



**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 2007

Open Call for Proposals

9th European Development Fund

Reference: EuropeAid/125565/D/ACT/Multi

Deadline for submission of applications: **2 October 2007**

DISCLAIMER

The translation in French is 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.

During their evaluation, proposals must pass a four step process:

1. Opening Session and Administrative Check
2. Evaluation of the concept note
3. Full Evaluation of applications forms
4. Eligibility of the applicants and partners

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1. THE EDULINK PROGRAMME

1.1 BACKGROUND

The EDULINK Programme is designed to foster co-operation in the field of higher education between the European Union and the countries of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP States). More precisely, the objective of the Programme is to promote regional and multilateral networking between higher education institutions (HEIs) in both regions in the perspective of mutual interest.

The Programme is rooted on the European Commission communication on “*Strengthening Co-operation with Third Countries in the Field of Higher Education*” adopted in July 2001.

It represents a harmonised approach for the implementation of the European Commission funded programmes in the ACP Group of States with a view to improving the effectiveness, management, visibility and hence the impact of ACP-EU co-operation in the field of higher education.

EDULINK is open to all ACP States and to the 15 EU Member States that are signatories to the 9th European Development Fund (EDF). It primarily benefits **Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)**.

1.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAMME AND PRIORITY ISSUES

The overall objective of the EDULINK Programme is twofold:

- To foster capacity building and regional integration in the field of higher education through institutional networking between HEIs based in the ACP Group of States and the HEIs in the 15 EU Member States eligible for the programme, and
- To support a higher education system of quality that is efficient and relevant to the needs of the labour market, and consistent with ACP socio-economic development priorities.

The EDULINK Programme purpose is to strengthen the capacity of ACP HEIs at three levels:

- Management/administration,
- Academic, and
- Research and Technology.

Thus, the EDULINK Programme funds project which aim at achieving the following results:

- Enhance contribution to national and/or regional policies and implementation plans for regional co-operation in higher education,
- Increase inter-institutional networking between HEIs in the ACP Group of States and HEIs in the EU,
- Create better regional conditions for effective networking of higher education centres in research, science and technology innovation,
- Enhance management and financial administration capacity of HEIs in the ACP Group of States,
- Turn ACP HEIs into regional and/or international poles of attraction as they deliver labour-market oriented study programmes, which satisfy quality standards,
- Create a suitable institutional framework to pursue academic excellence in higher education,
- Develop or reinforce the strategic expertise of ACP States in fields linked to the socio-economic development of the country/region.
- Upgrade and enhance the qualifications of teaching staff and administrators of HEIs
- Promote the exchange of experience and encourage mutual knowledge and recognition of study programmes and reciprocal access to higher education.

In order to increase institutional capacity and the transfer of know-how in the field of higher education in the ACP Group of States, this Call for Proposals seeks proposals for consortia of networked HEIs that carry out one or more of the following types of activities:

- Institutional capacity building of ACP HEIs 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 9 000 000. 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 to contract procedures for EC external actions, which is applicable to the present call (available on the Internet at this address: http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/work/procedures/index_en.htm).

2.1 ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

There are three sets of eligibility criteria, relating to:

- **Applicant** which may request a grant (2.1.1), and its 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”	Member institution of the partnership other than the applicant;
“Associate”	Organisation that has a real role in the action but does 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;
“Constituted network”	A temporary consortium between several HEIs constituted for the purpose of submitting an application and, if successful, for implementing the project. It does not have to exist previously, and its constitution has to be demonstrated by the signed “Partnership Statements” required under chapter III of the Application Form.
“Established network”	A consortium of HEIs existing prior to submitting an application under the EDULINK Programme and fulfilling the criteria referred to in Section 2.1.1 under the Sub-title “Are also eligible”.

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 Institution (HEI)**¹ or **an Entity within such an institution** with a legal status that allows it to apply on its own behalf. These HEIs or Entities have to be registered in one of the ACP States or in the 15 EU Member States that are signatories to the 9th European Development Fund (EDF) as enumerated here below:

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.

