



COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

Brussels, 27.5.2003
COM(2003) 280 final

2003/0110 (CNS)

Proposal for a

COUNCIL DECISION

**establishing a Community action programme for bodies promoting reciprocal
understanding of relations between the European Union and certain non-industrialised
regions in the world**

(presented by the Commission)

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

1. Introduction

The Community implements a policy of financial, economic and technical cooperation with various parts of the world. The Council has confirmed the importance it attaches to relations with its partners: hence the concomitant need to strengthen reciprocal knowledge between the European Union and partners receiving EU assistance. This two-way familiarisation process needs to be backed up by the work of bodies specialising in the analysis of relations between the EU and the regions concerned.

Several institutions have for a number of years been receiving operating grants under chapter A 30 of the general budget of the European Communities. Until now the Budget Authority has required that the recipients of such grants be named in the titles of the budget headings.

The activities to be financed under this basic instrument are those that increase understanding and dialogue concerning relations between the European Union and the regions concerned, via inter alia:

- study and analysis of the policies of the EU and the region concerned,
- the production of discussion documents,
- the organisation of round tables and/or thematic seminars,
- various publications.

Subsidiarity: promoting reciprocal knowledge of relations between the EU and certain non-industrialised regions in the world is in line with the approach of providing EU assistance to these regions and is thus an activity of multilateral dimensions which must be conducted at Community level in accordance with the principles of efficiency and sound management. In this spirit, Member States' participation in the financing of these activities could contribute to enriching the objective pursued by this programme.

2. The need to give current activities a legal basis

The adoption of Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002 of 25 June 2002 on the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the European Communities¹ and the Commission decision to move to Activity Based Budgeting (ABB) involve establishing basic instruments for a number of grants funded on the basis of appropriations defined in part A (administrative appropriations) of the Commission section of the budget (section III).

The objective of this Decision is therefore to establish a basic instrument for awarding operating grants to bodies active in promoting reciprocal understanding of relations between the European Union and certain non-industrialised regions in the world, for a period of three years (2004-2006).

The proposal is based on Article 308 authorising the Council to take appropriate measures if an action proves necessary to attain one of the objectives of the Treaties and the Treaty has not provided the necessary powers. The procedure to be followed is set out in that Article: the

¹ OJ L 248, 16.9.2002, p. 1.

Council acts unanimously on a proposal from the Commission after consulting the European Parliament.

3. Main features of the proposal for a Decision

The Decision includes the general principles applicable to grants concerning gradual reduction and cofinancing.

Selection of recipients: in accordance with the new Financial Regulation, the grant beneficiaries must be selected by means of a call for proposals. Until now the Budget Authority has asked for the recipients of such grants to be named in the titles of the budget headings. For recipients to be named in the basic instrument, the qualifications of the body must make it the only possible choice but, given the type of recipients awarded grants until now, the conditions are not being met.

Budgetary impact: the amounts provided for are based on the amount granted under the 2003 budget of the European Communities for lines A-3031, A-3033, A-3034 and A-3039. It is proposed to maintain the same amount of EUR 1 353 000 per year.

Legal base: The operations covered by this Decision are not cooperation measures falling directly under the policies of development cooperation or cooperation with other third countries and yet are necessary to achieve one of the Community's objectives. For the adoption of this Decision, therefore, the Treaty does not provide powers of action other than those laid down in Article 308 EC.

4. Conclusion

For the above reasons, the Commission proposes that the Council adopt the attached decision.

Proposal for a

COUNCIL DECISION

establishing a Community action programme for bodies promoting reciprocal understanding of relations between the European Union and certain non-industrialised regions in the world

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Community, and in particular Article 308 thereof,

Having regard to the proposal from the Commission,²

Having regard to the opinion of the European Parliament,³

Whereas:

- (1) The Community maintains relations with certain non-industrialised countries and regions, in particular by providing substantial assistance under the ALA,⁴ MEDA,⁵ TACIS⁶ and CARDS⁷ Regulations.
- (2) The European Council has on several occasions underlined the importance it attaches to relations between the European Union and its partners.⁸
- (3) Special attention should be given to the regional dimension of Community assistance, taking account of the divergence of needs and priorities among the main regions covered by the aforementioned regulations and stepping up regional cooperation.
- (4) Increased reciprocal knowledge between the European Union and partners receiving assistance from it should be promoted.
- (5) Strengthening reciprocal knowledge between the EU and its partners will be assisted by the work of bodies specialising in the analysis of relations between the European Union and the regions concerned.
- (6) Several budget lines are designed to support institutes, bodies or networks with a view to reinforcing relations between the European Union and other regions in the world.

