*e*Content*plus*

A multiannual Community programme to make digital content in Europe more accessible, usable and exploitable

Work Programme

2006

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1. INTRODUCTION

This Work Programme covers the activities of the *e*Content*plus* programme, a multiannual Community programme to make digital content in Europe more accessible, usable and exploitable. It defines the priorities for these activities, in line with the decision of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the *e*Content*plus* programme (the "Programme Decision")[1].

The programme is part of the Commission's policy announced in *"i2010 – A European Information Society for growth and employment"*[2]. In aiming to facilitate content access, use and exploitation and to stimulate content enrichment, the eContentplus programme will address two of the four main challenges posed by digital convergence for the creation of a single European Information Space, as identified by i2010, namely *"interoperability"* and *"rich content"*. More specifically, it will help achieve Objective 1 of i2010: *A Single European Information Space offering affordable and secure high bandwidth communications, rich and diverse content and digital services*.

On 30 September 2005, the Commission adopted a Communication outlining the vision of the *"i2010: Digital Libraries"* initiative[3], which aims at making European cultural heritage easier to access and to use in an online environment. It addresses the issues connected with the digitisation, online accessibility and preservation of digital resources. It deals with all types of material (books, audiovisual material, photographs, documents in archives, etc.) and all types of cultural institutions (libraries, archives and museums). Within this initiative, the Commission is working towards a "European Digital Library", which is expected to make available over the next five years at least six million books, documents and other cultural works to anyone with a web connection[4].

The Commission foresees a Communication on scientific and scholarly content for 2006 which will set out the specific challenges for digital libraries in this area, including the role of the supporting high capacity infrastructure and the actions to be undertaken at European level. A recent study of the Research Directorate General on the economic and technical evolution of the scientific publication markets in Europe[5] is also relevant in this context.

The *e*Content*plus* programme will contribute to this initiative by *"achieving interoperability between national digital collections and services (e.g. through common standards) and facilitating access and use of the material in a multilingual context"*[6], which are core objectives of the programme.

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[1] Decision No. 456/2005/EC of 9 March 2005, OJ L 79, 24.03.2005, p.1 .

[2] COM(2005) 229, http://europa.eu.int/i2010

[3] COM(2005) 465, http://europa.eu.int/information_society/activities/digital_libraries/index_en.htm

[4] Press release IP/06/253 of 2 March 2006 available at the address:
http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/06/253&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en

[5] http://europa.eu.int/research/science-society/pdf/scientific-publication-study_en.pdf

[6] COM(2005) 465.

2.   OBJECTIVES AND OVERALL APPROACH

2.1.   *e*Content*plus*, the overall aim

The overall aim of the *e*Content*plus* programme is *"to make digital content in Europe more accessible, usable and exploitable, facilitating the creation and diffusion of information, in areas of public interest, at Community level"*.

Digital content is machine-processable information that has been either digitised or created in digital form.

The programme has an **enabling role:** it will contribute to creating better conditions for accessing, using, reusing and exploiting digital material, based on which it will be possible to build added-value products and services across Europe. It will help **content stakeholders** (providers and users) realise the full potential of digital content: content *providers,* i.e. public and private organisations and institutions that create, collect or own digital content, who will be able to increase the use and re-use of their material; content *users,* including European citizens, students, researchers but also organisations and enterprises that reuse and/or add value to digital content, who will be able to find and use digital content, irrespective of location or language.

The programme addresses areas which have a public interest and which would not develop or would develop at a slower pace if left to the market. It does not aim to create digital content or services. It aims to improve the **usability** and **quality** of existing digital content **in specific contexts of use** in order to create the **conditions** for the emergence of quality trans-European content-based services.

Multicultural and **multilingual** aspects of accessing, exploiting, using, and re-using digital content in Europe will be integral to all the actions (but not through funding the translation of existing content).

Actions in the programme will use **proven state-of-the-art technical solutions**, and will be geared towards **innovation in organisation and in deployment**, as opposed to purely technological innovation.

2.2.   Target areas and project types

There was a significant response to the 2005 call for proposals, but in view of the available budget only a small proportion of proposals could be funded (19 proposals selected out of 238 proposals submitted). In 2006, the Commission wishes to receive a much smaller number of proposals of very high quality, from which it will choose the best to be funded.

