

COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

COM(82) 129 final

Brussels, 22 March 1982

Report from the Commission to the Council

Definition after consultation with the Committee for Information and Documentation on Science and Technology (CIDST) of the procedures and criteria to be applied to new calls for proposals under the Third Plan of Action in the field of information and documentation

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Commission report to the Council

Subject: Definition after consultation with the Committee for Information and Documentation on Science and Technology (CIDST) of the procedures and criteria to be applied to new calls for proposals under the Third Plan of Action in the field of information and documentation.

1. When it adopted the three-year plan of action in the field of information and documentation for the period 1981 to 1983 (OJ L 220 of 6 August 1981) the Council decided not to allow the implementation of new calls for proposals provided for under this plan until 1982. It invited the Commission to define, in consultation with the CIDST, the procedures and criteria to be applied to these new calls and to present a report to the Council in order to permit this part of the Plan of Action to go ahead.
2. During 1981 the Commission, in consultation with the CIDST, examined the procedures and evaluation criteria to be applied to the new calls for proposals. First of all they examined the procedure applied during the first call for proposals in the field of information and documentation launched by the Commission on 29 November 1979. At that time the Commission and the CIDST had considered the procedures applied by some Member States in respect of similar calls.

At the end of this examination, the Commission prepared a document defining the improvements in procedures to be applied in future calls for proposals, including the main evaluation criteria (Doc. CIDST 510/81 final). The CIDST examined this document and delivered a favourable opinion on it (Doc. CIDST 508/81 final).
3. Since the procedures and criteria to be applied to the new calls for proposals have been defined by the Commission in accordance with the conditions and deadlines laid down by Council Decision of 27 July 1981, the Commission requests the Council to sanction the implementation of this part of the programme under the Third Plan of Action.

Annexes:

1. Doc. CIDST/510/81 final
2. Doc. CIDST/508/81 final

**COMMISSION
OF THE
EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES**

Luxembourg 11 November 1981

Directorate-General
Information Market and Innovation
Secretariat CIDST

**SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL RESEARCH
COMMITTEE**

**Committee
for Information and Documentation
on Science and Technology**

**Subject : Improvements of the procedures to be applied for launching
future calls and for the evaluation of proposals, including
major evaluation criteria.**

1. The Commission and CIDST have agreed that for the implementation of calls for proposals under the 3rd Action Plan for Information and Documentation, both will base their involvement on the following considerations which will also be used as basis for the drafting of texts for the publication of calls in the Official Journal of the Communities and in other media.

2. The main objective of the call for proposals mechanism is to accelerate the development and improve the quality of the European supply of information of both private and public origin. This is to be achieved by the creation of new services or improvement of existing services of public interest, aimed at becoming commercially viable.

In order to be considered for support, proposals will demonstrate that :

- involvement of organizations in more than one Member State for the implementation of systems or services has been investigated;
- they are unique in character by being complementary to existing services, by filling gaps in European access or by applying new approaches;
- they are of Community-wide relevance;
- they have applicability and accessibility for the whole range of target users, where necessary in several languages;
- they aim to satisfy an existing demand;
- they are likely to be viable without continuing Community support;
- they on technical grounds are likely to achieve their goals.

Information systems receiving support should be made available to all interested host organizations in the Community on equal terms.

As guidance for the assessment and selection of submitted proposals, the following additional criteria are recommended :

- position of proposed systems within the existing spectrum of information supply;
- strengthening or consolidation of the European information provision sector;
- ability to improve performance of industry, commerce or scholarship in the Community;

- contribution to the European export drive;
- relationship of proposals to the existing framework of compatibility between Community and National policies and diminishing differences in level of information activity between Member States.

3. Proposals will in general be for the development of systems and services. However, proposals which in a first phase aim at the investigation of the technical and economical feasibility of a specified project without a commitment to implement the service if not feasible, in a second phase, may also qualify for financial assistance.

Decision on cofinancing of the implementation of such a new service will be taken by the Commission, after consultation of CIDST, on the basis of results obtained in the first phase.

This approach will be of particular interest to projects based on international cooperation since it allows for longer term arrangements to be made and introduces the necessary flexibility for the setting-up of more complex forms of cooperation. This approach may also help the implementation of projects in which the application of new technologies is envisaged.

4. As a guideline for the Commission when approached by organizations wishing to submit proposals, CIDST emphasises that :

- international cooperation can be an important mechanism for improving the quality of the input through better geographic and language coverage and providing multi-language access;
- organizations should provide evidence that the proposed service will be accessible and if required could be marketed throughout the Community.