² OJ C [...], [...], p. [...].

³ OJ C [...], [...], p. [...].

⁴ Council Regulation (EEC) No 443/92 of 25 February 1992 (OJ L 52, 27.2.1992, p.1).

⁵ Council Regulation (EC) No 1488/96 of 23 July 1996 (OJ L 189, 30.7.1996, p. 1).

⁶ Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 99/200 of 29 December 1999 (OJ L 12, 18.1.2000, p.1).

⁷ Council Regulation (EC) No 2666/2000 of 5 December 2000 (OJ L 306, 7.12.2000, p. 1).

⁸ Cannes European Council, 26-27 June 1995 and Lisbon European Council, 23-24 March 2000.

- (7) Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002 of 25 June 2002 on the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the European Communities requires a legal basis to be established for existing support actions.
- (8) The geographical scope of this programme should be extended to all the regions covered by the abovementioned Regulations and to the candidate countries.
- (9) The operations covered by this Decision are not cooperation measures falling directly under the policies of development cooperation or cooperation with other third countries and yet are necessary to achieve one of the Community's objectives.
- (10) For the adoption of this Decision, the Treaty does not provide powers of action other than those laid down in Article 308.

HAS DECIDED AS FOLLOWS:

Article 1 [Objective of the programme]

1. A Community action programme is hereby established for the promotion of centres, institutes and networks specialising in the analysis of relations between the European Union and certain regions.
2. The general objective of this programme shall be to support the activities of these bodies. The activities shall consist of the annual work programme of a centre, institute or network and must be in keeping with those described in the Annex. The activities supported must contribute to increasing understanding and dialogue between the European Union, the regions covered by the ALA, MEDA, TACIS and CARDS Regulations and the candidate countries.

Article 2 - [Access to the programme]

1. To qualify for a grant, an applicant body must comply with the provisions laid down in the Annex and meet the following requirements:
 - it must be an independent and non-profit making legal entity active chiefly in promoting understanding of relations between the EU and the regions concerned, with an objective that serves the public good;
 - it must have been legally established for more than two years and have had its accounts for the preceding two years certified by a registered auditor;
 - its activities must be in keeping with the principles underlying Community external relations action and take account of the priority areas identified in Article 5.
2. For a body pursuing an objective in keeping with EU external relations policy to qualify for an operating grant under its annual work programme, it must also be active at a European level or in the region concerned and its structure and activities must have potential at the level of the EU and/or its regions.

Article 3 - [Participation of countries outside the European Union]

Participation in the programme shall be open to bodies, institutes and networks established in:

- a) the Member States;
- b) countries whose accession to the European Union in 2004 was approved at the 2002 Copenhagen Summit;

- c) Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey;
- d) countries or regions covered by the ALA, MEDA, TACIS or CARDS Regulations.⁹

Article 4 - [Selection of beneficiaries]

1. The award of an operating grant on the basis of the annual work programme of a body must comply with the general criteria laid down in the Annex.
2. Bodies entitled to receive such operating grants shall be selected following a call for proposals covering the full duration of the programme, with a view to establishing a partnership between these bodies and the European Union.

On the basis of the call for proposals, the Commission shall adopt the list of recipients and the amounts approved in accordance with Article 116 of the Financial Regulation.

Article 5 - [Award of the grant]

1. The operating grants awarded under this programme may not finance the body's entire eligible expenditure for the calendar year for which the grant is awarded.
2. The amount of an operating grant awarded may not exceed 70% of the organisation's eligible expenditure for the calendar year for which the grant is awarded.
3. Pursuant to Article 113(2) of Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002 of 25 June 2002, where such operating grants are renewed, they shall be gradually decreased. If a grant is awarded to a body having already received an operating grant the preceding year, the percentage of Community cofinancing represented by the new grant shall be at least 10 percentage points lower than the Community cofinancing percentage represented by the grant in the preceding year.