The following **target areas** have been singled out, where the programme can have maximum impact with the available resources:

- geographic information

- educational content

- digital libraries (cultural and scientific/scholarly content)

- reinforcing cooperation between digital content stakeholders (across target areas)

The definition and objectives for each of these target areas are specified in the corresponding sections of the work programme.

There will be two **project types** for the 2006 Work Programme:

- **Targeted Projects (TP)**, which address specific barriers that prevent or limit access to and the use of digital content at any stage of the chain — production, exposure, discovery, acquisition and use. Ensuring the interoperability and increasing the usability of existing datasets at cross-border level is a typical example.

- **Thematic Networks (TN),** which bring together relevant stakeholders, expertise and facilities with the objective of identifying best practices and coordinating the development of specific approaches for improving the availability and usability of digital content. They aim to achieve a broad consensus on methods and standards and to impact on a critical mass of digital content at European level. Activities may include coordination and assessment, the exchange of information between teams working around a common theme, improvement plans, the organisation of conferences and information brokerage.

2.3. Actions open in 2006

The decision on the actions under which activities will be funded in 2006 is based on the results of the evaluation of the first call for the programme in 2005 and on the available budget. The following **actions** are open:

Geographic information

3.1.   Targeted projects for geographic information

3.2   A thematic network on geographic information

Educational content

4.1.   Targeted projects for educational content

4.2   A thematic network on educational content

Digital libraries (cultural and scientific/scholarly content)

5.1.   Targeted projects for digital libraries

5.2   A thematic network on cultural content

Reinforcing cooperation between digital content stakeholders

6.1.   A thematic network on public-domain and related issues

All proposals must fulfil the common requirements in section 2.4 for the appropriate type of projects. Sections 3, 4, 5 and 6 provide further information on the objectives and conditions of each **action**.

2.4. Common requirements for all proposals

Targeted Projects must fulfil at least the following requirements:

- The **consortium** must <u>include content providers</u>**.** It should also include <u>users</u>**.** In particular, where a commercial service is expected to be built on project results, the future commercial users must either participate in the consortium or be involved in the project, for instance through a project advisory board or a pilot user group, to be consulted by the consortium in order to provide advice and feedback on the results.

- The issues addressed should have a **European dimension**, and the ways proposed to tackle them should impact on a large number of users in the largest possible number of EU countries, in particular the new Member States[7].

- As far as **content** is concerned:

  – The quality and quantity of the digital content (and related metadata) to be contributed to the project by each content provider, as well as the criteria for its selection, must be clearly identified. The digitisation or creation of content is not funded by the programme.

  – The consortium and its members must ensure the necessary availability of the content to be contributed to the project (input). In particular, the input should not depend on proprietary third-party rights or any other constraints which would limit its use for the execution of the project. The consortium and its members must agree on the necessary licensing or clearing arrangements for any Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) arising from the project (output) to ensure wider use and dissemination of the project results.

- As far as the expected **impact** is concerned:

  - The target users and their needs, also beyond the consortium participants, must be clearly identified. Proposers must present an analysis of demand based as much as possible on quantified evidence. Multicultural, multilingual and, where appropriate, gender aspects shall be taken into account.

  - Proposers should demonstrate that the underlying content constitutes the critical mass necessary to make a significant impact in terms of increasing access and use in the area concerned.

  - The results of the project must be accessible by the target users and re-users beyond the end of the project.

  - A clear case should be made for the sustainability of the proposed solutions, i.e. their capability of developing and surviving without Community funding after the end of the project. Sustainability comprises both economic and organisational aspects. This requirement may be translated into different practical measures and provisions, depending on the target users and the intended uses of the results of the projects, i.e. whether the content resulting from the project is to be made available through commercial services or through open-access services or services based on public-private partnerships.

Thematic Networks should fulfil at least the following requirements:

- Coverage of the **majority of EU Member States,** including at least 3 new Member States.

- Involvement of **major relevant digital data stakeholders** from the countries covered.

- Being open and proactive in attracting new partners.

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[7] Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia.

3.   GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

For the purpose of this work programme, 'core' geographic information (or spatial information) means any data that directly refer to a specific location or geographic area. Digital maps are the clearest example. Special features of these maps (e.g. the location and ownership of buildings, addresses, cadastral information) are also covered. This call does not cover datasets that have geographical components but are not in themselves 'core' spatial information. This would be the case, for example, for traffic information, meteorological data, health data, economic data or statistical data.

