



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL HOME AFFAIRS
Directorate C : Migration and Borders

EUROPEAN RETURN FUND 2008-2013¹

COMMUNITY ACTIONS CALL FOR PROPOSALS 2010

¹ The European Return Fund 2008-2013 was established by Decision No 575/2007/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council.

1. Introduction

1.1 GENERAL OBJECTIVES

Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council No 575/2007/EC of 23 May 2007 established the European Return Fund for the period 2008 to 2013 as part of the General programme "Solidarity and Management of Migration Flows"¹ (hereafter 'the Decision').

The objective of the Fund is to support the efforts made by the Member States to improve the management of return in all its dimensions through the use of the concept of integrated management and by providing for joint actions to be implemented by Member States or national actions that pursue European Union objectives under the principle of solidarity, taking account of European Union legislation in this field and in full compliance with fundamental rights.

The Fund is part of a policy mix of instruments and measures available to the European Union for integrated management of returns. The bulk of resources available for the Fund is allocated to the Member States² each year (shared management), in order to support actions relating to the general objectives defined in Article 2 of the Decision. In accordance with Article 6(1) of the Decision, the Commission may use up to 7% of the Fund's available resources to finance transnational actions or actions of interest to the European Union as a whole (hereinafter referred to as 'Community actions'). The budget for grants under the Community actions for 2010 amounts to **4.825.000,00 €** which shall be used for the following objectives defined in Article 6(2) (b) and (e):

- Support the setting-up of transnational cooperation networks and pilot projects based on transnational partnership between bodies located in two or more Member States designed to stimulate innovation, facilitate the exchange of experience and good practice and improve the quality of return policy.
- Support pilot projects exploring the possibility of new forms of Community cooperation and Community law in this area.

1.2 PRIORITIES AND ELIGIBLE ACTIONS

The objectives laid down in Article 6(2) (b) and (e) of the Decision will be pursued in 2010 by taking into account the policy context and by further building on priorities identified for the "Preparatory Actions: Migration Management - Solidarity in Action". The eligible actions for each of the two categories are described below:

¹ OJ L144, 6.6.2007, p.45

² For the purpose of the European Return Fund and in line with Decision No 575/2007/EC, the term "Member States" covers all Member States with the exception of Denmark.

Category 1 Creation of an EU network on voluntary return
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Policy context

According to the recently adopted "Stockholm Programme" voluntary return should be a preferred option and focus should be placed on encouraging voluntary return by using the possibilities offered by existing financial instruments.

As already mentioned in the section 1.1, at national level, in the European Return Fund Multiannual Programmes around 20 Member States have drawn up integrated plans with a strong focus on the area of voluntary return. The remarkable number of different national activities in the 2008 and 2009 Annual Programmes under the European Return Fund, but also under earlier programmes such as the Return Preparatory Actions and Solidarity in action serves as proof of the commitment of Member States in the area of voluntary return. On the other hand it has become obvious that there is a lack of co-ordination *between* Member States, and also *within* certain Member States in the area of voluntary return and voluntary return assistance.

One reason might be that, unlike in the area of forced return, in the field of (assisted) voluntary return a lot of stakeholders, including national, regional and local governmental bodies, non-governmental and international organisations are involved. Moreover, voluntary return has a strong external component, involving often the same range of stakeholders in the country of return.

Eligible actions

Creation of a EU-wide network on voluntary return aiming to improve cooperation among stakeholders in the field. This network would set up a website as its main tool for gathering and sharing of information on all activities in the field of voluntary return, in order to achieve more coherence and create positive synergies. Although the membership of the website would be limited to the return community, it should also have certain amount of publicly available information introducing the return activities and the network.

In addition to moderating the website, the applicant should propose other ways to start, facilitate and lead the activities of the network. The activities suggested should strengthen coordination and help Member States and other stakeholders engaged in the process of voluntary return to adjust their activities and to pool and share their competences and resources.

The Commission will provide an IT platform for the website (a Commission IT tool called SINAPSE that hosts different communities on specific issues), consequently, there would be no need for IT programming and no need for the hosting space. However, the applicant should be ready, if need be, to design an introductory webpage to introduce the website to the general public.

The main objective of the SINAPSE tool is to help the practical implementation of new forms of governance, by facilitating the involvement of actors who are currently hard to consult, and enabling them to share their knowledge and viewpoints. SINAPSE is a platform that allows for both public and registered access. Further information on its functionalities can be found at <http://www.europa.eu/sinapse>.

