



Call for proposals no. VP/2012/004

Actions for Cooperation and Information on Social Security Coordination

Budget Heading 04.03.0500

In view of the large number of enquiries, please do not telephone. Questions should be sent by email only to:

empl-b4-calls-proposals@ec.europa.eu

This text is available in English, French and German. The English version is the original.

To ensure a rapid response to information requests, applicants are invited
to send their queries in English or French.

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1. GENERAL BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Ensuring that people do not lose their social security rights when they travel or work abroad is an important factor in promoting free cross-border movement of persons.

The EU approach involves the coordination of Member States' social security schemes as a key to encouraging free movement of citizens. While each Member State defines the characteristics of its national benefits on its own, where those benefits fulfil the characteristics of social security benefits under the EU law, coordination rules apply. Their ultimate aim is to ensure that persons do not lose their rights as a consequence of moving within the EU.

The basis for the coordination of social security schemes is Article 48 TFEU (governing social security matters). The coordination at EU level was originally established by a 1959 Regulation, which introduced the principle of international social security coordination in European Union law. This was replaced by Regulation (EEC) No 1408/71 and implementing Regulation (EEC) No 574/72. A modernised coordination system, that incorporated case-law of the Court of Justice of the EU, started to apply in May 2010, with the coming into force of Regulations (EC) Nos. 883/2004 and 987/2009¹.

With a widened scope, the EU law on social security coordination now applies to all EU citizens who are insured under a national law, whether they work or not.

For effective application of the EU coordination rules, the dissemination of information remains one of the most important factors. The wider public, but also the administrations dealing with the implementation of the Regulation have to receive the necessary information on the novelties and instruction for the national implementation of these texts. The information and awareness raising work of mobility portals such as EURAXESS also requires that they are informed of these developments.

One of the main new features of the modernised coordination system is its aim to enhance cooperation between social security institutions, enabling the speeding up of the provision of benefits to citizens, including those that are highly mobile. To this end, the Member States have agreed on the introduction of the system for electronic data exchange (EESSI²). The shift from paper to electronic data exchange calls for enormous preparation within the Member States.

Article 79 of Regulation 883/2004 provides that "In connection with this Regulation and the Implementing Regulation, the Commission may fund in full or in part: (a) activities aimed at improving exchanges of information between the social security authorities and institutions of the Member States, particularly the electronic exchange of data; (b) any other activity aimed at providing information to the persons covered by this Regulation and their representatives about the rights and obligations deriving from this Regulation, using the most appropriate means".

The effective implementation and enforcement of rights deriving from the Regulation (EC) No 883/2004 and the Regulation (EC) No 987/2009 is indeed a shared task where the social security institutions, the Member States administrations and the social partners can play an important role in improving citizens' knowledge of their rights.

¹ Regulation (EC) No 883/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 on the coordination of social security systems (OJ L 166, 30.4.2004, p. 1) and Regulation (EC) No 987/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 September 2009 laying down the procedure for implementing Regulation (EC) No 883/2004 on the coordination of social security systems (OJ L 284, 30.10.2009, p. 1).

² Electronic Exchange of Social Security Information (see Article 4(2) of Regulation (EC) No 987/2009).

The call for proposals is funded by Article 04.03.05.00 of the EU Budget - Free movement of workers, coordination of social security systems and measures for migrants, including migrants from third countries.

2. OBJECTIVES FOR THIS CALL FOR PROPOSALS

The objectives of this call for proposals are to support:

1. Initiatives and actions with a trans-national dimension, which
 - aim at developing cooperation between social security institutions; and/or
 - aim at improving information of the public about their rights and obligations deriving from the EU Regulations on social security coordination when exercising the right of free movement;
2. trans-national initiatives and actions aiming at preparing and implementing the system for electronic data exchange (EESSI);
3. national initiatives and actions aiming at preparing and implementing the system for electronic data exchange (EESSI).

