

Note from EU Funding Programmes Information Day Cabinet Office, 18 January 2010

Summary

1. On 18th January 2010 the Cabinet Office hosted an Information Day on EU Funding Programmes. Speakers from the European Commission DG Environment and DG Justice, Freedom and Security, and the German Federal Agency for Technical Relief (THW) provided information on the EU Civil Protection Mechanism¹, civil protection related EU funding programmes and the EU Exchange of Experts programme. Successful beneficiaries of EU funding gave their advice to potential applicants. Copies of the presentations are available at <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/ukresilience/ccs/events/eu-fp-informationday.aspx>. This note summarises key points raised during the day.

Detail

Calls for Civil Protection Financial Instrument funding – general points

2. The two underlying priorities for the 2010 Annual Work Programme for Civil Protection were prevention and chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN). It was noted that floods remained the predominant type of disaster in Europe, although this did not exclude proposals addressing other types of disaster.

3. Applicants coordinating the proposals (the Coordinating Beneficiaries) needed to have a legal personality; typically the applicant who managed the bank account would take on this role.

4. The Commission was not permitted to help Coordinating Beneficiaries find other European partners for their proposals; however, information on the Civil Protection website about successful past projects could help identify like-minded partners. Additional sources of information and support included the International Team in the Civil Contingencies Secretariat, County Council European Funding Officers and Liaison Officers.

5. The Commission used a standard set of criteria to assess proposals. Proposals should be written for a non-specialist audience (including lawyers) to ensure the evaluators understood what was intended. The lead time from the submission of a proposal to the decision to grant EU funds ranged between 6 and 9 months.

6. A grant could not be increased once it had been awarded. However, modifications of up to 10 percent (plus or minus) within the overall balance of the project grant were permitted during the life of the project. Accurate

¹ The EU Civil Protection Mechanism is a legal framework enabling Member States' assistance to each other and to third countries in disasters. The Civil Protection Financial Instrument enables Community funding for research, training, equipment, and can support transport of assistance to where it is needed.

costing of an exercise or project needed to take into account potential exchange rate variation; it was not possible to claim a reserve for financial risk due to the exchange rate. At the end of the project, the Coordinating Beneficiary would invoice the Commission for all costs converted into Euros using the official exchange rate of either the month purchased or the month invoiced.

7. EU funding programmes would not cover the costs of preparing a proposal. The Commission would not accept proposals submitted after the deadlines. Due to the difference in scale, prevention and preparedness project proposals required less detailed information than exercise proposals. The Commission suggested that it was possible to complete the required proposal paperwork within about a week, although they recognised that it could take longer to identify and engage appropriate partners.

8. Civil protection funding opportunities were also available in the 7th Framework Programme (FP7); Prevention, Preparedness and Consequence Management of Terrorism and Other Security Related Risks (CIPS) Programme; and through the Communications Directorate. Funding rules prohibited the same proposal being financed by more than one EU funding programme.

Exercises

9. The Civil Contingencies Secretariat, as the UK's competent national civil protection authority, was required to sign up to any exercise proposal involving the UK. CCS would then play in the exercise; as a minimum by activating the Civil Protection Mechanism and requesting international assistance. The level of additional central government participation in an exercise would depend on the exercise scenario.

10. Realism was encouraged in exercise proposals, for example, exercising with countries that would normally cooperate together or shared similar risks; and taking account of current EU-level concerns and priorities as represented in European Council Conclusions and relevant statements by HMG. Proposals should also include a consideration of how the exercise would be evaluated and how lessons would be learned.

Prevention and preparedness projects

11. The indicative total of €1.7m allocated to the 2010 call for prevention projects could be raised if there were additional quality proposals.

12. Experience showed that the best projects were the result of continued dialogue with the Commission Project Officer. External funding support could be added to a project and would help to indicate the project's financial viability.

13. CCS as the UK's point of national contact should be made aware of project proposals coordinated by UK entities; the application needed to include proof of this.

Lessons from successful applicants

14. The administrative side of an EU project should not be underestimated; particularly as projects could be audited over a 7 year period. Therefore a dedicated project administrator was recommended. The finance officer would also need to understand the processes and be supportive of the project.

15. In-kind assistance could be used to cover some / all of the funding shortfall; people's time, effort and resources that would not ordinarily be working on the project or exercise could be accounted for.

16. Stakeholder engagement was particularly important; potential applicants were advised to engage early with key stakeholders. A simple tip was to remember European partners' names and to understand potential cultural differences.

17. EU Funding Programmes provided opportunities to carry out innovative work and learn from European partners. It was helpful to consider how to take the outcome of a European project forward nationally; projects should seek to develop tangible products that could be used by participating and non-participating Member States.

Prevention, preparedness and consequence management of terrorism and other security related risks (CIPS programme)

18. The CIPS programme issued two calls for proposals each year; any remaining funds from the first call would be transferred to the second call. Trans-national projects required one additional Member State; national projects did not require an additional Member State but should fulfil specific eligibility criteria. The Programme would finance up to 70 percent of a project; many projects were co-financed by private sector engagement.

EU Exchange of Experts Programme

19. The German Federal Agency for Technical Relief (THW) was the coordinator for the EU Exchange of Experts programme. The programme enabled visits to another country to exchange good practice in the field of civil protection. National Training Coordinators were required to pre-approve candidates for the scheme. There were no specific quotas for countries; THW hoped that all Member States would take advantage of the scheme.

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