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| <p>(a) a certificate proving that they are registered members of their profession;</p> <p>(b) a list of technical installation maintenance works carried out over the last five years (particularly on installations in buildings), with details of value and sites;</p> <p>(c) the nature of the firm, and the number and qualifications of employees;</p> | <p>(d) as much information as possible on the firm's financial and economic capacity.</p> <p>11. The invitation to tender will state the criteria on which bids will be assessed.</p> <p>The firm chosen to carry out the works will need to have a permanent office in Brussels.</p> |
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NOTICE TO MEMBER STATES

laying down guidelines for integrated global grants for which Member States are invited to submit proposals in the framework of a Community initiative for rural development

(91/C 73/14)

1. On 15 March 1991, the Commission of the European Communities, acting pursuant to Article 11 of Regulation (EEC) No 4253/88⁽¹⁾, decided to establish an initiative which would serve as a model for rural development, hereinafter referred to as Leader (Liaison entre actions de développement de l'économie rurale — Links between actions for the development of the rural economy).

2. In the framework of the Leader programme, Community assistance in the form of integrated global grants may be provided to permit local groups to implement measures in accordance with the guidelines laid down in this notice. The groups and the programmes which they propose to implement will be chosen by the Member States and the Commission together on the basis of broader proposals made by the Member States.

I. OBJECTIVES

3. Readjustment of activities and maintenance of a sufficiently diversified socio-economic fabric call for an approach firmly geared to local requirements and local origin and making use of available organizational capacity and expertise. That is why the initiative is designed to establish a network of local rural development action groups (hereinafter called groups) enjoying a substantial degree of flexibility in implementing at local level the initiatives financed by national global grants. It is additional to the local development measures contained in the Community support frameworks.

4. The objective of the initiative is to find innovative solutions which will serve as a model for all rural areas and ensure maximum integration between sectoral measures.

5. The initiative will take the form of integrated global grants to competent bodies (which may be public authorities) nominated by the Member States. The bodies will coordinate use of the grant by local rural development groups. Leading figures in the local economy and society will take part in the operation of the groups, which may, in some cases, be local collective bodies (associations of municipalities).

6. The public, private or mixed bodies which will act as groups will be *selected* by the Commission and the Member States in collaboration⁽²⁾ on the basis of broader proposals made by the Member States, taking account of certain criteria, some of a general nature:

- guarantee of solvency,
- administrative ability,

⁽¹⁾ OJ No L 374, 31. 12. 1988, p. 1.

⁽²⁾ Within the meaning of Article 4 of Regulation (EEC) No 2052/88.

- local presence,
- participation of leading figures in the local economy and society in their operation;

while others will be specific to this initiative:

- quality of the local development programme proposed by the group in the form of a multi-annual business plan (objective and methods of implementation),
- know-how and expertise on rural development,
- acceptance of the principle of operating as a transnational network.

In preparing their proposals to the Commission and with its agreement, the Member States will be able to add other national selection criteria provided that the initiative's underlying philosophy and objectives are respected.

7. It will be proposed that use be made either of existing bodies meeting the above criteria or of new bodies set up by local communities to participate in the Leader programme.

Where the Member States and the Commission decide to use newly created groups, appropriate technical assistance will be provided where required. The national body may be made responsible for this.

8. The groups will operate on a network basis to exchange information and experience, using for this purpose not only traditional means but also new communications technologies where these are already available or can be readily provided. Each local group will be given the minimum equipment required. Operation of the network will benefit from technical assistance and centralized information at Community level (exchanges and visits, meetings, appraisal seminars, etc.) provided by the Commission.

In addition to its use for internal communications within the group network (facilitating the exchange of information and the pooling of methods), the data handling and transmission equipment will be important for external communications, helping to match supply of and demand for services.

9. This will enable the groups to act as intermediaries in exchanges by linking up to a series of transmission

and database networks in the following fields, for example:

- studies on the potential market for goods and services produced locally,
- links with travel agencies,
- reservation systems (hotel rooms),
- mail-order buying,
- links with the central purchasing offices of organic or quality food chains,
- access to distance learning.

10. The groups will undertake the delegated management of global financial allocations coordinated by the national body. The funds will be allocated to them on the basis of the local rural development programme submitted by them (business plan), an outline of which, complementary to the measures provided for in the relevant Community support frameworks, is annexed to the global grant agreement signed by the Commission and the appropriate national body, with the agreement of the Member State concerned. The agreement also covers the types of measures, the criteria for selecting beneficiaries, the conditions and rates for granting assistance and the specific provisions for monitoring utilization of the global grant.