Eligible African/ Caribbean/ Pacific Countries

Angola Antigua and Barbuda The Bahamas Barbados Belize Benin Botswana Burkina Faso Burundi Cameroon Cape Verde Central African Republic Chad Comoros Dem. Rep of Congo Congo Cook Islands Ivory Coast Djibouti Dominica Dominican Republic Equatorial Guinea Eritrea Ethiopia Fiji Gabon	Gambia Ghana Grenada Guinea Guinea-Bissau Guyana Haiti Jamaica Kenya Kiribati Lesotho Liberia Madagascar Malawi Mali Marshall Islands Mauritania Mauritius Federated States of Micronesia 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 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
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Eligible EU Member States:

Austria Belgium Denmark Finland France	Germany Greece Ireland Italy Luxembourg	Netherlands Portugal Spain Sweden United Kingdom
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Are also eligible:

- ***Established networks of HEIs*** within the ACP Group of States and the 15 EU Member States eligible for the Programme 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, and
 - 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 as applicants or as partners:

- ***The Member States of the EU which joined since 2004.***
- ***Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs)***
- ***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 they are in any of the situations which are listed in Section 2.3.3 of the Practical Guide to contract procedures for EC external actions (available from the following Internet address: http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/work/procedures/index_en.htm);

In part B section VI of the grant application form (“Declaration by the applicant”), applicants must declare that they do not fall into any of the situations.

PLEASE ALSO NOTE THAT:

- HEIs or organisations (including NGOs) from countries that are not in the list of eligible countries can nevertheless participate in projects as “**associates**”, under the conditions established in section 2.1.2 of the guidelines.
- Independent **Research Institutes** (RI) as such are not eligible. An RI can be an associate, under the conditions established in section 2.1.2 of the guidelines.
- HEIs that already receive EC funding are eligible for the EDULINK Programme, provided that the funding they already receive is used for different purposes than those for which they apply for EDULINK funding. There can be no double financing.

2.1.2 <i>Partnerships and eligibility of partners</i>

Applicants must operate within a **constituted network**, fulfilling the following conditions:

- The network must involve at least 3 HEIs. There is no upper limit to the number of HEIs included. The optimum size of a network is one allowing for the achievement of the project objectives in the most cost-effective manner.
- The network must involve HEIs from at least 2 different States within the ACP Group of States.
- The participation of EU HEIs is not imperative, but will be welcomed.

- HEIs from Cuba and South Africa may participate in projects *as applicants or partners* but the activities implemented by the South African or Cuban institutions have to be ACP related and consequently the final beneficiaries² have to be the ACP States mentioned in section 2.1.1.
- The number of institutions from different eligible ACP States must always be greater than the number of EU, South African or Cuban institutions.
- 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.
- One of the HEIs involved in the network will act as the lead institution (the “Applicant”) and, if selected, as the contracting party (the “Beneficiary”).

Please note that applications submitted by *networks where the lead institution is an ACP HEI* or by *networks composed exclusively of ACP HEIs* will be given priority over networks not fulfilling these criteria if at a certain stage of the evaluation process they receive the same scores.

Partners

Applicants’ partners participate in designing and 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.

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 diem 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 B section IV (“Associates of the Applicant participating in the Action”) of the Grant Application Form. The associates may make a financial contribution to the project. It will be included in the own contribution.

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.³ 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.

² “Final beneficiaries” are those who will benefit from the project in the long term at the level of the society or sector at large.

³ 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

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 Eligible actions: actions for which an application may be made

Duration

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

Sectors or themes

The Programme purpose is to strengthen the capacity of ACP HEIs at three levels:

- Management/administration:

Institutional capacity building of ACP HEIs 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 HEIs to:

- Improve their academic and teaching excellence in priority sectors linked to the socio-economic development of ACP Group of States;
- 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.

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 beneficiaries must still be the ACP States (other than Cuba and South Africa).

Types of action

Corresponding to these levels, the following modules 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.

1. 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

2. 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

3. 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

Please note that a project can encompass **one or more** modules of eligible actions described here above.

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. However, 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 *financed under the eligible types of action*, 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 States 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 (i.e. the applicant + partners) *composed of the same HEIs or the same Entities within those HEIs*, may not submit more than one proposal, even if the applicant (i.e. the lead HEI) is different in each case.

