

III ERLAI meeting

Brussels, 21st of April 2004, hrs. 14.45 - 17.45

Subject

- 1) Opportunities offered by the European Fund for Refugees.
- 2) Possible ERLAI proposal to be submitted to the European Commission for financial support to our network.

Anne Boillot - DG Justice and Home Affairs - Financial solidarity for asylum, immigration and borders Unit

Financial Opportunities

European refugee Fund I (2000 - 2005)

A European Refugee Fund of EUR 216 million has been created to help Member States of the European Union receive asylum seekers, refugees and displaced persons. It is due to operate under its present form until 31 December 2004.

The European Refugee Fund fosters solidarity between Member States and promotes balance in the efforts they make in receiving asylum seekers, refugees and displaced persons.

The European Refugee Fund also supports Member States action to promote the social and economic integration of refugees.

It provides practical support to help asylum seekers, refugees and displaced persons take an informed decision to leave the territory of the Member States and return home, should they so wish.

It finances pilot initiatives and exchanges between Member States.

Target groups

1. Any third-country nationals or stateless persons having the status defined by the Geneva Convention of 28 July 1951 relating to the Status of Refugees and permitted to reside as refugees in one of the Member States.
2. Any third-country nationals or stateless persons enjoying a form of international protection granted by a Member State in accordance with its national legislation or practice.
3. Any third-country nationals or stateless persons who have applied for one of the forms of protection described in points 1 and 2.
4. Third-country nationals or stateless persons benefiting from temporary protection arrangements in a Member State.
5. Persons whose right to temporary protection is being examined in a Member State.

Measures

The Fund supports Member States action relating to:

- a. conditions for reception (infrastructure or services for accommodation, supply of material aid, health care, social assistance or help with administrative and judicial formalities, including legal assistance).
- b. integration of persons whose stay in the Member State is of a lasting and/or stable nature (social assistance in areas such as housing, means of subsistence and health care or to enable beneficiaries to adjust to the society of the Member State or to provide for themselves).
- c. repatriation, provided that the persons concerned have not acquired a new nationality and have not left the territory of the Member State (information and advice about voluntary return programmes and the situation in the country

of origin and/or general or vocational training and help in resettlement).

Actions

At the Commissions initiative, up to 5% of the Funds available resources may be used to finance innovatory action or action of interest to the Community as a whole, separate from the action implemented by the Member States, including studies, exchanges of experience and steps to promote cooperation at Community level, as well as assessment of the implementation of measures and technical assistance.

The Commission examines the applications submitted by two or more Member States with a view to the joint implementation of transnational initiatives. The Fund may provide up to 100% of the funding for such action.

* * *

European Refugee Fund (2005 - 2010)

On 12 February the EC adopted a proposal for a Council Decision establishing ERF 2005 - 2010.

The broad lines of the Commission proposal are as follows:

- a gradual and substantial increase in the budget from 2008, to assert Community solidarity and generate significant results and impacts not only for target groups but also for asylum systems within the limits set for the area of freedom, security and justice in the new post-2006 financial perspective; the amounts proposed as a guide are €45 million in 2005, €50 million in 2006, €60 million in 2007 and €150 million annually between 2008 and 2010;
- an emergency reserve of €10 million to be spread over the Member States if the temporary protection scheme in the event of a mass influx of displaced persons is launched on the basis of the Directive adopted in July 2001;
- co-financing of three types of action in the Member States relating to:
 - I. conditions for the reception of asylum-seekers and asylum procedures,
 - II. the integration of refugees and other persons enjoying international protection in the EU,
 - III. the voluntary return of persons enjoying protection or asylum-seekers whose applications are rejected.

In ERF II these actions also cover persons enjoying international protection in the EU via a resettlement scheme after transfer from an initial host country outside the EU;

- more strategic programming of support from the instrument, in which the Commission should play a more important role, with due account for the adoption and implementation of the Community legislative framework for asylum policy;
- in the criteria for the distribution of funds between Member States, account will be taken not only of the target population received by each of them but also of the need to make investments to make national asylum systems more efficient, in

particular in the new Member States. In addition to an amount determined in proportion to the number of persons received, a fixed amount of €300 000 per Member State (€500 000 for the new Member States in the first three years) is proposed;

- project programming and life-cycles allowing better use to be made of results through multiannual strategies based on a process of concerted action (between national partners and between Member States and the Commission).