At the end of the project, the grant recipient may be requested to hand over the deliverables of the project for further use by the Commission or other EU bodies.

Category 2 Cooperation of two or more Member States in the field of pre-departure and post-arrival reintegration activities related to Assisted Voluntary Return operations

Policy context

Targeted reintegration measures are key conditions for a sustainable return. They can cover preparatory pre-departure activities in the Member States, the reception and accompanying activities in the first days after the return, but also socioeconomic long-term measures in the country of return. Pre-departure measures can also include the necessary measures addressing the specific needs of vulnerable returnees, such as family tracing in the case of unaccompanied minors, etc.

The Commission has launched in the framework of the European Return Fund 2009 "Community Actions" a call for tender for a comparative study analysing practices to interlink pre-departure reintegration measures carried out in Member States with short and long-term reintegration measures in the countries of return. The study will be available in the first half of 2011 and will indicate best practices and provide concrete recommendations.

Taking into account the main findings of this study Member States shall develop and implement coherent reintegration strategies which will aim at common reintegration activities in selected third-countries willing to cooperate in this respect.

Member States are encouraged to define common reintegration strategies targeted to specific countries of return. This includes common missions to these countries of return, the common assessment of the socioeconomic needs of the countries of return (in relation to returnees), the development of coherent pre-departure and post arrival reintegration tools and the common implementation and establishment of these tools as far as the countries of return are concerned. Particular emphasis should be given to the reintegration needs of vulnerable groups, in particular unaccompanied minors. With reference to the return directive, the actions should take into account the best interests of the child, and prior to returning an unaccompanied minor the Member State must ensure that s/he is returned to a family member, nominated guardian or adequate reception facilities. The obligation to try to trace the family, explore other possibilities for reintegration in their home society and assess which solution is in the best interests of the child is also clearly stated in the Communication on the Action Plan on Unaccompanied Minors.

Eligible actions

Setting up and further development of cooperation of at least two Member States in the field of reintegration in order to coordinate and implement reintegration measures envisaged in the country of return at an early stage and to develop a common approach towards specific countries of return.

2. Distribution of Resources

For each of the categories of actions, the amount of grant per project will not exceed **90%** of the total eligible costs.

Category of Community actions as defined in section 1.2	Indicative total EU amount available	Indicative Minimum EU funding per project	Duration	Estimated number of actions
Category 1 (Creation of an EU network on voluntary return)	€ 800.000	n/a	Maximum 24 months	1
Category 2 (Cooperation of two or more Member States in the field of pre-departure and post-arrival reintegration activities)	€ 4.025.000	Minimum: € 250.000	Maximum 18 months	8-10

The above figures on the minimum funding relate to the amount of grant requested from the European Union (EU funding) and not to the total cost of the project. The Commission will determine the amounts of financial assistance to be awarded, based on the available budget.

3. Grants awarded through a call for proposals (Categories 1 and 2)

3.1 Access to the programme

This call for proposals is addressed to:

- public authorities from the 26 Member States participating in the Fund¹;
- International Organisations, EU Agencies, private bodies and Non-Governmental Organisations registered in the 26 Member States mentioned above, provided that they all work on a strictly non-profit basis and have proven experience and expertise in the fields covered.

Proposals must be submitted by an entity from one Member State together with **at least one partner** entity from a different Member State.

Attention has to be paid to ensure optimal synergy with programmes carried out at Community and national level by the EU Agencies, the Member States and international

¹ Denmark does not participate in the European Return Fund.

organisations. This will require effective information sharing about the activities so that the necessary contacts and connections can be made.

In case of co-funding of an activity by both the national programme(s) and the Community actions, a clear division has to be established in order to avoid double-funding. Under no circumstances can a project be financed by both national programmes and Community actions.

3.2 Exclusion criteria

Applicants, co-beneficiaries and associated partners shall declare in their honour that they are not in one of the situations listed in Article 93 and 94 of Council Regulation No1605/2002 of 25 June 2002¹ on the Financial Regulation applicable to the budget of the European Union.

Effective, proportionate and dissuasive administrative and financial penalties may be applied in the event of incorrect statements.