2.1. Eligible types of actions and initiatives

On the basis of the objectives as described above, three sub-programmes have been defined. Please find below a detailed **description** of these eligible actions and initiatives as well as **examples** of possible actions that may be co-financed:

- I Trans-national actions** for cooperation between social security institutions and/or for improving information of the public about their rights and obligation deriving from the EU Regulations on social security coordination

A variety of transnational actions, including conferences, round tables, training initiatives, seminars and workshops, setting up of networks, publications, studies, development and reinforcement of administrative capacity (for example, exchange of experience on training, exchange of public servants between Institutions, exchange of best practices and experiences on the coordination,), or other appropriate tools of information on social security coordination.

- II Trans-national actions** for preparing and implementing the system for electronic data exchange (EESSI)

Transnational actions aiming at exchange of best practice, knowledge, expertise and experiences with the implementation of the EESSI, provision of mutual support for system set up, reinforcement of technical capacity, bilateral testing, training, or other relevant transnational activities aiming at completion of the EESSI project.

- III National actions** for preparing and implementing the system for electronic data exchange (EESSI)

Adjustments of national IT systems for the EESSI purposes, testing at national level, support and reinforcement of administrative capacity, knowledge dissemination, training, or other relevant actions supporting the set up and implementation of EESSI at national level.

2.2. Indicative amount and maximum possible rate of co-financing

The budget earmarked for the co-financing of the projects selected under this call for proposals is two million six hundred thirty-three thousand twenty Euros (€ 2,633 020).

For actions under objective 3), the maximum EU contribution for an individual project cannot exceed € 200 000.

The European Union co-financing percentage (all objectives) is limited to a maximum of 80% of the total eligible costs of the action.

The applicant has to guarantee the co-financing in cash of the remaining 20%. Contributions in kind will not be taken into account.

Applications which request a grant of more than 80 % will be excluded automatically from the selection.

3. SUBMISSION AND EXAMINATION OF GRANT APPLICATIONS

3.1. Submission and implementation dates

The **deadline** for submission of complete applications is as follows:

31/05/2012

For actions **commencing** no earlier than **15/09/2012** and no later than **15/12/2012**.

The maximum project duration is **15 months**. Applications for projects with duration in excess of 15 months will not be considered. Extensions after the maximum duration will not be granted, except in very exceptional circumstances if it becomes impossible to complete the project within the scheduled period for reasons beyond the control of the beneficiary, duly notified in advance and before the deadline specified in the grant agreement.

In view of the time needed to examine applications, actions may not start before the deadlines given above. Applicants should note that if their project is approved, they will not necessarily receive the grant agreement prior to the action starting dates indicated and should, therefore, take this into account in programming the timing of their project.

Any expenditure incurred before written confirmation that the application has been accepted is at the applicant's risk.

Proposals which indicate an earlier starting date than the ones indicated above will not be taken into consideration by the Evaluation Committee.

3.2. Exclusion criteria

Applicants must be in conformity with Articles 93(1), 94 and 96(2)(a)³ of the Financial Regulation ⁴.

3.3. Eligibility criteria

This call for proposals is intended to finance specific actions, projects or initiatives. Therefore grants are not intended to finance the normal operations of the bodies presenting applications; they are intended only to cover **additional expenditure** linked directly to projects.

Eligible applicants

- i. The applicant must be a properly constituted and registered legal entity, having the registered office based in one of the Member States of the European Union or in one of the EEA Countries (Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway)⁵. In derogation from this requirement and pursuant to Article 114 of the Financial Regulation, organisations of social partners without legal personality under the applicable national law are also eligible provided that their legal representatives have the capacity to undertake legal obligations on their behalf and assume financial liability.

- ii. For objective 1) the applicant and the partner(s) must be:

national social security institutions,

or

social partners organisations, NGOs or other legally recognised type of non-profit organisation in the field of free movement of workers and social security, having a practical experience with the application of the Regulations on social security coordination.

- iii. For objectives 2) and 3) the applicant and for objective 2) also the partner(s) must be:

national social security institutions,

or

liaison bodies and organisations hosting the Access Points to the EESSI.

A project applicant and/or partner cannot be an individual.