* * *

INTI- Integration of third country nationals

INTI is a European Union (EU) funding programme for pilot projects promoting the integration in the EU member states of people who are not citizens of the EU. Its aim is also to promote dialogue with civil society, develop integration models, seek out and evaluate best practices in the integration field and set up networks at European level.

The publication of the Call for proposal 2004 is supposed to be on mid May and the dead line will probably be the *end of June 2004*.

Pilot Projects' purposes

Member States vary considerably in the way they conceive the integration of third-country nationals and in the extent to which they have developed and implemented integration policies. Some countries have a long experience in this area whereas others have only just started developing national policies.

Both experienced and less experienced member states should benefit from the INTI programme. The acceding countries and/or other third countries can participate in the activities undertaken by Member States, although they cannot apply or receive financial support in this framework.

The underlying principle is to promote new and innovative ways of integrating immigrants, building wherever possible on past experience.

INTI encourages co-operation between member states and the creation of transnational partnerships and networks.

Priority will also be given to actions enhancing the empowerment of migrants and contributing to a trans-national and constructive dialogue.

Actions

- Strand A - Support of networks, exchange of information and best practices
 - a. Support for transnational co-operation at national, regional and local level between public authorities, private enterprises and representatives of civil society, including migrant associations, by establishing

- transnational networks or partnerships between stakeholders at all levels, designed to create platforms for dialogue.
- b. Stimulate transnational actions involving a range of actors, consisting of the transfer of information, lessons learned and good practice concerning integration of immigrants.
- Strand B - Information and dialogue
 - a. Promote a tolerant and inclusive society by raising awareness of fundamental European values and the promotion of communication and dialogue between immigrants and their local communities.
 - b. Promote awareness raising at EU-level, which will focus on projecting accurate information about immigrants with regard to their culture, traditions, religion and their positive contributions - economically and socially - to European Society.
 - Strand C - Improved knowledge of integration issues
 - a. Explore the validity of civic responsibility as a concept for promoting the integration of third country nationals including the rights and duties needed to give immigrants a sense of participation in society and the impact of granting political rights to immigrants.
 - b. Analyse current national integration programmes and practices and examine new and innovative ways of integrating immigrants, including diversity management, with a view to develop transferable models and a best practice guide.
 - c. Compare the influence of existing national integration strategies in Member States on the current social situation of immigrants, including analyses of the impact of compulsory elements in national policies and solutions for improvement of these policies at national and European level.
 - d. Develop common European indicators for successful integration, with a view to streamlining the monitoring processes and assessing the effectiveness and impact of national strategies.
 - Strand D - Support for innovative projects
 - a. Support the development of transferable inter-cultural orientation and training activities for public officials dealing with immigrants.
 - b. Support the development of innovative pilot integration/settlement programmes or models for integration which take into account language tuition, communication training and information on the cultural, political and social characteristics of the country concerned, including fundamental European values and citizenship.

Call for Proposals 2003

The first call for proposals has been launched at the beginning of July.

This Call for Proposals 2003 has been a great success: 135 applications received, with a total grant amount requested of 41.464.401 euro.

14 projects are proposed for funding, due to the relatively small budget available (4.000.000 €).

* * *

ARGO – asylum, visas, immigration and external borders

It's an action programme for administrative cooperation at European Union level in the fields of asylum, visas, immigration and external borders, replacing in part the Odysseus programme.

The ARGO programme covers the period from 1 January 2002 to 31 December 2006.

Objectives

- To promote cooperation between national administrations responsible for implementing Community rules and to ensure that proper account is taken of the Community dimension in their actions
- To promote the uniform application of Community law
- To encourage transparency of actions taken by the national authorities and to improve the overall efficiency of national administrations in their tasks

Next call for proposal: dead-line 30th June 2004.

Priorities

- External borders (e.g. effectiveness of controls at the external borders)
- Visas (e.g. compliance with the principles of Community legislation on issuing visas, harmonisation of rules on the examination of visa applications, harmonisation of exceptions, etc.)
- Asylum (e.g. establishment of a common European asylum system, determination of the State responsible for examining an asylum application, approximation of rules on the recognition and content of refugee status, etc.)
- Immigration (e.g. effective, and homogeneous application of rules on legal immigration, fight against illegal immigration and return of illegal residents, etc.).

Type of actions

- Training actions
- Staff exchange
- Actions promoting the computerised handling of files and electronic data exchange
- Setting up of common operative centres and of teams composed of staff drawn from two or more Member States
- Studies, conferences and seminars
- Member States' co-operation activities in third countries.