the proposal exceeds the maximum duration allowed, the requested contribution is higher than the maximum allowed, etc);
- the proposal was not relevant enough and/or the applicant's financial and operational capacity was not sufficient;
- the proposal was considered technically and financially inferior to the proposals selected;
- although the proposal fulfils the quality criteria required for a favourable opinion, another proposal of a similar nature was awarded a higher score;
- several proposals were submitted by the same applicant and selected for financing, but the applicant does not have the financial and operational capacity required to implement the actions all together;
- one or more of the requested supporting documents were not provided before the set deadline;
- any other criterion included in these guidelines has not been respected.

The ACP Secretariat's decision to reject an application or not to award a grant is final.

2.5.2 *Indicative time table*

The date on which the ACP Secretariat plans to inform the applicants about the outcome of the opening session and the administrative check is February 2007 - this date is indicative only.

The date on which the ACP Secretariat plans to inform the applicants about the outcome of the evaluation of the concept note is April 2007 - this date is indicative only.

The date on which the ACP Secretariat plans to inform the applicants about the outcome of the evaluation of the full application form is May 2007 - this date is indicative only.

The date on which the ACP Secretariat plans to announce the award decision after having verified the eligibility of applicant and partners is June 2007 - this date is indicative only.

2.6 CONDITIONS APPLICABLE TO IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACTION FOLLOWING THE ACP SECRETARIAT'S DECISION TO AWARD A GRANT

Following the decision to award a grant, the Beneficiary will be offered a contract based on the ACP Secretariat's standard contract (see Annex F).

The date planned for the start of actions, following the signing of the contract by the parties, is 1 June 2007 — this date is indicative only.

The contract will, in particular, establish the following rights and obligations:

Audit firm

The name and address of the audit firm which will carry out the expenditure verification(s) referred to in article 15.6 of annex II to the standard grant contract, if such verifications are required, will have to be included in Article 5.2 of the contract.

Final amount of the grant

The maximum amount of the grant will be stipulated in the contract. As explained in point 2.1.4, this amount is based on the budget, which is itself only an estimate. As a result, it will be final only once the action has ended and the final accounts have been presented (see Articles 17.1 and 17.2 of the General Conditions).

Failure to meet the objectives

If the Beneficiary fails to implement the action as undertaken and agreed in the contract, the ACP Secretariat reserves the right to suspend payments, and/or to terminate the contract (see Article 11 of the General Conditions). The ACP Secretariat's contribution may be reduced, and/or the ACP Secretariat may demand full or partial repayment of the sums already paid, if the Beneficiary does not fulfil the terms of the contract (see Articles 12.2 and 17.4 of the General Conditions).

Amendments to the contract and variations within the budget

Any amendment to the contract must be set out in a written addendum to the original contract (Article 9.1 of the General Conditions). However, some amendments (addresses, bank account, etc.) may simply be notified to the ACP Secretariat (see Article 9.2 of the General Conditions).

The description of the Action (Annex 1 to the contract) and budget items may vary from the original figures provided that the following conditions are met:

- (1) they do not affect the basic purpose of the action; and
- (2) the financial impact is limited to a transfer between items within a single main budget heading or to a transfer between the main budget headings involving a variation of less than 15% of the original amount (as the case may be modified by addendum) of each relevant main budget heading.

In such instances, the Beneficiary may make alterations to the budget, and inform the ACP Secretariat.

This method may not be used to amend the heading for overhead costs and contingency reserve (see Article 9.2 of the General Conditions).

In all other cases, a written request must be made in advance to the ACP Secretariat and an addendum is required.

Reports

Reports must be drafted in the language provided for in the contract. Narrative and financial reports conforming to the models attached to the contract are to be supplied together with payment requests (other than the first instalment of pre-financing).

Additional information

In accordance with Article 2.2 of the General Conditions, the ACP Secretariat may request additional information.

Payments

The Beneficiary will receive pre-financing. The first pre-financing instalment will be 80% of the part of the estimated budget for the first 12 months of the action financed by the Contracting Authority (see Article 15.1 option 2 of the General Conditions). In that case, subsequent pre-financing payments may be made upon submission by the Beneficiary and approval by the Contracting Authority, of an interim report.

In each case, the final balance will be paid upon submission by the Beneficiary and approval by the Contracting Authority of the final report (see Article 15.1 of the General Conditions).

Payments will be made to a bank account or sub-account which identifies the funds paid by the Contracting Authority and allows calculating the interests produced by these funds.

Accounts of the action

The Beneficiary must keep accurate and regular records and dedicated, transparent accounts of the implementation of the action (see Article 16.1 of the General Conditions). It must keep these records for seven years after payment of the balance.

Expenditure verification

A report on the verification of the Action's expenditures, produced by an approved auditor who is a member of an internationally recognised supervisory body for statutory auditing, must be attached to:

- any request for a further pre-financing payment if the sum total of the earlier and the new pre-financing payments exceeds EUR 750 000;
- any request for payment of the balance in the case of a grant of more than EUR 100 000.

In an expenditure verification report conforming to the model attached at Annex VII to the contract, the auditor will certify that the costs declared by the Beneficiary are real, exact and eligible in accordance with the Contract (see Article 15.6 of the General Conditions).

The contract will permit the Commission, the European Anti-Fraud Office, the European Court of Auditors and the external auditor to carry out both record-based and on-the spot inspections of the action (see Article 16.2 of the General Conditions).

Publicity

Appropriate visibility and credit must be given to the grant made by the European Union, for example, in reports and publications stemming from the action or during public events associated with the action, etc. (see Article 6 of the General Conditions).

Implementation contracts

Where implementation of the action requires the Beneficiary to award procurement contracts, it must award the contract to the tenderer offering the best value for money, that is to say, the best price-quality ratio, in compliance with the principles of transparency and equal treatment for potential contractors, care being taken to avoid any conflict of interests. To this end, the Beneficiary must follow the procedures set out in Annex IV to the contract.

3. LIST OF ANNEXES

DOCUMENTS TO FILL IN

ANNEX A: GRANT APPLICATION FORM (WORD FORMAT)

ANNEX B: BUDGET (EXCEL FORMAT)

ANNEX C: LOGICAL FRAMEWORK (EXCEL FORMAT)

ANNEX D: LEGAL ENTITY SHEET (EXCEL FORMAT)¹¹

http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/budget/execution/legal_entities_en.htm

ANNEX E: FINANCIAL IDENTIFICATION FORM¹²

DOCUMENTS FOR INFORMATION

ANNEX F: STANDARD CONTRACT (WORD FORMAT), available at the following address:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/europeaid/tender/gestion/cont_typ/st/index_en.htm

ANNEX G: DAILY ALLOWANCE RATES (PER DIEM), available at the following address:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/europeaid/perdiem/index_en.htm

¹¹ ¹² Annex D and E are considered supporting documents, which must be submitted only under the conditions established in section 2.4.