Article 6 - [Financial provisions]

1. This programme shall start on 1 January 2004 and end on 31 December 2006.
2. The annual appropriations shall be authorised by the budgetary authority within the limits of the financial perspectives.

Article 7 - [Monitoring and evaluation]

By 31 December 2005 at the latest the Commission shall report to the Council on the achievement of the objectives of the programme. The report shall be based on the results obtained by the beneficiaries and assess, in particular, their relevance, effectiveness and usefulness in achieving the objectives defined in Article 1 and the Annex.

⁹ See notes 3 to 6.

Article 8 - [Transitional provisions]

The principle of the gradual decrease of the rate of Community cofinancing provided for in Article 5 in the case of renewal of an operating grant to bodies having received such a grant for the same activities the year before the entry into force of this Decision and for the two preceding years shall apply only from the third year following the entry into force of this Decision.

Article 9 - [Entry into force]

This Decision shall enter into force on the day following its publication in the Official Journal of the European Communities.

Done at Brussels,

*For the Council
The President*

ANNEX

1. ACTIVITIES SUPPORTED

The activities of bodies that may help to reinforce and increase the effectiveness of Community action shall include the following:

- study and analysis of the policies of the European Union and of the region targeted by the call for proposal,
- production of discussion documents,
- round tables,
- thematic seminars,
- various publications.

2. IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTIVITIES SUPPORTED

- 2.1. The activities covered by this programme shall be carried out by a body whose objective is to increase understanding and reciprocal knowledge between the European Union and the regions covered by the regulations referred to in Article 3.
- 2.2. The programme shall apply to all non-profit making bodies, institutes or networks active in the countries and/or regions covered in Article 2 of the Decision that promote principles and policies forming part of the objectives of the Treaties.
- 2.3. An annual operating grant may be awarded to support the implementation of such a body's annual work programme.

3. SELECTION OF BENEFICIARIES

Bodies entitled to receive an operating grant shall be selected on the basis of calls for proposals, as provided for in the Financial Regulation. These calls for proposals will be launched at the beginning of this programme in order to select the partners with which the European Union will implement it.

4. CHARACTERISTICS OF GRANT APPLICATIONS ON WHICH ASSESSMENT IS BASED

Grant applications shall be assessed on the basis of:

- their complementarity with the objectives of the programme,
- the quality of the activities,
- prior experience in the field,
- the existence of well-established information sources and contacts in the regions concerned and the European Union,
- the proportionality of the costs and benefits of the activity proposed,
- the geographic scope of the activities.

The exact characteristics and criteria for awarding the grants shall be specified in the calls for proposals.

5. ELIGIBLE EXPENDITURE

- 5.1 The only costs to be taken into account in determining the operating grant shall be those necessary for the proper conduct of the normal activities of the body selected, in particular personnel costs, overheads (rental and property charges, equipment, office supplies, telecommunications, postal charges, etc.), costs of internal meetings, publication, information and dissemination costs.
- 5.2 The bodies concerned receive budget cofinancing from sources other than Community sources. Such cofinancing may be partly contributed in kind, provided the contribution is valued at no more than the cost actually incurred and is evidenced by accounting documents or the cost generally obtaining on the market in question and with the exception of contributions in kind in the form of real estate.

6. CHECKS AND AUDITS

- 6.1 The beneficiary of an operating grant shall keep available for the Commission all the supporting documents, including the audited financial statement, regarding expenditure incurred during the grant year, for a period of five years following the last payment. The beneficiary of a grant shall ensure that, where applicable, supporting documents in the possession of partners or members are made available to the Commission.
- 6.2 The Commission may have an audit of the use made of the grant carried out either directly by its own staff or by any other qualified outside body of its choice. Such audits may be carried out throughout the lifetime of the agreement and for a period of five years from the date of payment of the balance. Where appropriate, the audit findings may lead to recovery decisions by the Commission.
- 6.3 Commission staff and outside personnel authorised by the Commission have appropriate right of access to sites and premises where the action is carried out and to all the information, including information in electronic format, needed in order to conduct such audits.
- 6.4 The Court of Auditors and the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) shall enjoy the same rights, especially of access, as the Commission.
- 6.5 In order to protect the European Community's financial interests against fraud and other irregularities, the Commission may also carry out on-the-spot checks and inspections under this programme in accordance with Council Regulation (Euratom, EC) No 2185/96.¹⁰ Where necessary, investigations shall be conducted by the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) and shall be governed by European Parliament and Council Regulation (EC) No 1073/1999.¹¹

¹⁰ OJ L 292, 15.11.1996, p. 2.