The general situation on spatial information in Europe is characterised by fragmentation of datasets and sources, gaps in availability, lack of harmonisation between datasets at different geographical scales and duplication of information collection. Much of the 'core' geographic information in Europe is produced by public sector organisations at all levels of government.

A large part of this spatial information, especially that available at local and regional level, is difficult to exploit in a broader context, since the collection and preservation practices at different levels of government are not compatible and lead to data that cannot be combined with other datasets.

Furthermore, it is not easy to discover which spatial information is available and, even where it is possible to discover it, there is insufficient meta-information allowing the user to evaluate its fitness for purpose and to know which conditions apply to its use.

These are major barriers to accessing, using and exploiting digital content in the area of geographic information

Synergies should be sought with other Community initiatives, such as the proposal for a Directive aiming at the establishment of an infrastructure for spatial information in the Community[8] (INSPIRE), and the Global Monitoring for Environment and Security initiative[9] (GMES) designed to establish a European capacity for the provision and use of operational information for the global monitoring of the environment and security. Where appropriate, projects should fully integrate the standards and positioning, navigation and timing solutions that the European Union's satellite navigation infrastructure, Galileo, will provide.

3.1.   Targeted projects for geographic information

Objective:

To aggregate 'core' geographic information across borders and guarantee its interoperability for seamless data integration. Projects should aim to improve the opportunities and possibilities for use of the data by end-users and for their re-use by public sector organisations and private companies throughout Europe.

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[8]   Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing an infrastructure for spatial information in the Community. Proposal of 23.7.2004, COM(2004) 516 final, 2004/0175 (COD).

[9]   Joint initiative of the European Commission and the European Space Agency.

Conditions:

In addition to the common requirements for Targeted Projects, proposals should meet the following conditions:

- They should result in datasets that are easily accessible and re-useable through the use of open, non-proprietary standards that facilitate re-use, where appropriate. The intended pricing models and their effects on re-use by the target groups will be an important factor in choosing one proposal rather than another.

- The multilingual aspects of accessing, exploiting, using, and re-using the underlying content should be an integral part of the proposed project.

- Specific and measurable criteria against which cross-border availability and use can be measured should be devised, where possible during the lifetime of the project.

- All relevant stakeholders should be involved, including coordinating bodies.

- Synergies should be sought with other Community initiatives (INSPIRE, GMES).

Expected results:

'Core' geographic information will be aggregated to cover a significant part of Europe. Data will be accessible in a seamless way across borders in multiple languages. The outcome is sustainable without further Community funding. A community of stakeholders will be created with clear and viable plans to take up the results in order to facilitate further re-use and exploitation of the data.

3.2.   A Thematic Network on geographic information

Objective:

A single network will be funded to promote dialogue and exchanges of information and best practice between stakeholders on interoperability and on tagging digital geographic information with semantically well-defined metadata. It will spread awareness among geographic information stakeholders (producers, owners, users) of the specific benefits of meta-tagging as demonstrated by best practices. The network will coordinate steps to ensure organisational cohesion and the sustainability of relevant actions.

Conditions:

In addition to the common requirements for Thematic Networks, proposals should meet the following conditions:

- Cost-effective means should be used to distribute information to a large number of stakeholders.

- Multiplier organisations, electronic dissemination channels, the mass media and information material should be used to reach the intended target groups.

- Proposals should demonstrate convincingly the strategic impact of the consortium on the availability, accessibility and use/reuse of European geographic information across borders.

- A partnership should be established and maintained with key players.

- Synergies should be sought with other Community initiatives (INSPIRE, GMES).

Expected results:

The producers and owners of 'core' geographic information in a large number of EU Member States will understand and appreciate the benefits of improving the interoperability of 'core' geographic information and of tagging it with semantically well-defined metadata. Awareness of best practices in the field will be increased in the target groups.

4. EDUCATIONAL CONTENT

For the purpose of this work programme, educational digital content is content that can be used for learning in different contexts: in formal education and training programmes, in non-formal general education and in continuing vocational training courses, as well as for self-learning. In 2006, the programme will focus on content used for face-to-face and distance learning in the **formal education system**, especially in compulsory education, secondary general education and higher education. Vocational training (formal or non-formal) as well as other forms of lifelong learning will not be covered in the call for proposals.