II. DEFINITION OF ELIGIBLE AREAS

11. All areas under Objectives 1 and 5 (b) (55 % of Community territory) are eligible under this initiative.

In selecting the local areas to receive assistance, the Member States will be required to have regard to the need to ensure that the initiative serves as a model for all the Objective 1 and 5 (b) areas.

The groups selected will need to be local in character (locally formed bodies or the local branches of a regional body) and, using their knowledge of the area, will submit guidelines for the development of a rural area with a population ranging from about 5 000 people (areas with a very low population density) to 100 000 corresponding to an area smaller than the NUTS III

administrative category. Within this area individual initiatives undertaken by the groups may concern rural communities of a smaller size. In certain justified cases mutually agreed by the Member State and the Commission, group activities on technical support for rural development may cover a larger area provided their other activities are not affected.

III. MEASURES ELIGIBLE FOR GLOBAL GRANTS

12. Three types of measures are eligible: those of direct benefit to the inhabitants and economic operators of each of the rural areas concerned, those concerning the establishment, equipment and management of groups and those ensuring the operation of the network.

Particular attention will be paid to the need to avoid any investment which generates pollution and to the protection and development of rural landscapes.

13. Measures for agricultural and rural development as such

(a) *Technical support to rural development*

- Technical assistance at the request of local groups (micro-zone analysis, assessment of development potential, development engineering, production of dossiers, etc.).
- Technical assistance to development project promoters (identification of initiatives involving setting up or taking over businesses, feasibility studies, technical advice, follow-up, etc.).
- Technical assistance for existing activities (identification of potential markets, access to funding, innovation management, etc.).
- Link up with all the CSF-funded measures to encourage development of the area.

All activities of this type are to be undertaken by qualified development advisers and organizers in conjunction with other complementary Community measures.

(b) *Vocational training and assistance for recruitment*

The success for this initiative depends on the ability of local operators to find new ways of exploiting local resources and securing new know-how. Accordingly, training, particularly in the form of short modules, and assistance for recruitment should form part of the implementation of the various measures and apply both to the final beneficiaries of

the measures and to the groups' advisers and organizers. Giving some of the training a transnational character is an option which should be encouraged.

(c) *Rural tourism*

The aim of all measures in this field shall be to:

- improve knowledge of the demand for leisure in the countryside,
- develop both the quantity and quality of supply in the light of the increased requirements of potential customers in terms of the level of presentation and diversity of tourist services,
- improve the organization of the supply of tourist services and the matching of supply to demand (minimum standards, guaranteed quality of services, promotion of rural tourist products, reservation centres, etc.),
- at the same time, encourage centres of rural tourism with basic equipment (swimming pools, tennis courts, etc.) and those offering cultural facilities and opportunities for theme holidays (sports, arts and crafts, environmental discovery, etc.), together with a more broadly-based rural tourism centred on individual investment (particularly farm tourism).

All these forms of rural tourism are closely linked with agriculture since they offer a way of further exploiting the essential activity of farms, both through the diversification of activities (extra income and the prevention of out-migration) and in relation to the management of the countryside and the landscape which such farms undertake.

These actions must be implemented in a way consistent with the guidelines of the programme adopted by the Commission in favour of rural tourism enterprises (¹).

The groups, besides identifying local project promoters, may facilitate:

- individual or collective investment (including tourism-related investment linked to agricultural activity),
- the adaptation of small public works to meet the needs arising from the supply of tourist services,

(¹) COM(90) 438 final: 'Community action to promote rural tourism'.

- the listing, restoration and development of buildings and rural sites of tourist interest,
- promotional activities,
- market studies,
- the introduction of reservation systems,
- measures to extend the tourist season (short-range tourism, weekends).

(d) *Small firms, craft enterprises and local services*

It should be stressed that absolute priority under this heading will be given to measures to encourage the establishment, continuation and development of small firms, craft enterprises and local services. Such measures should take account of the special features of rural areas, particularly as regards:

- the possibility of combining other work with part-time farming,
- the close links of some firms with agriculture and forestry, for which they often provide inputs or absorb output,
- the geographical and cultural handicaps, which mean that special help should be given to sectors not greatly dependent on inputs from outside and able to exploit local human and natural resources,
- the dependency on advanced outside services and the need to provide specific assistance to the promoters of isolated projects.

