

European Commission

5. Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA)

Background

The Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) provides assistance to countries which have the perspective to accede to the EU. The instrument is valid for the period from 2007 to 2013. Assistance is provided within the framework of the European Partnerships of the potential candidate countries and the Accession Partnerships of the candidate countries. The IPA is intended as a flexible instrument and therefore provides assistance which depends on the progress made by the beneficiary countries and their needs as shown in the European Commission's evaluations and annual strategy papers. The Council regulation establishing the IPA <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2006:210:0082:0093:EN:PDF> was adopted on 17 July 2006 and replaces the 2000-06 pre-accession financial instruments PHARE, ISPA, SAPARD, the Turkish pre-accession instrument, and the financial instrument for the Western Balkans CARDS.

The overall IPA budget for the period from 2007 to 2013 is €11,468 billion.

Types of Grant

Grants and tenders.

Grant Size

To be defined in the annual action plans

Own Contribution

To be defined in the annual action plans

Funding Priorities

The IPA aims at supporting the EU candidate and potential candidate countries in their efforts to come closer to European standards and policies.

Mainly it promotes institution-building and the rule of law, human rights, including the fundamental freedoms, minority rights, gender equality and non-discrimination, both administrative and economic reforms, economic and social development, recon-

struction and reconstruction, and regional and cross-border co-operation.

The IPA is made up of five components, each covering priorities defined according to the needs of the beneficiary countries. Two components concern all beneficiary countries:

- the “support for transition and institution-building” component
- the “cross-border cooperation” component.

The aims of these components are, respectively, to finance capacity-building and institution-building, and to support the beneficiary countries in the area of cross-border co-operation. The other three components are aimed at candidate countries only:

- the “regional development” component is designed to prepare the countries for the implementation of the Community’s cohesion policy, and in particular for the European Regional Development Fund and the Cohesion Fund ;
- the “human resources development” component concerns preparation for cohesion policy and the European Social Fund ;
- the “rural development” component is concerned with preparation for the common agricultural policy and related policies and for the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD).

Candidate countries are therefore prepared for full implementation of the Community acquis at the time of accession, while potential candidate countries are led to progressively align themselves on the Community acquis. As for the nature of the measures provided to both groups of countries, the potential candidate countries have access to measures which are similar to those provided under the third, fourth and fifth components, but within the framework of the first two components.

The IPA is based on strategic multi-annual planning established in accordance with the broad political guidelines set out in the Commission’s Enlargement package, which now includes a multi-annual financial framework. The planning is made up of multi-annual indicative planning documents, established for each beneficiary country and covering the main intervention areas envisaged for that country. Regarding action on the ground, annual or multi-annual programmes (depending on the component) based on the indicative planning documents are adopted by the Commission. They are implemented in three ways: by centralised, decentralised or shared management. Assistance under the IPA can take the following forms:

- investment, procurement contracts or grants
- special loans, loan guarantees and financial assistance,
- administrative cooperation, involving experts sent from the Member States;

- action by the Community acting in the interest of the beneficiary country;
- budget support, the contribution to the capital of international financial institutions or the regional development banks

Grantmaking Criteria

Participation in the award of procurement or grant contracts is open to all natural persons, who are nationals of a Member State, to legal persons, who are established in a Member State of the EU or the European Economic Area (EEA), a country that is a beneficiary of the IPA or a country that is a beneficiary of the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI), and to international organisations.

The beneficiary countries are divided into two categories, depending on their status:

- candidate countries under the accession process: Croatia, Turkey, FYRO Macedonia.
- potential candidate countries under the stabilisation and association process: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia (incl. Kosovo).

Guidelines

The practical implementation of the IPA is regulated by two documents:

1. "Rules and Procedures"

This document explains the basic principles the implementation of an action, which is supported by a grant from the Community. It is available at: http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/tender/gestion/final_annexe_en.pdf.

2. "Practical Guide to Contract Procedures for EC External Actions" (PRAG)

The PRAG is available at: http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/tender/practical_guide_2006/documents/new_prag_en_final.pdf

The purpose of the PRAG is to provide users with all the information necessary to undertake procurement or a grant procedure from the very first steps to the award of contracts. The annexes cover both the procurement phase and the execution of contracts. The Guide provides the procedures to be used in centralised systems (centralised and indirect centralised) and de-centralised systems with ex-ante approval or with ex-post controls by the European Commission.

Project Duration

To be defined in the annual programmes plans

Deadline

To be defined in the annual programmes plans

Application Forms

The annexes of the Practical Guide to Contract Procedures for EC External Actions" (PRAG) (see below) include standard forms used in calls for proposals: http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/tender/practical_guide_2006/annexes_general_en.htm. For each call for proposal, they are provided together with the guidelines setting out the objectives of the call.