Today, educational content abounds in multiple formats, on the web and in repositories, both public and proprietary. However, the availability of quality digital content for learning remains an issue. Production costs or lack of expertise are among the most cited barriers. In addition, there is an incoherent use of technological solutions, a lack of a comprehensive analysis of users' needs, demands and opportunities. Moreover, organisational and pedagogical frameworks are often inadequate to support multilingual and multicultural access to and use of digital content for learning.

In 2006, *e*Content*plus* will fund activities that are expected to make it easier for schools, universities, students, teachers and other actors involved in the educational process (e.g. organisations developing educational content or curricula) to access and use educational content that fits their needs, languages and cultures. The objective is to **create the necessary structures and conditions** (organisational, business, technical) for the emergence of pan-European learning services, offered by the public sector, private actors or through public-private partnerships, that will significantly increase multilingual access to quality European digital content and repositories and their use in different educational and academic contexts.

4.1. Targeted projects for educational content

Objective:

To enhance the accessibility, use and exploitation of existing educational content and/or learning repositories across borders in different formal education contexts and in several languages by implementing solutions that integrate technical, pedagogical and organisational aspects in order to address problems at all stages of the chain: creation, publication, discovery, acquisition, access, and use. Interoperability is the key issue to be addressed. Other issues may include trust and management, adaptability of digital content, distributed digital repositories or the enabling infrastructure for related brokerage services.

Conditions:

In addition to the common requirements for Targeted Projects, proposals should meet the following conditions:

- Digital content stakeholders, technology providers and pedagogical experts should be represented in a balanced way.

- Feedback mechanisms for users should be provided on the usability of the content and on its quality, in terms of the effectiveness and efficiency of the learning process.

- The multilingual aspects of accessing, exploiting, using, and re-using the underlying content should be addressed. The translation of the content itself is not funded by the programme.

- The multicultural aspects related to the use of the underlying content in different educational and learning cultures should be specifically addressed.

- Specific and realistic quantified indicators should be provided to measure the envisaged improvements in availability, access and use — at different stages in the project lifetime.

- Where appropriate, the use of open standards is recommended.

Expected results:
There will be a significant increase in the use and re-use of the underlying educational content across borders for formal education in multiple languages and in different educational environments. A community of stakeholders will be created with clear and viable plans to take up the results in order to facilitate further access, use and exploitation of the educational content in different contexts.

4.2. A Thematic Network on educational content

Objective:
A single network will be funded to identify specific problems and best practice for improving the accessibility, use and exploitation of existing educational content and/or learning repositories across borders in different formal education contexts and in several languages. It will promote consensus building and the coordination of stakeholders at organisational level to ensure the implementation and sustainability of the solutions identified, including for example the adoption of common reference models, roadmaps for operational actions, advice to policy-making bodies, and concerted actions to convey European needs to standardisation bodies for learning technologies.

Conditions:
In addition to the common requirements for Thematic Networks, proposals should meet the following conditions:

- A balance should be sought between the interests of governmental organisations and funding bodies, content creators and owners, and user community representatives. Cooperation among public and private organisations should be encouraged.

- The focus should be on specific issues relating to the interoperability of educational content as well as on a general shared interest, with identifiable shared goals and a strong commitment by all partners.

- Proposals should demonstrate convincingly the strategic impact of the consortium on the availability, accessibility and use/reuse of European digital educational content across borders.

- Expertise should be obtained from professionals on the pedagogical use of digital content for learning and there should be liaison with international organisations.

Expected results:
The providers and users of digital content for learning in a large number of EU Member States should understand and appreciate best practices in the field that can significantly increase the multilingual and multicultural accessibility, use and re-use of material across borders. Formal or informal trans-national networks will be established for transferring and replicating best practices. European needs will be successfully communicated to, and taken up by, relevant standardisation bodies.

5. DIGITAL LIBRARIES (CULTURAL AND SCIENTIFIC/SCHOLARLY CONTENT)

For the purpose of this work programme *digital libraries* are organised collections of digital *cultural and scientific/scholarly content* made available to the public by cultural institutions (libraries, archives and museums) in the EU Member States or other countries participating in the programme. They can consist of all kinds of "physical" material that has been digitised (books,

audiovisual material, photographs, documents in archives etc) and material originally produced in digital format. This is increasingly the case in the area of scientific/scholarly content, i.e. the published results of researchers' work, including articles, papers, conference proceedings, monographs, textbooks and other similar publications.