¹¹ OJ L 136, 31.5.1999, p. 1.

6. LEGISLATIVE FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Policy area(s): EXTERNAL RELATIONS

Activity: 19.02.02 Institutes specialising in relations between the European Union and non-EU countries

TITLE OF OPERATION:

BODIES PROMOTING RECIPROCAL UNDERSTANDING OF RELATIONS BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND CERTAIN NON-INDUSTRIALISED REGIONS IN THE WORLD

1. BUDGET HEADINGS

Nomenclature:

19.02.02 (A-3031 in 2003): European Institute for Asian Studies

19.02.08 (A-3033 in 2003): European Centre for Global Interdependence and Solidarity (the North-South Centre)

19.02.09 (A-3034 in 2003): Latin American Centre for Relations with Europe (CELARE)

19.02.10 (A-3039 in 2003): Mediterranean and Euro-Arab cooperation

2004 nomenclature ABB:19.02.02 (4 headings merged into one)

2. OVERALL FIGURES

2.1 Total allocation for action: €4.059 million for commitment

2.2 Period of application:

2004-2006

2.3 Overall multi-annual estimate of expenditure:

(a) Schedule of commitment appropriations/payment appropriations (financial intervention)
(see point 6.1.1)

€ million (to three decimal places)

Non-differentiated appropriations	N 2004	n +1 2005	n+2 2006	N+3 2007			Total
Commitments	1.353	1.353	1.353				4.059

(b) Technical and administrative assistance and support expenditure(see point 6.1.2)

Commitments							
Payments							

Sub-total a+b							
Commitments	1.353	1.353	1.353				4.059

(c) Overall financial impact of human resources and other administrative expenditure
(See points 7.2 and 7.3)

Commitments/ Payments	0.087	0.087	0.087			0	0.2610
--------------------------	-------	-------	-------	--	--	---	--------

TOTAL a+b+c							
Commitments	1.440	1.440	1.440				4.320
Payments	1.102	1.440	1.440	0.338			4.320

2.4 Compatibility with financial programming and financial perspective

- ☒ Proposal is compatible with existing financial programming.
- ☐ This proposal will entail reprogramming of the relevant heading in the financial perspective.
- ☐ This may entail application of the provisions of the Inter-institutional Agreement.

2.5 Financial impact on revenue

- ☒ Proposal has no financial implications (involves technical aspects regarding implementation of a measure)

OR

- ☐ Financial impact – the effect on revenue is as follows:

- NB All details and observations relating to the method of calculating the effect on revenue should be shown in a separate annex.

€ million (to one decimal place)

		Prior to measure (year n-1)	Situation following implementation of measure					
Budget heading	Revenue		Year n ³	n+1	N+2	n+3	n+4	n+5
	a) <i>Revenue in absolute terms</i> ¹							
	b) <i>Change in revenue</i> ²	Δ						

(Please specify each budget line involved, adding the appropriate number of rows to the table if there is an effect on more than one budget line.)

3. BUDGET CHARACTERISTICS

Type of expenditure		New	EFTA contribution	Contributions from applicant countries	Heading in financial perspective
Non-comp	Non-diff.	No	No	No	No 5

4. LEGAL BASIS

In 2003, Part A of the Budget (administrative expenditure)

New basic instrument proposed for 2004

5. DESCRIPTION AND GROUNDS

5.1 Need for Community intervention¹²

5.1.1 Objectives pursued

The objectives pursued are an increase in mutual understanding and knowledge of relations between the European Union and certain non-industrialised regions of world benefiting from Community assistance.

5.1.2 Provision made for ex-ante evaluation

The Community action programme for bodies promoting reciprocal understanding of relations between the European Union and certain non-industrialised regions in the world is effectively an extension of the grants awarded to bodies mentioned by name in the remarks in the Budget (Chapter A30 in the 2003 Budget).