³ The situations referred to include bankruptcy, compulsory winding-up, being under court administration, in an arrangement with creditors or any other similar proceedings; convictions of professional misconduct; non-fulfilment of social security or tax payment obligations; convictions of fraud, corruption, involvement in a criminal organisation or any other illegal activity; declared in serious breach of contract in relation to activities funded by the EU budget; subject to conflict of interest; guilty of misrepresentation in supplying the required information.

⁴ See Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002 on the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the European Communities as subsequently amended: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CONSLEG:2002R1605:20101129:EN:PDF> (O.J. L311 of 26.11.2010, p.9)

⁵ The co-financing of proposals by applicants having their registered offices based in Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway is conditional on these countries' participation in the financing of the budget line of the general budget of the European Union on the basis of which the projects are co-financed for the budgetary year during which the proposal is submitted.

Eligible actions

To be eligible, the action must:

- i. Be clearly linked to at least one objective of the call for proposals.
- ii. For actions under objectives 1) and 2), the action must be carried out in cooperation between active partners from at least two different EU Member States or EEA Countries. This must be demonstrated in the application by signed letters indicating the active involvement;
- iii. For actions under objective 3), the action must be an individual action, which is a part of a wider national multi-annual strategy for implementing EESSI. To this end, an overview of the national strategy(ies) should be presented in the call application.

Profit-making organisations and companies, such as normal commercial suppliers of goods and services, are not eligible as project partners.

Eligible applications

To be eligible, applications must:

- i. be sent by the submission deadline;
- ii. be submitted according to the set requirements. Application forms must be compulsorily submitted on-line as set below and their respective detailed and signed print-outs must be submitted as set in point 4.2 hereinafter;
- iii. be complete, detailed and include all the documents indicated in the checklist in Annex;
- iv. comply with the European Union co-financing percentage of maximum 80 %.

If an applicant submits more than one proposal, each application must be submitted separately.

3.4. Selection criteria

Only organizations with the necessary financial and operational capacity may be awarded a grant.

Financial capacity

Applicants must have access to solid and adequate funding to maintain their activities for the period of the action and to help finance it as necessary. In particular, 1) the annual turnover of the applicant (in the last financial year for which statements are available) must be superior to the amount of the requested EU contribution; and 2) the applicant must be mature enough to be financially viable, i.e. it must be legally established for at least 2 years on the date of submission of the application.

The financial capacity shall be proven, inter alia, by the annual balance sheet and declaration of honour mentioned in the checklist annexed.

The verification of financial capacity will not apply to public bodies and international organisations.

Operational capacity

The applicant must have the operational resources (technical, management) and the professional skills and qualifications needed to successfully complete the proposed action, as well as the ability to implement it. The applicant must have a strong track record of competence and experience in the field of social security and in particular in the type of action proposed.

In order to demonstrate his operational capacity the applicant shall provide, inter alia:

- the most recent activity report of the applicant's organisation;
- a **written declaration** signed by the project manager certifying the professional competence of the team performing the tasks associated with the action for which funding is requested. This declaration shall be accompanied by their **curriculum vitae** (educational and professional qualifications) and **job specifications**.

3.5. Award criteria

Proposals which fulfil the eligibility and selection criteria indicated above will be assessed according to the following award criteria:

Policy Criteria

- i. the extent to which the action meets the objectives and priorities of the call for proposals and adds value in comparison to other projects of similar nature *(20 points)*;
- ii. the extent to which there is a clear and well-supported diagnosis of the issues addressed in the proposal, the methods used for addressing these issues and a clear indication of the proposal's contribution to the objectives of the call *(15 points)*;
- iii. the extent to which the proposal responds to the identified challenges of the coordination of social security schemes *(10 points)*.