The "digital libraries initiative"[10] adopted by the Commission builds on Europe's rich heritage and its cultural and linguistic diversity. It aims at making European cultural and scientific/scholarly resources easier to access and use in an online environment. The visibility, accessibility and usability of cultural and scientific/scholarly resources at European level is restricted by the lack of interoperability between existing networks, across forms of organisation, collection and publication, and across different types of content. The wide range of different legacy systems and different practices for describing cultural and scientific/scholarly content further aggravates the situation. Finding ways to make better use of the new technologies so as to ensure effective multilingual access, use and re-use while respecting the legitimate interests of right holders will be a decisive factor for the online accessibility of content.

In order to help achieve the objective of establishing a "European digital library" by 2010, *e*Content*plus* will fund in 2006 Targeted Projects supporting the development of interoperable **digital libraries,** i.e. collections and objects held by libraries, museums and archives, on which multilingual and cross-border services can be built, and supporting solutions to facilitate the exposure, discovery and retrieval of these resources. In 2006, the programme will also fund a thematic network bringing together all types of cultural institutions, including libraries, museums and archives.

5.1.   Targeted Projects for digital libraries

Objective:
To improve the interoperability of digital cultural and scientific/scholarly content held by libraries, museums and archives and enable multilingual access to it, so as to enhance the cross-border visibility, accessibility, use and re-use of European cultural and scientific/scholarly resources.

Conditions:
In addition to the common requirements for Targeted Projects, proposals should meet the following conditions:

- The focus should be on specific issues relating to the **standards-based interoperability** between digital objects and collections and the interoperability of systems for authorising the use of and/or **multilingual access** to the digital content (excluding however the translation of existing content).

- Proposals should provide specific and realistic quantified indicators to measure the envisaged improvements in availability, access and use — at different stages in the project lifetime.

Expected results:
Digital cultural and scientific/scholarly content held by libraries, museums and archives will be made interoperable and be aggregated across borders. Multilingual access to the content will be significantly improved.

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[10]   Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions "i2010: Digital Libraries", COM(2005)465

5.2.   A Thematic Network on cultural content

Objective:

A single network will be funded to identify best practice for the interoperability of digital European cultural content (covering different types of content: books, photographs, audiovisual material, archival records, etc) held by different types of cultural institutions (libraries, museums, archives). The aim is to achieve a consensus on the use of common standards that will make it easier to search the collections of the cultural institutions as part of a European digital library.

Conditions:

In addition to the common requirements for Thematic Networks, proposals should meet the following conditions:

- Key stakeholders from the different cultural institutions should be brought together.

- The focus should be on the interoperability of cultural content between the different types of cultural institutions.

- Proposals should be representative of the different types of institutions and able to ensure a wide take-up of the agreed standards.

- User needs should be taken into account.

Expected results:

Progress on the use of common standards, making it easier to search and use European cultural content from preferred or central access points.

6.   REINFORCING COOPERATION BETWEEN DIGITAL CONTENT STAKEHOLDERS

Issues and policies relating to the public domain are critical across all the target areas covered by the programme for facilitating the accessibility, use and exploitation of digital content in general. In 2006, eContent*plus* will fund a thematic network to examine the situation in the European Union and develop strategies and solutions for its Member States.

For the purposes of this work programme, **public domain** refers to content that is not or no longer protected by copyright, for example because it is not entitled to copyright protection or the copyright has been waived or has expired. Related issues that also require examination include material that is protected by copyright, but can be accessed and used by all, e.g. through open access, under Creative Commons licences or as orphan works, i.e. works protected by copyright but where it is impossible to identify the person entitled to exercise the rights.

6.1.   A Thematic Network on public-domain and related issues

Objective:

A single network will be funded to spread awareness among content stakeholders on the importance of issues relating to the public domain for the usability and accessibility of digital content. It will identify the issues and develop strategies for tackling them at European level.