The Commission will exclude a proposal from the eligibility, selection and award procedure if any of the partners involved in the project:

- (a) is bankrupt or is being wound up, is having its affairs administered by the court, has entered into an arrangement with creditors, has suspended business activities, is the subject of proceedings concerning those matters or is in an analogous situation arising from a similar procedure provided for in national legislation or regulation;
- (b) has been convicted of an offence concerning his/her professional conduct by a judgement which has the force of *res judicata*;
- (c) has been guilty of grave professional misconduct proven by any means which the Commission can justify;
- (d) has 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 it is established or with those of the country of the contracting authority or those of the country where the contract is to be performed;
- (e) has been the subject of a judgement which has the force of *res judicata* for fraud, corruption, involvement in a criminal organisation or any other illegal activity detrimental to the Communities' financial interests;
- (f) is currently subject to an administrative penalty referred to in Article 96(1) of the Financial Regulation;
- (g) is subject to a conflict of interest;
- (h) is guilty of serious misrepresentation in supplying the information required by the authorising department as a condition of participation in the contract or grant award procedure or fail to supply this information.

¹ OJ L 248, 16.09.2002, p. 1. Regulation as last amended by Council Regulation No 1525/2007 of 17 December 2007 (OJ L 343, 27.12.2007, p. 9)

3.3 Eligibility criteria

In order to be eligible, project proposals must meet **all** the following requirements:

1. The submission of the proposal must respect the deadline set for the call. The applications must be submitted at the latest by **10 June 2011 at 14.00 C.E.T.**;
2. Project proposals must be presented by eligible entities from the eligible Member States as defined in section 3.1:
 - a) Applications for action grants in Category 1 actions are open to applicants with a proven experience in the field of voluntary return having an existing network of contacts covering most of the Member States enabling to start a project without delay.
 - b) Applications for action grants in both categories must involve one main beneficiary and minimum one co-beneficiary(ies)/partner(s) and associated partners (optional) in different Member States. Organisations in Denmark or third countries may participate as associated partners on a non-cost basis.
3. Project proposals must fall within one of the two categories as defined in section 1.2. The applicant must specify in the application form which category the project relates to (maximum 1 category).
4. Project proposals must respect the ceiling on percentage, minimum grant amount and the maximum project duration set out in section 2.
5. The indicative budget, the objectives of the project and its intended impact must be clearly indicated, and a detailed description must be given of the activities envisaged, the results and impacts anticipated, and the approach, working methods and timetable to be followed.
6. Project proposals must contain **all** the elements and documents defined in the application form (including annexes and documents requested by the checklist attached to the form). If a document appearing on the checklist is either unavailable or not relevant, please indicate and give the reason why. Declarations of partnership must be signed.

3.4 Selection criteria

All applicants, co-beneficiaries and associated partners should have sufficient financial and operational capacity (e.g. list of similar projects carried out, CVs of key staff, etc...) to complete the proposed action, as defined in Art 115 of the Financial Regulation and Art 176 of Implementing Rules. The analysis of the financial capacity will be done on the basis of the signed financial statements (profit and loss account and the balance sheet for the last financial year) or any other equivalent documents provided by the applicant organisation for the last available financial year. This is not applicable for public bodies and international organisations.

3.5 Award criteria

Among the projects which fulfil the exclusion, eligibility and selection criteria, the Commission will select the proposals achieving the highest score following evaluation according to the award criteria set out below, taking into account the funds available:

- *Relevance*: the extent to which the proposed action falls within the priorities and objectives of the programme defined in section 1.2 above and the clarity and pertinence of the project's objectives (max 30 points);
- *Quality of the proposed action*: the thoroughness, appropriateness and feasibility of the approach, methodology, timeframe and organisation (max 20 points);
- *Synergies*: level of synergy with programmes carried out at Community and national level by EU Agencies and the Member States (max 15 points);
- *Value for money*: the adequacy of the forecast budget, appropriateness of the amount requested as to the expected results, inter alia in view of the number of persons concerned by the project (max 20 points);
- *Impact of the project*: the sustainability of the project and/or its results after the termination of the grant (where relevant), the dissemination of results, lessons learned and acquired know-how beyond the national level (max 15 points).

In order to be selected for co-financing, the project must obtain a minimum of 60 points out of 100. The proposals receiving less than 15 points for the criteria on "relevance" will not be evaluated further.