Organisational Criteria

- iv. the clarity and feasibility of the proposed work plan, including timetable and methodology, and in particular its capacity to achieve the planned objectives through well-identified and well-planned activities with clear and attainable timelines *(20 points)*;
- v.
 - a) for **actions under objective 1)**, also the quality of partnerships, the extent to which the project, action or initiative has a genuine transnational dimension and/or requires joint participation of different stakeholders, the multiplier effect and the sustainability of the action *(15 points)*;
 - b) for **actions under objective 2)**, the extent to which the action has a genuine transnational dimension in relation to the multi-annual national strategy for implementing EESSI and the multiplier effect of the action *(15 points)*;
 - c) for **actions under objective 3)**, the link of the action in relation to the multi-annual national strategy for implementing EESSI. *(15 points)*

Financial Criteria

- vi. the financial quality of the proposal including a reasonable and realistic budget, its likely value for money and a sound cost-efficiency ratio (10 points);
- vii. the quality, clarity and detail of the budgetary presentation (10 points).

In order to be considered for co-financing, the projects must obtain the minimum of 60% of the total (100) available points. Funding will be awarded to proposals with the highest scores in order of merit, to the extent of available budget for this call.

4. PRACTICAL PROCEDURES

4.1. Where can the application form be found?

The compulsory on-line grant application form is an electronic form which must be filled by using the Internet Web system "SWIM" at the following internet address:

<https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/swim/external/displayWelcome.do>

This system allows the introduction, edition, validation, printing and submission of the grant application form. Once the application is submitted electronically, a print out of an exemplar has to be signed by the legal representative of the organization submitting the proposal and be sent to the Commission as per point 4.2. After submission of the application electronically no changes are possible.

At the above quoted web site other requested forms, the financial guidelines for applicants and other useful documents can be found.

4.2. Where does the application need to be sent?

Please send your covering letter of application, together with all the documents listed in the checklist, as **signed originals** as well as **one copy of all these documents (in total: 2 sets of documents)** by the deadline of **31/05/2012**, either:

- a) by **registered mail** (date of postmark serving as proof of postage in time to meet the deadline), to the following address:

**Call for proposals VP/2012/004
European Commission – DG EMPL/B.4
J-54 02/57
B-1049 Brussels
Belgium**

or

- b) by **courier services** (date of deposit slip serving as proof of sending in time to meet the deadline), to the address below,

or

- c) **delivered by hand**, in person or by an authorised representative (date of acknowledgement of receipt by the Commission serving as evidence of timely delivery) to the following address

**Call for proposals VP/2012/004
European Commission – DG EMPL/B.4
J-54 02/57
Service central de réception du courrier
Avenue du Bourget, 1-3
B-1140 Brussels
Belgium**

In case of hand-delivery, please keep a receipt as proof of submission, signed and dated by the official in the Commission's central mail department who took delivery. This department is open from 08.00 to 17.00 from Monday to Thursday and from 08.00 to 16.00 on Friday; it is closed on Saturdays, Sundays and on Commission holidays. Please note that for security reasons, hand deliveries (including courier services) are not accepted in other Commission buildings.

Regarding the presentation of the application file, it is recommended to:

- Follow the order of documents as listed in the checklist in Annex
- Print the documents double-sided, where possible
- Use only 2-hole folders (please do not bind or glue).

If an applicant submits more than one proposal, each one must be submitted separately.

ALL ENQUIRIES MUST BE MADE BY E-MAIL ONLY AT:

empl-b4-calls-proposals@ec.europa.eu

- PLEASE DO NOT TELEPHONE -

4.3. Accepted and rejected applications

Applications will be examined by an Evaluation Committee, which will meet, in principle, within 40 working days following the deadline for submission indicated in point 3.1.

Only proposals which satisfy the eligibility and the selection criteria will be assessed against the award criteria.

The Evaluation Committee will draw up a list of proposals recommended for funding.

Rejected applications

The European Commission will notify unsuccessful applicants in writing no later than one month after the meeting of the Evaluation Committee at which the application was examined. Requests concerning the progress of dossiers sent prior to the elapse of this time period will not be answered.

Selected applications

Successful applicants will receive two original copies of the grant agreement for acceptance and signature. Both these copies must be sent back to the Commission, which will then return one of them once it has been signed by both parties.