Conditions:

In addition to the common requirements for Thematic Networks, proposals should meet the following conditions:

- They should bring together experts from different backgrounds with an interest in the public domain, such as IPR experts, content owners (libraries and archives), representatives of the scientific community, end users and consumers.

- Participants should represent the interests of actors from a sufficiently wide geographical area so as to have an impact at European level.

Expected results:

Digital stakeholders should understand and appreciate public domain issues and incorporate that understanding and appreciation in strategies and solutions for dealing with such issues at European level.

6.2. Public procurement

Public procurement is planned in 2006 for the following **three studies**:

Title and description	Launch date (quarter)	Budget (Budget line)	Duration (months)
Statistics on European efforts and progress in the digitisation of culture The study should measure the investment in the digitisation of cultural resources and the growth and use of such digitised resources, in order to track the progress of efforts made at MS and EU levels and to identify future needs for funding, research and coordination. (Work in support of the "i2010: Digital Libraries" initiative.)	3rd	€400 000 (09 01 04 02)	24
Socio-economic drivers and impact of longer-term preservation of digital resources The preservation of digital resources is becoming a critical issue both for the traditional repository organisations (e.g. libraries, archives, museums) and for the corporate world, as a result of the widespread use of digital media as the native and sometimes exclusive format for documents, legal records, scientific data and cultural resources (notably audio and video). The systematic analysis of socio-economic factors affecting the development of digital preservation and its future economic impact, to be carried out for this study, should improve the understanding of the economic importance of this sector and provide input for defining the priorities of future research and non-research activities developed at EU level. (Work in support of the "i2010: Digital Libraries" initiative.)	3rd	€200 000 (09 03 02)	9
Economic and social impact of the public domain in the information society Public domain content (i.e. material that is not or no longer protected by intellectual property rights) has a considerable potential for re-use thanks to the new tools of the information society. The study would be a first systematic attempt to map or measure the social and economic impact of the public domain. The results will be widely distributed among stakeholders that have an interest in public domain policies, for example cultural institutions, academic and scientific institutions, consumer organisations or publishers. (Work in support of the "i2010: Digital Libraries" initiative.)	2nd	€200 000 (09 03 02)	12

The criteria used in awarding contracts under a public procurement procedure are defined in the documentation relative to that specific procedure (notice of call for tenders published in the Official Journal, terms of reference).

7. PARTICIPATION IN THE *e*CONTENT*PLUS* PROGRAMME

The call for proposals under this Work Programme is open for participation to all legal entities (public and private) established in the Member States.

The call is also open to the participation of legal entities established in EFTA States which are contracting parties to the EEA Agreement (Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein).

It is furthermore open to legal entities established in Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey, Croatia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia[11]. If grant agreements are concluded with consortia including legal entities from these countries, such legal entities will be eligible for funding only if the country concerned has effectively joined the Programme by means of a Memorandum of Understanding by the date of signature of the grant agreement. Up-to-date information on which countries are part of the programme is available on the programme website at http://europa.eu.int/econtentplus.

Legal entities established in third countries and international organisations may take part in all projects at their own expense.

There are no formal minimum or maximum requirements for the number of applicants in proposals. However, the European added value of the proposal will have to be clearly demonstrated.

8. EVALUATION PROCESS

The evaluation of proposals will be based on the principles of transparency and equality of treatment. It will be carried out by the Commission with the assistance of independent experts.

8.1. Appointment of independent experts for evaluation and reviews

The Commission will appoint independent experts to assist with the evaluation of proposals and with the review of project results. The experts shall be identified on the basis of a current call for independent experts for the eContentplus and Safer Internet Plus programmes (2005-2008). Experts will be selected in consideration of the skills and knowledge appropriate to the tasks assigned to them, taking into account the thematic requirements of a call or project, and with consideration of geographical and gender balance.

8.2. Evaluation criteria

Each submission will be assessed on the basis of the evaluation criteria, which are divided into three categories: eligibility criteria, award criteria, and selection criteria. Only proposals meeting the requirements of the eligibility criteria will be evaluated further.

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[11] Stabilisation and Association Agreement between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, of the other part, OJ L 84 of 20.03.2004. Protocol to the Stabilisation and Association Agreement between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, of the other part, on a Framework Agreement between the European Community and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia on the general principles for the participation of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in Community programmes, OJ L 92 of 22.7.2005, p. 23.