Cooperation should be promoted where useful, without penalising proposing organizations which are able to serve users efficiently in other countries without such cooperation or which will work on behalf of organizations in other Community countries.

5. The basic financial assistance for the selected projects will be limited to 25 % of the development costs during a period not exceeding 24 months, subject to a ceiling of 200.000 EAU. A premium of 25 % can be added by the Commission (after consultation of CIDST) for those costs that are incurred in meeting the additional criteria recommended in § 2. Since projects which will be realized through international cooperation are among those likely to meet these additional criteria it is expected that in particular these joint projects can take advantage of the 25 % premium facility.
6. The content of a proposal rather than its financial motivation is considered as the main basis for project assessment. It is therefore recommended not to differentiate evaluation/selection actions because of different financial motivations.
7. The call for proposals mechanism will not inhibit the implementation of projects which are considered important for achieving the objectives formulated by CIDST and its working groups and which originate from work in these groups. Such projects could be dealt with through the traditional procedures of projects definition, financing and monitoring.

As far as the procedure for the implementation of the future calls is concerned, CIDST has taken notice of the procedure applied in the first call (Annex VIII of Doc. CIDST-487/81). It recommends the Commission to apply the improvements proposed by the ad-hoc group "Methods, Criteria, Procedures" which are presented in Annex I of this document.

For advice at the practical level, CIDST has decided to set up immediately an ad-hoc group : "Call Advice". Each delegation is invited to nominate a member.

In particular this group will advise the Commission on :

- text for publication of the calls;
- application formsheet, including guidelines for cost estimates and presentations;
- simplified evaluation sheet, including preselection criteria;

- extended evaluation sheet;
- selection of projects and amount of assistance.

8. General consensus exists on the need to limit the number of submitted proposals. Limitation will be achieved through definition of the subject areas to which priority shall be given. In addition, strong emphasis will be given to factual information systems and advanced bibliographic services based on informative abstracts. Proposals for software/hardware development only will also be excluded as well as proposals in which software development and data processing costs are predominant over other costs, such as data input, selection, preparation and formatting, analysis of content and translations.

9. CIDST recommends to use 50 % of the foreseen amount of 5,5 Million EAU in 1982 and the remainder in 1983, with priority given to the following subject areas :

- agriculture;
- biomedicine and health care;
- energy saving and alternative resources;
- environment;
- information for industry and trade, such as products, standards, patents, law, regulations, financial and economic data;
- humanities and social sciences.

In order to avoid a concentration of the required evaluation effort in a too short period, it is decided to launch two series of calls each covering 3 of the above mentioned priority areas.

The Working Groups will be invited to express their preferred timing for launching the calls and to assist in the drafting of the text for publication.

Recommendations on improvement of the procedure

1. For calls limited to specific subject areas, the professional journals covering these areas should also be used for announcement.
2. More time should be allowed for the preparation of proposals.
3. Responsible national bodies should be free to provide advice to potential proposers on the preparation of their submission.
4. Application formsheets should contain :
 - more information on the professional standing of the applicant;
 - a substantial abstract of the subject matter of the proposal;
 - questions related to the objectives of the call, stated explicitly.

Also,

- the development plan should take the form of a sequence of probable events, with estimated times and costs;
 - more evidence should be requested on the market for the product including estimates of sizes of potential user communities or market segments;
 - more specific information should be requested on the nature and volume of both input material and products, including a sample if possible of the input/output records;
 - a set of instructions for completion of the formsheet should be developed.
5. Together with the acknowledgement of the receipt of a proposal, information will be sent to the proposing organization about the evaluation procedure and tentative time schedule.
 6. Proposals which are outside the scope of the call, technically inadequate or insufficiently informative will be eliminated by the Commission on the basis of a simplified evaluation sheet. CIDST will be informed and delegations invited to review the decisions.

7. Full evaluations of valid proposals will be prepared by the Commission on the basis of an extended evaluation sheet.
8. Proposals falling within the field of competence of the sectoral groups will be assessed by ad-hoc committees of the Working Groups, with preferably not more than one member per country. Sufficient time should be allowed for the discussion of the evaluation reports in the plenary meetings of the Working Groups.
9. In the case of proposals in subject areas for which no appropriate sectoral Working Group exists, ad-hoc evaluation committees of subject experts will be set up, for which CIDST delegations will be invited to nominate members.
10. Guidelines should be given to proposing organizations in order to help them in the assessment of the development cost of their proposals and to achieve an uniform presentation of these costs.