However, applicants may submit more than one proposal if *the majority of the partners are different and if the proposals are for projects that are clearly different* in content or geographical coverage. Please note that in these cases, each proposal must be submitted individually and separately.

Applicants to whom a grant was awarded under the 1st Call for Proposals may introduce another proposal under the 2nd Call, even with the same network of partners, provided that the new grant is requested for a project with a clearly different content.

2.1.4 <i>Eligibility of costs: costs which may be taken into consideration for the grant</i>
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Only "eligible costs" can be taken into account for a grant. 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 based on supporting documents, not lump sums (except for subsistence costs and indirect costs where flat-rate funding apply).

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 (for instance arithmetical errors, inaccuracies or unrealistic costs and other ineligible costs). The checks may give rise to requests for clarification and may lead the ACP Secretariat to impose modifications or reductions to address such mistakes or inaccuracies. The amount of the grant and the percentage of co-financing as a result of these corrections may not be increased in any case.

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

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**.

Eligible direct costs

To be eligible under the call for proposals, costs must respect the provisions of article 14 of the General Conditions to the Standard Grant Contract (see Annex F).

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)

The indirect costs incurred in carrying out the action may be eligible for flat-rate funding fixed at not more than 7% of the total eligible direct costs.

Contributions in kind

Any contributions in kind, which must be listed separately at Annex III, do not represent actual expenditure and are not eligible costs. The contributions in kind may not 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 of the Action when paid by the Beneficiary or his partners. The partnership may use sitting staff and /or extra staff especially employed if it is necessary for the implementation of the project.

Notwithstanding to the above, if the description of the action as proposed by the beneficiary foresees the contributions in kind, such contributions have to be provided.

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). **This form includes guidance for the concept note, which must be drafted in the same document and must not be separated from the application form.**

Applicants **must keep strictly to the format of the application** and fill in the paragraphs and the pages in order.

Applicants must apply either in English or in French.

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 the Contracting Authority from conducting an objective assessment.

Please note that:

Only the application form and the annexes (budget and the logical framework) that are annexed to these Guidelines **will be considered valid** and 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.**

While filling in the Application form and the annexes, applicants **must strictly respect the space foreseen for each section. It is up to the applicants to determine the level of detail of description that will allow to do so.**

This is essential so that the applications can be processed and evaluated in the most efficient manner.

Hand-written applications will not be accepted.

Applications must be submitted 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 (the same address applies for hand delivery or delivery by private courier service)

EDULINK Programme Management Unit
c/o GOPA-Cartermill
Rue de Trèves 45
B-1040 Brussels
BELGIUM
TEL: 00 32 (0)2 234 37 20

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):

- *Full Application Form* (including the Concept Note) (Annex A);
- *Budget* including :
 - The Budget for the Action and Sources for Funding (Annex B)
 - The Budget Justification (no special template);
- *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 above mentioned documents, containing **exactly the same information**, must be provided in electronic format (floppy disc or CD-Rom).

Each of the three components of the application (Application Form, Budget and Logical Framework) must be submitted in a separate and unique electronic file. Please **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”

Please also note that:

- Applicants must verify that their application is complete by filling in the checklist (Section V of the Grant application form) and signing the Declaration by the applicant (Section VI of the Grant application form). **Incomplete applications will be rejected.**
- **Only the Declaration by the applicant must be an original (signatures and stamps).** Faxed or scanned copies of signed partnership statements will be accepted, but applicants may be subsequently asked to replace them with originals.

The signing of documents

The applicant only has to sign “the Declaration by the applicant”. The Applicant does not have to sign a “Partnership statement” (Section III of the application form).

The person to sign the “Declaration by the applicant” should be the one who is authorised to act on behalf of the network submitting the proposal. At the same time, the form sheet “the applicant” must identify the contact person, to whom any requests for clarification or further information could be addressed.

The “Description of Partners” (Section III of the Grant application form) has to be filled in either by the partners themselves or by the applicant on the basis of the information provided by the partners.