5.1.3 Provision made for ex-post evaluation

When a body's eligibility for a grant expires, the body in question must send the Commission a final report on implementation of the work programme together with final accounts.

The Commission will evaluate these documents against the objectives set and the expected results.

5.2 Action envisaged and budget intervention arrangements

(This point should describe the logic behind the proposal. It should specify the main actions to achieve the general objective. Each action should have one or more specific objectives. These should indicate the progress expected over the proposed period. They should also look beyond immediate outputs but be sufficiently precise to allow concrete results to be identified. Specify for each main action:

¹² For further information, see separate explanatory note.

Organisations specialised in relations between the EU and other regions of the world constitute a rich resource of knowledge and often form part of a wider network, either formal or informal. Such organisations offer a real possibility to communicate knowledge and ideas concerning relations between the EU and the relevant regions to a significant number of opinion formers. This is a clear need to increase understanding of the EU in the regions of the world which benefit from external assistance programmes and a parallel need to increase understanding of these regions in the EU and the relations which exist between them. The centres, institutes and networks which specialise in relations between the EU and such regions can provide an effective vehicle to achieve this goal. They can provide reliable, objective and pertinent information on the state of relations between the EU and the relevant region. In order to be effective in their mission, these organisations need to be able to focus on their core tasks. The establishment of a partnership covering a number of years whereby an organisation would receive an annual grant, after selection through a transparent procedure, and subject to acceptance of the annual programme of the organisation will greatly facilitate the achievement of the organisations' mission.

- the target population(s) (specify number of beneficiaries if possible);

Specialist centres, institutes and networks pursuing an objective connected to analysis of relations between the European Union and the relevant regions.

- the specific objectives set for the programming period (in measurable terms);

Activities by bodies likely to strengthen Community action and make it more effective must promote understanding and dialogue between the European Union and regions receiving assistance.

- the concrete measures to be taken to implement the action;

The programme will be implemented through the provision of support to organisations dedicated to the promotion of mutual understanding of relations between the EU and certain non-industrialised regions of the world.

The grants will cover a part of the operating costs of the beneficiary organisations chosen after a call for proposals and selected in function of their capacity to contribute to the achievement of the objective of the programme.

- the immediate outputs of each action;

These will consist in the actions undertaken by the beneficiaries in the context of their annual programme and will include, inter alia, studies, workshops, conferences, publications etc.;

- the contribution of these outputs to the expected outcomes in terms of satisfying needs or solving problems

The effects produced will be a better understanding of the EU, its policies towards particular regions and a better understanding of the regions and the policies pursued by the countries of the regions as well as the relations between the EU and the regions by opinion formers, including academics, politicians, civil society and officials.

Information should also be given on the budget intervention arrangements (rate and form of the required financial assistance).

The budget provides scope for the awarding of five annual grants of €338 000 on average.

Operating grants must not exceed 70% of the body's eligible expenditure for the civil year in respect of which the subvention is awarded.

5.3 Methods of implementation

Direct management by the Commission

6. FINANCIAL IMPACT

6.1 Direct management by the Commission

(The method of calculating the total amounts set out in the table below must be explained by the breakdown in Table 6.2.)

6.1.1 Financial intervention *Commitments in € million (to three decimal places)*

Breakdown	Year n	n + 1	n + 2	n + 3	n + 4	n + 5 and subs. years	Total
Action 1							
Action 2							
Etc.							
TOTAL	1.353	1.353	1.353				4.059

6.1.2 Technical and administrative assistance, support expenditure and IT expenditure
(commitment appropriations)

	Year n	n + 1	n + 2	n + 3	n + 4	n + 5 and subs. years	Total
1) Technical and administrative assistance:							
a) Technical assistance offices							
b) Other technical and administrative assistance: - intra-muros: - extra-muros: <i>of which for construction and maintenance of computerised management systems:</i>							
Sub-total 1							

2) Support expenditure :							
a) Studies							
b) Meetings of experts							
c) Information and publications							
Sub-total 2							
TOTAL							

6.2. Calculation of costs by measure envisaged in Part B (over the entire programming period)¹³

(Where there is more than one action, give sufficient detail of the individual measures to be taken for each one to allow the volume and costs of the outputs to be estimated)

Commitments in € million (to three decimal places)