Application and Procedures

The EC delegations are in charge of the practical implementation of IPA grants. Call for proposals and tenders will be published on the delegation website and on the Europe Aid website: <http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/cgi/frame12.pl> This website has just been reviewed in order to make it more user-friendly. All EC external assistance follows the same set of rules which are summarised on this webpage in the section on EC management procedures.

Management procedures applied to the IPA

The IPA puts particular emphasis on ownership by and responsibility of the recipient country with regard to the programming and implementation of assistance. One of the primary objectives of IPA is to progressively reach decentralised management, for all partner countries -be they potential candidates or candidates to the EU- and all IPA components. The ultimate aim is to have, wherever possible, decentralised management without ex ante controls by the EC delegation.

In the case of candidate countries, where all 5 IPA components are available, decentralised management will be the rule.

- The regional development, human resources development and rural development components will only work in a decentralised way, with the national authorities taking responsibility for tendering, contracting and payments as soon as they are ready to do so. Different requirements apply to those three components, so the timeframe for actually reaching decentralised management may be different according to the component. For the regional development component and the human resources development component, the EC delegation will be involved through ex ante controls, whereas the rural development

component will only require ex post controls.

- As regards the transition assistance and institution building component, funds will be managed in a decentralised way where the necessary structures are already in place (Turkey, Croatia) and in a deconcentrated way by the delegation until they are actually functioning (FYRoM).
- Cross-border co-operation will be governed by different rules according to the nature of the co-operation (between a Member State and an IPA beneficiary or among IPA beneficiaries), but, there too, shared management or decentralised management will be the final objective.

In the case of potential candidates, the ultimate goal is also decentralised management, but the Commission will manage funds centrally first for some time (deconcentrated management from the EC delegation), both for components I and II.

The European Agency for Reconstruction will ensure that there is continuity between assistance provided under the former pre-accession instruments and IPA. The Agency will work closely with the EC Delegations in the implementation of the IPA programmes until the end of 2008, when all the implementation tasks will be transferred to the Commission and its Delegations.

Hence, the main contact points for NGOs in partner countries in all cases will be within the national administration. Delegations will continue to be fully involved in the process.

Language

n/a

Tips

In order to succeed in accessing EC funds, a good understanding of the rules and procedures of the calls are crucial. Little administrative mistakes, such as submission after the deadline or missing documents lead to an immediate rejection. NGOs considering responding to a call should carefully read the guidelines. Project objectives should directly be linked to the objectives of the call. Applicants should also read the relevant policy papers and refer to them, when appropriate. EC officials use an EC handbook explaining how to draft and manage a proposal. This document can also be useful for NGOs especially part 2 on the logical framework approach. It is called "Aid Delivery methods – Volume 1 – Project Cycle Management Guidelines" and is available online at http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/reports/pcm_guidelines_2004_en.pdf.

NGOs with little experience in applying for EC

funding should consider participating in other NGOs' projects funded by the EC. As a junior partner they can build their capacity and get acquainted to EC requirements without taking full responsibility of a project. Consult and liaise with both the EC Delegation in the beneficiary country and the Brussels-based officials. Another information source is CONCORD Europe, the European confederation of relief and development NGOs (contact details below). You also might get support from your national NGO platform.

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NAME OF GRANT PROGRAMME Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA)
NAME European Community
NAME IN ENGLISH European Community
ACRONYM EC
DEPARTMENT Within the European Commission: Head of Unit – D.1. Financial Instruments & Contracts Directorate General for Enlargement For general information on your country's multi-annual indicative planning document or other documents contact the EC delegation in your country. There you will be told how the IPA funds are managed nationally.
CONTACT Carlos Eduardo M FILIPE Head of Unit – D.1. Financial Instruments & Contracts Directorate General for Enlargement Phone: 0032 2 2960862 Fax: 0032 2 2969501 Email: Carlos.Filipe@ec.europa.eu A list of EC delegations web pages is available at http://ec.europa.eu/comm/external_relations/delegations/intro/web.htm .
ADDRESS European Commission Directorate General for Enlargement D.1. Financial Instruments & Contracts Charlemagne Rue de la Loi, 170 1040 - Bruxelles The External Service Directory is a database of delegation addresses. It is available at http://ec.europa.eu/comm/external_relations/repdel/index_rep_en.cfm .

COUNTRY INDEX
Countries covered by the IPA are Candidate countries under the accession process: Croatia Turkey FYRO Macedonia
Potential candidate countries under the stabilisation and association process: Albania Bosnia and Herzegovina Montenegro Serbia (incl. Kosovo)