8.2.1. *Eligibility criteria*

On receipt, all proposals will be subject to an eligibility check to ensure that they conform to the requirements of the call and to the submission procedure.

The following checks will be carried out:

– Receipt of proposal by the Commission on or before the deadline (date and time) established in the call.

– Completeness of proposal. Proposals which are substantially incomplete — that is to say, the forms do not include sufficient information to identify the partners, their legal status and to evaluate the scope of the proposed project — will be excluded.

Proposers will also be excluded from participation if:

(a) they are bankrupt or being wound up, are having their affairs administered by the courts, have entered into an arrangement with creditors, have suspended business activities, are the subject of proceedings concerning those matters, or are in any analogous situation arising from a similar procedure provided for in national legislation or regulations;

(b) they have been convicted of an offence concerning their professional conduct by a judgment which has the force of res judicata;

(c) they have been guilty of grave professional misconduct proven by any means which the contracting authority can justify;

(d) they have not fulfilled obligations relating to the payment of social security contributions or the payment of taxes in accordance with the legal provisions of the country in which they are established or with those of the country of the contracting authority or those of the country where the grant agreement is to be performed;

(e) they have been the subject of a judgment which has the force of res judicata for fraud, corruption, involvement in a criminal organisation or any other illegal activity detrimental to the Communities' financial interests;

(f) following another procurement procedure or grant award procedure financed by the Community budget, they have been declared to be in serious breach of agreement for failure to comply with their contractual obligations.

Proposers **must certify that they are not in one of the situations listed above.**

Applicants making false declarations are liable to financial penalties or exclusion from grants and contracts.[12]

8.2.2. *Award criteria*

This section of the Work Programme defines the award criteria, i.e. those applied to evaluate the relative merits of proposals received following a call for proposals, and the specific weighting of these criteria. One set of award criteria will apply to *Targeted Projects*. Another set of award criteria will apply to the *Thematic Networks*.

The award criteria are applied on the basis of the information supplied in the proposal.

Each criterion is marked from 1 to 10. A maximum score of 100 points can be given to a proposal. Proposals that do not receive **a mark of at least 6/10 for criterion 1 (Relevance, impact and**

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[12] Article 175 of Commission Regulation (EC, Euratom) No. 2342/2002 of 23 December 2002 (OJ L 357, 31 December 2002).

European dimension) will not be examined further. Proposals that do not gain **an overall score of at least 60 points** will not be retained for co-funding.

8.2.2.1.   Targeted Projects

1. Relevance, impact and European dimension   *(Weighting = 35%)*

- Contribution to achieving the <u>objectives</u> of the eContent*plus* programme, of relevant Community policies referred to in this work programme and of the specific action as set out in the call.

- Fulfilment of <u>common requirements</u> for the expected <u>impact</u> and the <u>European dimension</u> of the proposed action.

- Adequacy of the exploitation and/or dissemination plans to ensure optimal use of the project results, also beyond the participants in the project.

2. Content and additional conditions   *(Weighting = 25%)*

- Fulfilment of the <u>common requirements</u> for <u>content</u>.

- Fulfilment of the additional <u>conditions</u> for the specific action.

3. Quality of the technical part of the proposal   *(Weighting = 20%)*

- Clear description of the problems addressed and the proposed solutions.

- Adequacy of the methodology and work plan for achieving the objectives stated in the proposal.

4. Resources and management   *(Weighting = 20%)*

- Fulfilment of the <u>common requirement</u> for the <u>consortium</u>.

- Quality of the consortium in terms of relevance, competences, combination of complementary expertise, and European added value.

- Extent to which the project provides for the resources (personnel, equipment, financial, etc.) necessary for success.

- Adequacy of the management, decision-making structures, communication flow and cooperation mechanisms within the consortium.

- Adequacy of the measures and indicators for monitoring progress and assessing results and impact.

8.2.2.2.   Thematic Networks

1. Relevance, impact and European dimension   *(Weighting = 40%)*

- Contribution to achieving the <u>objectives</u> of the eContent*plus* programme, of relevant Community policies referred to in this work programme and of the specific action as set out in the call.

- Expected impact of the proposed action.

- European dimension of the issue(s) addressed, and extent to which the proposed action would contribute to tackling them at European level.