The groups, besides identifying local project promoters, may facilitate:

- working from home,
- access by small firms and craft enterprises (particularly in the agri-foodstuffs sector, including fishing) to services (advisory services, market studies, transfer of technology, innovation, vocational training),
- establishment (start-up aid) of local services needed in an area, including those providing additional work for farmers,
- investment in the craft sector, including work on farms and forestry holdings.

(e) *Exploitation and marketing of local agricultural, forest and fishery products*

Rural areas offer considerable scope for the production of local specialities which are inadequately exploited or in the process of disappearing.

An option for quality is the only way forward and this implies support for a stringent process of strengthening the identity of products, controlling their quality, improving production and processing techniques, organizing the sectors manufacturing each local speciality and developing a policy on promotion. Here the initiative could finance measures not eligible under Regulation (EEC) Nos 866/90 and 867/90⁽¹⁾ which are considered of use to the local area.

The groups, besides identifying local project promoters, may provide assistance for:

- local and regional market studies and analysis of distribution networks,
- equipment and technical assistance for the production of local specialities derived from agriculture, forestry and fisheries,
- transfer of technology,
- promotion of typical local and regional products,
- marketing (cooperative shops, participation in fairs, contacts with mail-order and central purchasing organizations, tele-marketing).

Priority will be given to collective and cooperative projects.

(f) *Other measures*

In addition to the above priorities, which in all cases will absorb the bulk of the global grant, the groups may propose to spend up to 10 % of their total funds on measures in other areas which contribute to local development.

14. *Measures concerning rural development groups:*

- Assistance for the establishment of a group where this measure has been mutually agreed (tapering operating aid, a contribution to establishment costs, training).
- Aid for data handling and transmission equipment (hardware, software, training).
- Technical assistance (expertise in particular subject areas and local development engineering).

⁽¹⁾ OJ No L 91, 6. 4. 1990.

Measures of this type must not as a general rule exceed 10 % of the total for the initiative and must be included in the business plan submitted by each group.

15. Measures concerning the transnational network for groups (technical assistance)

- Costs of operation of the network (Community-level organizing unit, exchanges, visits, translations, seminars).
- Costs of assessment of the network.
- Cost of circulation of results achieved by the networks.

All measures of this type must account for less than 2 % of the total for the initiative and will be funded by a levy at source on the total contribution from Community funds.

IV. COMMUNITY FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR THE LEADER INITIATIVE

16. The Leader initiative will be jointly financed by the Member State and the Community. The total contribution to Leader by the structural Funds over the period 1990 to 1993 is estimated at ECU 400 million.

17. The Commission decision on the amount of Community assistance in the Objective 1 and 5 (b) areas will be taken in the light of the quality of the programmes presented by the groups under the proposals drawn up by the Member States, the extent of the rural parts of those areas and the numbers of farmworkers and farms. Low population density and the geographical features of those areas may also be taken into account. It is planned to part-finance about 100 groups.

18. In assessing the quality of programmes, the Commission will pay particular attention to:

- complementarity with measures under the Community support frameworks for the areas concerned,
- the existence of an integrated development strategy for the rural area concerned,
- the multiplier effect of the proposed measures and their ability to serve as a model,
- the extent to which the local population and economic operators are involved in the planning and management of the measures,

— the degree of innovation, especially as regards measures relating to farming and the management of the countryside.

19. An indicative amount totalling less than 2 % of the total contribution from Community funds will be set aside to finance exchange of information and experience between groups and operation of the network at Community level.

20. During the preparation phase, the Commission will offer the technical assistance required to ensure that the selection of groups and preparation of their business plans is done in accordance with strict quality criteria.

21. The Leader programme will be monitored in accordance with special provisions to take account of its local nature and its capacity to serve as a model.

— At national level, if justified by the number of groups within the Member State, a single monitoring committee specifically concerned with Leader will monitor and assess the local groups. The secretariat to this committee may be provided by the national body which receives the global grant.

— All necessary information will be sent to the regional monitoring committees for the regions in which groups have been established in order to allow those committees to ensure consistency within the relevant Community support framework.

V. IMPLEMENTATION

22. The Member States may submit detailed proposals for integrated global grants (including a list of proposed local groups, their areas of operation and their business plans) within six months from the date of publication of this notice. The Commission will only take proposals received after that date into consideration in exceptional and duly justified cases.

If a programme concerns areas under both Objective 1 and Objective 5 (b), expenditure for each Objective must be shown separately.

23. Address to which all correspondence concerning this notice is to be sent:

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