The “Partnership Statement” must be signed by the person legally authorised to represent the partner institution.

The deadline for the submission of applications is **2 October 2007** as evidenced by the date of dispatch, the postmark or the date of the deposit slip. In case of hand-deliveries, the deadline for receipt is at **16:00 Brussels time** as evidenced by the signed and dated receipt. Any application submitted after the deadline will automatically be rejected.

2.2.4 *Further information for Applications*

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 submission 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 submission 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 composed of members of the ACP Secretariat. The Committee will be assisted by the EDULINK Project Management Unit and possibly by 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 submitted 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. ⁴

(2) STEP 2: EVALUATION OF THE CONCEPT NOTE

The evaluation of the Concept Notes that have passed the first administrative check will cover the relevance of the action, its merits and effectiveness, its viability and sustainability. The ACP Secretariat reserves the right to skip the evaluation of the Concept Notes whenever considered justified (for example when a less than expected number of proposals are received) and to go straight to the evaluation of the corresponding full proposals.

Please note that the scores awarded to this concept note are completely separate from those given in the Step 3 of the evaluation.

The Concept Note will be given an overall score out of 50 points in accordance with the breakdown provided in the Evaluation Grid below. The evaluation shall also verify the compliance with instructions provided in the guidance for Concept Note, part A of the grant application form.

If the examination of the Concept Note reveals that the proposed action does not meet the eligibility criteria stated in paragraph 2.1.3, the proposal shall be rejected on this sole basis.

The evaluation criteria are divided into headings and subheadings. Each subheading will be given a score between 1 and 5 in accordance with the following assessment categories: 1 = very poor; 2 = poor; 3 = adequate; 4 = good; 5 = very good.

⁴ 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.

Most importantly, please note that while filling in the concept note **it is essential that:**

- The information provided in the concept note explains the proposed action in a concise and complete manner
- The structure and space provided in the Application form are strictly respected
- No additional and unrequested information is included in the concept note.

	Scores	
	Sub-score	
1. Relevance of the action	Sub-score	15
1.1 Relevance of the problems to needs and constraints of the country/region to be addressed in general, and to those of the target groups and final beneficiaries in particular	5	
1.2 Relevance to the priorities and objectives mentioned in the Guidelines	5(x2)*	
2. Effectiveness and Feasibility of the action	Sub-score	25
2.1 Assessment of the problem identification and analysis	5	
2.2 Assessment of the proposed activities (practicality and consistency in relation to the objectives, purpose and expected results).	5(x2)*	
2.3 Assessment of the role and involvement of all stakeholders and proposed partners.	5(x2)*	
3. Sustainability of the action	Sub-score	10
3.1 Assessment of the identification of the main assumptions and risks, before the start up and throughout the implementation period.	5	
3.2 Assessment of the identification of long-term sustainable impact on the target groups and final beneficiaries.	5	
TOTAL SCORE		50

*the scores are multiplied by 2 because of their importance

Once all Concept Notes have been assessed, a list will be established with the proposed actions ranked according to their total score.

Firstly, only the Concept Notes which have been given a score of a minimum of **12 points in the category "Relevance"** as well as a **minimum total score of 30 points** will be considered for pre-selection.

Secondly, the list of Concept Notes will be reduced in accordance to the ranking to those whose sum of requested contributions amounts to **EUR 18 million**, two times the available budget for this Call for proposals. The Evaluation Committee will subsequently proceed with the evaluation of the full proposals of the pre-selected applicants.

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 FULL APPLICATION

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, 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.

If the examination of the proposal reveals that the proposed action does not meet the eligibility criteria stated in paragraph 2.1.3, the proposal shall be rejected on this sole basis.

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.