4. Contractual framework

The implementation will be on the basis of either a standard grant agreement for an action with a single beneficiary or a standard grant agreement for an action with multiple beneficiaries in those situations where the beneficiary will act as coordinator (the main co-beneficiary) in collaboration with other Member States or organisations (the other co-beneficiaries).

5. Payment conditions

The grant shall normally be paid under the following conditions:

- Pre-financing, representing 75% of the amount of the grant awarded upon signature of the grant agreement by the last of the parties;
- The balance upon receipt and approval by the Commission of the final technical and financial implementation reports, together with a request for payment, accompanied by an external audit certificate.

6. Checks and audits

Checks and audits will be carried out in accordance with the relevant Articles of the grant agreement.

Beneficiaries (applicants, and co-beneficiaries) are required to keep all original documents, including accounting and tax documents, or, in duly substantiated

exceptional cases, certified copies of original documents relating to the agreements for a period of five years from the date of payment of the balance of amounts payable. Upon request, these documents should be made available to the Commission. In case of audit, the applicant must have available all documents of partners.

The European Court of Auditors and the European Anti-fraud Office (OLAF) will have the same audit powers, and in particular the same rights of access, as the Commission.

7. Expected results

- 9-11 projects selected;
- Creation and implementation of a network improving the cooperation in the area of voluntary return;
- Improvement of the cooperation in the area of reintegration in specific countries of return.

8. Visibility of European Union financing

The beneficiaries whose projects are selected for funding should undertake to ensure adequate visibility of the operation financed by the European Union. Specific reference should always be made to the fact that a project is co-financed by the European Union under the European Return Fund - Community Actions 2010. Any communication or publication by the beneficiary, in any form and medium, shall indicate that sole responsibility lies with the author and that the Commission is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information contained therein.

During each operation the beneficiary shall do whatever necessary to bring the support and financing given by the European Union to the attention of the general public and the media and refer to this contribution in its internal and annual reports.

Evidence of implementation of activities undertaken in compliance with this requirement will be provided in the final reports. The beneficiary shall ensure that:

- a) all documents, including any attendance or other certificate, concerning the project include a statement indicating that the project is co-financed by the Fund;
- b) the equipment and any other material co-financed by the European Union display the EU logo, which should be of the same size and have the same prominence as the logo of the beneficiary;
- c) a permanent prominent poster of significant size is put up on all infrastructure co-financed by the European Union, stating the type and the name of the project and displaying the European flag.

The EU emblem can be found at:

http://europa.eu/abc/symbols/emblem/graphics1_en.htm

For further information concerning publicity kindly refer to the Grant Agreement.

9. Practical information about submitting an application

9.1 Submission via Priamos

This call is managed via *Priamos*, a system for the submission of the applications, which requires applicants to fill in an on-line Grant Application form and to attach to it all required annexes.

In order to access the system applicants first need to register (this involves applicants providing some basic data about themselves and their organisations). It should be done as soon as a decision is taken to participate in this call. Subsequently, it shall receive a password to be used to access the system.

Applications must be submitted, in their entirety, through Priamos. **No applications (partial or entire) submitted on paper, fax or e-mail will be considered. Please note that although the PRIAMOS system is able to deal with a lot of applications at the same time, it is advisable NOT to wait until the last moment to register on the system and submit your application.**

If the applicant submits more than one version of the grant application form or any annex, only the latest version of such document(s) will be taken into consideration for the evaluation.

Applicants should make sure that all electronic files are readable and are not corrupted and that their applications are complete. In the case of multiple submissions (repeated submission of the same project proposal by the same applicant), only the latest submission will be considered (and therefore must be complete, i.e. contain all the elements mentioned in the check list of the application form).

Following the conclusion of the selection process, applicants placed sufficiently high on the merit list to be considered for a grant may be requested to provide a paper copy of the application (printed out at the moment of submitting it via the Priamos system) and the originals (signed and stamped wherever applicable) of all annexes required under the call for proposals. Failure to produce any of the aforesaid documents may lead to disqualification of the project proposal concerned.

Information and guidance on how to register and submit your application on Priamos can be found on http://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/funding/return/funding_return_en.htm.

9.2 Deadline for submitting applications

Applications have to be submitted electronically via the Priamos system

by 10 June 2011, 14:00 CET

The Priamos system will not accept any application after the deadline. Applications submitted after the deadline will be automatically rejected.