2. Quality of the technical part of the proposal   *(Weighting = 20%)*

- Clear description of the problems addressed and the proposed solutions.

- Adequacy of the methodology and work plan for achieving the objectives stated in the proposal.

3. Quality of the proposed network and management   *(Weighting = 40%)*

- Fulfilment of <u>common requirements</u> for thematic networks and the <u>additional conditions</u> for the specific action.

- Quality of the partnership in terms of relevance, competences, combination of complementary expertise, and resources available.

- Quality of the coordinating team (good complementarities between participants) and adequacy of the organisations participating in the network to ensure the coordination envisaged.

- Adequacy of the management, decision-making structures, communication flow and cooperation mechanisms within the network.

- Adequacy of the measures and indicators for monitoring progress and assessing results and impact.

8.2.3.   Selection criteria

The <u>selection criteria</u> are intended to ensure that the proposers possess the resources to co-finance the project and the professional competences and qualifications required to complete the work successfully.

Selection criteria are applied on the basis of the information supplied in the proposal. Where cases of weak financial capacity or professional competence are identified, compensating actions such as financial guarantees or other actions may be required. Successful proposals called to negotiations will be the subject of a formal legal and financial validation as a requirement for the issuing of a grant agreement.

The selection criteria are divided into two parts:

Financial and operational capacity to carry out the project

– Capacity to co-finance the proposed project as demonstrated by the applicant's accounts;

– Capacity to allocate adequate human resources to carry out the project in question.

Professional competences and qualifications

– Documented relevant experience in the field of the proposed action.

9.   IMPLEMENTATION PLAN AND BUDGET

9.1.   Call for proposals 2006

An **indicative amount** of €27.3 million is available for the 2006 call on the budget line 09 03 02. This indicative amount may be increased by the contributions received from EFTA / EEA countries and candidate countries that may participate in the programme.

9.2.   Indicative allocation

The **indicative budget breakdown** by target area is as follows:

Geographic information	30%
Educational content	25%
Digital Libraries (cultural and scientific/scholarly content)	40%
Reinforcing cooperation between digital content stakeholders	5%

The Commission intends to fund 10 targeted projects and 4 thematic networks.

The following table presents the Community contribution and indicative funding for each project type, the indicative duration, the number of countries on which the proposed action is expected to have an impact.

Project type	Community contribution	Duration *(in months)*	Number of Countries *(impact)*	Funding *(in € million)*
Targeted projects	50% of eligible costs	typically 18-24 (up to 36)	6-15	€2-5m
Thematic Networks	Up to 100% of a limited set of direct eligible costs for coordinating and implementing the network. Costs for beneficiaries other than the coordinator are limited to travel and subsistence.	Up to 36	13-25	€0.4-1m

9.3.   Indicative calendar

The indicative calendar for the activities is as follows:

Date	Event
May 2006	Adoption of Work Programme and text of call for proposals
June 2006	Publication of call for proposals
October2006	Call closure
November 2006	Evaluation
December 2006	Evaluation report and draft implementation plan approved by Authorising Officer (DG)
January 2007	Implementation plan – inter-service consultation on call results.
January 2007	Committee Meeting – presentation for opinion on call results European Parliament scrutiny
March 2007	Opening of negotiations
May 2007	Completion of negotiations, award decision, individual commitments, signature of grant agreements

9.4.   Project reviews

The indicative operational budget for the review of projects funded under the budget line 09 03 02 (via appointment letters) in 2006 is €150 000.

Experts who are chosen and accept to assist the Commission with project reviews may claim, in addition to the reimbursement of travel and subsistence expenses, a payment of € 450,00 in the form of a lump sum for each full working day spent assisting the Commission's services.

9.5. Administrative expenditure

The planned administrative expenditure for 2006 is:

Publications & other expenses €126 000

Evaluation of proposals (appointment letters) €300 000

A commitment for the evaluation of proposals will be made in the third quarter on budget line 09 01 04 02, while publications & other expenses will be committed as required throughout the year.

Experts who are chosen and accept to assist the Commission with the evaluation of proposals may claim, in addition to the reimbursement of travel and subsistence expenses, a payment of €450,00 in the form of a lump sum for each full working day spent assisting the Commission's services.

10. FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information relating to this programme, please refer to the *e*Content*plus* web site at http://europa.eu.int/econtentplus.