Evaluation Grid

Section	Maximum Score
1. Financial and operational capacity	20
1.1 Do the applicant and partners have sufficient experience of project management ?	5
1.2 Do the applicant and partners have sufficient technical expertise ? (notably knowledge of the issues to be addressed.)	5
1.3 Do the applicant and partners have sufficient management capacity ? (including staff, equipment and ability to handle the budget for the action)?	5
1.4 Does the applicant have stable and sufficient sources of finance ?	5
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? Note: A score of 5 (very good) will only be allocated if the proposal specifically addresses at least one priority . Note: A score of 5 (very good) will only be allocated if the proposal contains specific added-value elements, such as promotion of gender equality and equal opportunities...	5 x 2
2.2 How relevant to the particular needs and constraints of the target country/countries or region(s) is the proposal? (including avoidance of duplication and synergy with other EC initiatives.)	5
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
3. Methodology	25
3.1 Are the activities proposed appropriate, practical, and consistent with the objectives and expected results?	5
3.2 How coherent is the overall design of the action?	5

(in particular, does it reflect the analysis of the problems involved, take into account external factors and anticipate an evaluation ?)	
3.3 Is the partners' level of involvement and participation in the action satisfactory?	5
3.4 Is the action plan clear and feasible?	5
3.5 Does the proposal contain objectively verifiable indicators for the outcome of the action?	5
4. Sustainability	15
4.1 Is the action likely to have a tangible impact on its target groups?	5
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
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
5. Budget and cost-effectiveness	15
5.1 is the ratio between the estimated costs and the expected results satisfactory?	5
5.2 Is the proposed expenditure necessary for the implementation of the action?	5 x 2
Maximum total score	100

Note on Section 1. Financial and operational capacity

If the total average score is **less than 12 points for section 1**, the Evaluation Committee will reject the proposal.

Note on Section 2. Relevance

If the total average score is **less than 20 points for section 2**, the Evaluation Committee will reject the proposal.

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.

(4) STEP 4: VERIFICATION OF 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 Part B 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 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 and if necessary, 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.⁵
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. 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)⁶.
4. Legal entity sheet (see annex D) duly completed and signed by the applicant, accompanied by the justifying documents that are requested therein.
5. 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 or where the European Commission has been in charge of the payments of a contract, 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. However, the Legal entity sheet and the financial identification form must always be submitted in original.

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

If the supporting documents are not provided before the set deadline (15 calendar days from the receipt of the letter sent by the ACP Secretariat), the application may be rejected.

Based on the verification of the supporting documents by the Evaluation Committee it will make a final recommendation to the ACP Secretariat which will decide on the award of grants.

⁵ 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

⁶ This obligation does not apply to public bodies.

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 and the reasons for the decision.

Applicants believing that they have been harmed by an error or irregularity during the award process may petition to the ACP Secretariat directly. The ACP Secretariat must reply within 90 days of receipt of the complaint.

Where the European Commission is informed of such a complaint, it must communicate its opinion to the ACP Secretariat and do all it can to facilitate an amicable solution between the complainant (applicant) and the ACP Secretariat. If this procedure fails, the applicant may have recourse to procedures established under the recipient's national legislation.

2.5.2 Indicative time table

	DATE*	TIME**
Deadline for request for any clarifications from the ACP Secretariat	21 days before the submission deadline	18:00
Last date on which clarifications are issued by the ACP Secretariat	11 days before the submission deadline	18:00
Deadline for submission of the Application Form	02/10/2007	16:00 (if hand-delivered)
Information to applicants on the opening & administrative check	October 2007*	-
Information to applicants on the evaluation of the Concept Notes	November/December 2007*	-
Information to applicants on the evaluation of the Full Application Form	January/February 2008*	-
Notification of award (after the eligibility check)	March/April 2008*	-
Contract signature	April/May 2008*	-

* Provisional date

**All times are Brussels time

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). By signing the Application form (Annex A), the applicant declares accepting, in case where it is awarded a grant, the Contractual conditions as laid down in the Standard Contract.

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 (PDF FORMAT)⁷

http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/work/procedures/documents/execution/grants/e3elefpublic_en.pdf

(Public Entities)

http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/work/procedures/documents/execution/grants/e3elefcompany_en.pdf

(Private Entities)

ANNEX E: FINANCIAL IDENTIFICATION FORM⁸

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://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/work/procedures/implementation/per_diems/index_en.htm

^{7 8} Annex D and E are considered supporting documents, which must be submitted only under the conditions established in section 2.4.