It is your responsibility to complete your on-line application before the deadline. We strongly advise you not to wait until the last few days before applying since heavy Internet traffic or a problem with the Internet connection could lead to your on-line session being interrupted before you complete your application there by obliging you to repeat the whole process and you may miss the deadline.

9.3 Content of Applications

Each proposal must include the documents mentioned in the check list of the application form.

In order to minimise translation delays, applicants are strongly encouraged to submit applications completed in either English or French. However, applications may be submitted in any of the official languages of the European Union.

The details and the explanations concerning the annexes to be provided by the applicant are available in the guide for submitting a grant application form. The forms necessary for the grant application, its annexes, the **"Guide for submitting a Grant Application"** and the relevant links can be accessed from the European Return Fund website at the following address:

http://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/funding/return/funding_return_en.htm.

The Commission may contact applicants to request additional information at any time prior to taking its decision. Failures to respond to such requests by the deadline set may lead to disqualification of the application. Applicants must take the necessary steps to ensure that they can be contacted rapidly up to the end of the selection process. Where the Commission contacts an applicant, this does not in any way constitute or reflect a pre-selection of the proposal on the part of the Commission.

10. Further information

10.1. Where to find the necessary information

The page on Funding possibilities of the website of Directorate-General Home Affairs is updated whenever relevant information becomes available, therefore, applicants are advised to check it regularly:

http://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/funding/return/funding_return_en.htm

10.2. Contact at the European Commission

The Commission service responsible for implementing the European Return Fund is Unit C-4 of Directorate General Home Affairs - HOME.

Contact :

European Commission

DG HOME

DG HOME/C4 - RF

LX 46 8/101,

BE-1049 Brussels.

Fax (32.2) 297 9590 - e-mail: HOME-RETURN-FUND@ec.europa.eu

All applicants will be informed of the Commission's decision concerning their grant application as soon as possible. It is envisaged that the Commission will complete its selection procedures in September 2011.

It should be noted that in the interest of equal treatment of applicants, the Commission cannot give a prior opinion on the eligibility of an applicant, a partner, an action or a specific activity.

11. Data protection

The grant applications will be processed by computer. All personal data (such as names, addresses, CVs, etc.) will be processed in accordance with Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2000 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data by the Community institutions and bodies and on the free movement of such data ¹. Your replies to the questions in this form are necessary in order to assess your grant application and they will be processed solely for that purpose by the department responsible for the Community grant programme concerned. On request, you may be sent personal data and correct or complete them. For any question relating to these data, please contact the Commission department to which the form must be returned. Beneficiaries may lodge a complaint against the processing of their personal data with the European Data Protection Supervisor at any time.

If, at any stage of the administrative treatment of grant applications, the persons or entities concerned consider that they have been affected by an instance of maladministration, they may, irrespective of any other means of redress, make a complaint to the European Ombudsman in accordance with Article 195(1) of the EC Treaty and as provided by the Parliament Decision of 9 March 1994 on the regulations and general conditions governing the performance of the Ombudsman's duties published in Official Journal of the European Communities L 113 of 4 May 1994.

Grant applicants and persons who have powers of representation, decision-making or control over them, are informed that, should they be in one of the situations mentioned in:

- the Commission Decision of 16.12.2008 on the Early Warning System (EWS) for the use of authorising officers of the Commission and the executive agencies (OJ L 344, 20.12.2008, p. 125,
- or
- the Commission Regulation of 17.12.2008 on the Central Exclusion Database – CED (OJ L 344, 20.12.2008, p. 12),

their personal details (name, given name if natural person, address, legal form and name and given name of the persons with powers of representation, decision-making or control, if legal person) may be registered in the EWS only or both in the EWS and CED, and communicated to the persons and entities listed in the above- mentioned Decision and Regulation, in relation to the award or the execution of a procurement contract or a grant agreement or a decision.

¹ Official Journal L 8, 12.1.2001.

12. Ex-post publicity

Information on all grants signed in the course of a financial year will be published on the Internet site of the Union institutions. The information may also be published by any other appropriate medium, including the Official Journal of the European Union. The following will be published with the agreement of the beneficiary:

1. the name and address of the beneficiaries;
2. the subject of the grant;
3. the amount awarded and rate of funding of the total eligible costs of the operational work programme.

The European Commission may waive the above obligations if publication of the information could threaten the safety of the beneficiaries or harm their business interests. Beneficiaries of grants must clearly display acknowledgement of the support received from the EU.