COMMISSION
DES
COMMUNAUTES EUROPEENNES

Luxembourg, le 11 December 1981

Direction générale
Marshe de l'Information et Documentation
Secretariat CIDST

Opinion of CIDST of 11 November 1981
on calls for proposals to be launched in 1982/1983
within the framework of the
3rd Plan of Action in the field of
Information and Documentation

The Committee for Information and Documentation on Science and Technology (CIDST),

In compliance with the stipulations of Appendix II, points 4a) and b) of the Council decision of 9 October 1978,

Having been invited by the Commission to give within the framework of the 3rd Plan of action in the field of Information and Documentation (1981-1983) an opinion on the methods, criteria and procedures to be applied to the calls for proposals to be launched in 1982/83 under this Plan,

Taking into account that the Council decision of 27 July 1981 *) foresees that an amount of 5,5 Million EAU be spent out of the total budget of 7,5 Million EAU within chapter 2 of this Plan for the implementation and promotion of programmes/projects for this particular action,

Given the recommendation, made by CIDST under point 7 of its opinion of 26 June 1980 on the 3rd Plan of action,

Having examined and endorsed document CIDST/510/81 final (attached),

*) O.J. Nr. L 220 of 6 August 1981.

1. recommends that the proposed improvements of the procedures followed in the first call for proposals for information systems of value to the Community as a whole, be applied to the launching of future calls and the evaluation of proposals,
2. recommends to apply the proposed criteria when publishing calls for proposals, when evaluating and selecting proposals received in the framework of such calls and when fixing the financial contribution to the selected projects,
3. recommends further to use about 50 % of the foreseen amount of 5,5 Million EAU in 1982 and the remainder in 1983,
4. is of the opinion that priority should be given to proposed projects filling gaps in the offer of high quality information systems and services of European origin,
5. is of the opinion that Community co-financing should be 25 % of the development costs with a premium of 25 % of that part of development costs which corresponds to the recommended criteria for assessment and selection, aiming at improving the European relevance of projects,
6. will assist the Commission in the formulation of the calls and in the evaluation of the proposals received,
7. asks the Commission to submit to the Council, without further delay, a request to decide on the implementation of this part of the programme.

The declaration made by the Belgian delegation is attached.

The Secretary of CIDST is asked to transmit this opinion to the Commission and to CREST, and to address a copy to the Council.

Opinion of the Belgian Delegation on Document CIDST/510/81

The following comments can be made with respect to the first call for proposals in the field of information organized by DG XIII in November 1979 :

- on examination of the proposals, major differences of opinion between Member States became apparent;
- the Commission as it currently stands is having difficulty solving the various problems connected with the signing and implementation of the contracts.

These elements underlie the Council decision not to allow new calls for proposals under the terms of the Third Action Plan in the field of information and documentation until 1 January 1982 at the earliest, following a reappraisal of the problems connected with these calls and subject to agreement on procedures for their implementation. The conclusions with regard to the work of CIDST are set out in document CIDST 510/81-final.

The Belgian Delegation cannot approve this document as it reflects only an agreement which is still too superficial, given that differences still exist on such fundamental issues as the Community intervention level and the selection of priority issues.

Although the Belgian Delegation can accept the general issues adopted, it is convinced that one or more of the calls should relate to definite priority subjects to avoid the tenders being too diversified and difficult to select. It is essential to limit invitations to tender either to specific aspects of the subjects proposed (for example agriculture : economic data) or to one of the subjects proposed (for example industrial or commercial data).

Moreover, basic financial backing to the extent of 25% would seem insufficient to stimulate action in some countries in this field. The "additional criteria" are too vague to offset the handicap. It will thus be necessary to increase systematically the level of Community backing to 50%.

Financial Statement

1. Budget heading concerned : 7502
2. Wording of the budget heading : Three year plan of action
Scientific and technical information
and information management.
3. Legal basis : Council Decision of 27 July 1981 adopting a Third Plan of Action in the field of information and documentation (1981 to 1983).
4. Description, aim and purpose of the action :

4.1 Description

The action concerns support for the development of high-quality information services in Europe in the form of calls for proposals.

4.2 Aim

To speed up the development and improve the quality of information supplied from both public and private sources at European level by encouraging the creation of new services, or the improvement of existing services which are of public interest and which aim to be commercially viable.

4.3 Purpose

There are considerable gaps and delays as regards the availability and quality of European information services. The Community is thus obliged in some fields to depend upon information services of North American origin.

The European information supply sector must be strengthened and consolidated in order to offer greater resistance to international competition and to improve the results achieved within industry, trade and science.

5. Financial consequences of the action in ECU

Total costs for the whole period are estimated as follows :

Commitment appropriations under the 1982 budget	2 750 000 ECU
Commitment appropriations under the 1983 budget	<u>2 750 000 ECU</u>
T o t a l	<u>5 500 000 ECU</u>