ANNEX 1

Checklist : The Evaluation Committee will not examine applications lacking one or more of these documents :

1	Official covering letter of application quoting the reference number of the call for proposals (VP/2012/004) with the original signature of the legal representative of the applicant organization.
2	<p>Print-out of the duly completed and submitted on-line application form including estimated budget (see point 4.1), dated and with the original signature of the legal representative.</p> <p>NOTE: The on-line form must first be electronically submitted before printing. After the electronic submission no further changes to the application are possible. The detailed and signed print-out must be submitted as set in point 4.2.</p>
3	A signed declaration of honour (to be found on-line as an annex to the application form), certifying that the applicant is not in one of the situations listed in Article 93 §1, 94 and 96 §2 point a) of the Financial Regulation and his financial and operational capacity. This must have the original signature of the legal representative of the applicant organization.
4	<p>"Financial identification" form duly completed with the original signature of the account holder and the original signature and stamp of the bank. The financial identification form can be found annexed to the on-line application form.</p> <p>NOTE: The bank account must be held in the name of the applicant. Applications cannot be accepted with an account held in the name of an individual.</p>
5	<p>"Legal entities" form duly completed with the original signature of the legal representative. The legal entities form can be found annexed to the on-line application form.</p> <p>Applicants must also provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ a copy of the certificate of official registration or other official document attesting to the establishment of the entity (where this exists) – not necessary for public bodies and international organizations; ▪ a copy of the articles of association/statutes or equivalent, proving the eligibility of the organization; ▪ a copy of a document confirming the applicant's tax or VAT number, if available; ▪ in the case of social partner organizations without legal personality, a letter of the representative with the capacity to undertake legal obligations.

6	<p>Detailed description of the action and work programme for the project signed by the legal representative.</p> <p>i. The full description of the action and work programme and the main objectives must be provided as an annex to the on-line application form by using the mandatory structure for proposals (available online, together with this document);</p> <p>The detailed description of the action and work program should be submitted in English, French or German.</p>
7	<p>Each active partner involved in project management, for example providing technical support and/or financing, should provide an official version of the letter of commitment/partnership (see Annex E2 of the online application form) with the name, address and person responsible, explaining the nature of their involvement, the tasks to be carried out and specifying the amount of each cash contribution provided.</p> <p>Work and tasks carried out by the project partners (as described in the letters of commitment/partnership) are not subject to the rules on subcontracting listed in Financial Guidelines for applicants. However, it is not permissible to include normal commercial suppliers of goods and services as project partners in order to avoid these rules. By way of example, and without limiting the exclusions to the examples listed, the Commission does not find it appropriate to include as project partners independent consultants, conference organisers, etc.</p>
8	<p>A written declaration signed by the project manager certifying the professional competence of the team performing the tasks associated with the action for which funding is requested.</p> <p>This declaration shall be accompanied by the Curriculum vitae of the project manager indicating clearly the current employer with whom there exists either a permanent or temporary contract of employment. Where applicable, the declaration will include also the curriculum vitae of the persons who will perform the tasks associated with the action for which funding requested.</p>
9	<p>Information on subcontracting for external expertise: The nature and value of all activities to be subcontracted must be compulsorily described with an explanation of why subcontracting is necessary. The planned selection and award criteria must be compulsorily explained in the appropriate annex to the on-line application form.</p> <p>Applicants wishing to recruit the services of external experts for an amount above 60.000 Euros must provide a copy of the draft tender specifications. To assist applicants a model for tender specifications is included as an annex to the online application form. This requirement does not apply to public authorities which are already governed by a system of public procurement rules.</p> <p>Additional information about subcontracting can be found in the Financial Guidelines for Applicants.</p>

10	<p>The balance sheet for the last financial year for which the accounts have been closed, demonstrating the financial capacity of the applicant. The applicant should specify which currency is being used in the balance sheet. The Commission reserves the right to request balance sheets from previous years, if necessary.</p> <p>Not necessary for public bodies and international organisations.</p>
11	<p>The most recent activity report of the applicant's organisation (if available);</p>
12	<p>A list of the main projects carried out in the last three years relating to the objective of the call. In the case of work done for the Commission, the applicants must also indicate the reference number of the contract and the department for which the contract was performed.</p>