Breakdown	Type of outputs (projects, files...)	Number of outputs (total for years 1...n)	Average unit cost	Total cost (total for years 1...n)
	1	2	3	4=(2X3)
<u>Action 1</u> - Measure 1 - Measure 2 <u>Action 2</u> - Measure 1 - Measure 2 - Measure 3 Etc.				
TOTAL COST				

If necessary, explain the method of calculation

7. IMPACT ON STAFF AND ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENDITURE

7.1. Impact on human resources¹⁴

Types of post	Staff to be assigned to management of the action using existing or additional resources	Total	Description of tasks deriving from the action
---------------	---	-------	--

¹³ For further information, see separate explanatory note.

¹⁴ Existing resources.

		Number of permanent posts	Number of temporary posts		
Officials or temporary staff	A B C	0.35 0.35		0.35 0.35	Programming, including calls for proposals, monitoring of implementation of action programme. Identification, preparation, financing, implementation and evaluation and on-the-spot checks on bodies.
Other human resources					
Total		0.70		0.70	

7.2 Overall financial impact of human resources

Type of human resources	Amount €	Method of calculation*
Officials Temporary staff	75 600	€108 000 € (standard admin costs) x 0.70 man-years
Other human resources (specify budget heading)		
Total	75 600	

The amounts are total expenditure for twelve months.

7.3 Other administrative expenditure deriving from the action

Budget heading (No and heading)	Amounts (in €)	Method of calculation
Overall allocation (Title A7) A0701 – Missions A07030 – Meetings A07031 – Compulsory committees ⁽¹⁾ A07032 – Non-compulsory committees ⁽¹⁾ A07040 – Conferences A0705 – Studies and consultations ... Other expenditure (specify)	10 000	4 missions for on-the-spot checks per year 1 mission per body x 4 @€2 500
Information systems (A-5001/A-4300)		
Other expenditure - part A (specify)		
Total	10 000	

The amounts are total expenditure for twelve months.

⁽¹⁾ Specify the type of committee and the group to which it belongs.

I.	Annual total (7.2 + 7.3)	€85 600
II.	Duration of action	3 years
III.	Total cost of action (I x II)	€256 800

(In the estimate of human and administrative resources required for the action, DGs/Services must take into account the decisions taken by the Commission in its orientation debate and when adopting the preliminary draft budget (PDB). This means that DGs must show that human resources can be covered by the indicative pre-allocation made when the PDB was adopted.

Exceptional cases (i.e. those where the action concerned could not be foreseen when the PDB was being prepared) must be referred to the Commission for a decision on whether and how (by means of an amendment of the indicative pre-allocation, an ad hoc redeployment exercise, a supplementary/amending budget or a letter of amendment to the draft budget) implementation of the proposed action can be accommodated.)

8. FOLLOW-UP AND EVALUATION

8.1 Follow-up arrangements

(Adequate follow-up information must be collected, from the start of each action, on the inputs, outputs and results of the intervention. In practice this means (i) identifying the indicators for inputs, outputs and results and (ii) putting in place methods for the collection of data.)

8.2 Arrangements and schedule for the planned evaluation

By 31 December 2005 at the latest the Commission shall report to the Council on the achievement of the objectives of the programme. The report shall be based on the results obtained by the beneficiaries and assess, in particular, their effectiveness in achieving the objectives defined in Article 1 and the Annex.

9. ANTI-FRAUD MEASURES

In order to protect the European Community's financial interests against fraud and other irregularities, the Commission may also carry out on-the-spot checks and inspections under this programme in accordance with Council Regulation (Euratom, EC) No 2185/96.¹⁵ Where necessary, investigations shall be conducted by the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) and shall be governed by European Parliament and Council Regulation (EC) No 1073/1999.¹⁶

The beneficiary of an operating grant shall keep available for the Commission all the supporting documents, including the audited financial statement, regarding expenditure incurred during the grant year, for a period of five years following the last payment. The beneficiary of a grant shall ensure that, where applicable, supporting documents in the possession of partners or members are made available to the Commission.

The Commission will carry out regular document checks and on-the-spot checks.

¹⁵ OJ L 292, 15.11.1996, p. 2.

¹⁶ OJ L 136, 31.5.1999, p. 1.