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FREQUENTLY-ASKED QUESTIONS

A. APPLICANTS

1. What is exactly Action 3?

Action 3 provides support to transnational initiatives, studies, projects, events and other activities related to the international dimension of all aspects of higher education. This action aims at promoting European higher education through measures enhancing its attractiveness, accessibility, profile, image and visibility.

Action 3 projects should contribute to:

1. the promotion and awareness raising of the European higher education sector as well as the relevant cooperation programmes and funding schemes;
2. the dissemination of the programme’s results and examples of good practice;
3. the exploitation of these results at institutional and individual level.

2. What kind of activities can be carried out in the framework of this action?

Action 3 provides support to activities related to the international dimension of all aspects of higher education, such as promotion, accessibility, quality assurance, credit recognition, mutual recognition of qualifications between European and third countries, curriculum development, mobility and quality of services for international students. Examples of eligible activities are indicated in the Programme Guide (Section 7.2.2). Furthermore proposals should address the annual priorities that are defined in the Call for proposals.

3. Who can participate in Action 3?

The Erasmus Mundus Programme 2009-2013 is open to higher education institutions and to any organisation active in the field of higher education from any part of the world.

Eligible participating organisations include:
- Higher education institutions (HEIs) from all countries of the world;
- Erasmus Mundus consortia;
- Public or private bodies active in the field of higher education from all countries of the world;
- Erasmus Thematic Networks selected under the Erasmus strand of the Lifelong Learning Programme (these will be considered as a single participating organisation).

Erasmus Thematic Networks are financed only when it is indicated so in the annual Calls for proposals. National organisations acting in their capacity as Erasmus Mundus National Structures are not eligible to participate in Action 3 promotion projects. Restricted Calls for proposals addressed exclusively to the Erasmus Mundus National Structures are sent directly to the National Structures.

4. Who can apply for an Action 3 project (acting as Coordinator)?

Only organisations based in the following countries (eligible applicant countries) are eligible as
coordinating institution (applicant):

- EU Member States
- EEA-EFTA States (Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein)
- Candidate countries with a pre-accession strategy and potential candidate countries of Western Balkans and the Swiss Confederation can also act as coordinator, provided an agreement establishing their participation in the EM programme is in force by the date of the selection decision. Should this not be the case, organisations from the country concerned will be considered as third-country organisations entitled to participate in projects as partners but neither to submit nor coordinate them.

5. What is the minimum / maximum composition of a consortium for an Action 3 project?

The minimum partnership is composed of:

- for Attractiveness projects, eligible participating organisations coming from at least three eligible applicant countries and from at least one third country.

- for Internationalisation of Erasmus Thematic Networks, the Network and 15 eligible participating organisations representing at least 10 different third countries. Activities implemented in the context of the internationalisation of Erasmus Thematic Networks are financed only when it is indicated so in the respective annual Call for proposals.

The maximum number of project partners is not defined in the Programme Guide and will be decided by the beneficiaries. The partnership composition will be evaluated in terms of its diversity (type of organisations involved, geographical coverage) and demonstrated expertise / complementarity of the partners rather than the number of partners involved. The role of each European and third country partner and their level of involvement to the project should be clearly described in the proposal.

6. Where can Action 3 projects take place?

Action 3 projects can take place anywhere in the world.

7. What kind of conditions obligations do Action 3 proposals have to respect?

Action 3 proposals must have the following characteristics:

- have a clear European dimension and a wide geographical scope;
- have a clear international (third-country) dimension;
- contribute to fostering intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding between cultures;
- ensure that they do not overlap with other European Union programmes; projects falling primarily within the scope of other programmes (e.g. Lifelong Learning, Tempus, Youth in Action, Citizens for Europe, etc.) will not be funded;
- have clear objectives responding to demonstrated needs, clearly defined outputs and expected outcomes and include a plan to ensure the sustainability of the project and its results beyond the period of funding;
- last between 12 and 36 months and begin their activities in Autumn of the application year.

8. How can an organisation prove that it is active in the field of higher education?

An organisation can prove that it is active in the field of higher education by attaching to the application a description of its main higher education activities.
Higher education institutions don’t need to prove that they are active in the field of higher education.

9. If selected, what are the contractual conditions?

Selected projects proposed for enhancing the Attractiveness of European higher education will be offered a “Grant Agreement with Multiple Beneficiaries” with the coordinator and the participating organisations (co-beneficiaries) of each selected project. The agreement will be drawn up in euro and detail the conditions and level of funding. This grant agreement will be signed between the Agency and the beneficiary and its duration will vary from 12 to 36 months. The awarded grant can be the same or lower than the requested grant.

10. Do the partners have to sign any kind of document between them?

In the context of the grant agreement with Multiple Beneficiaries the co-beneficiaries mandate the coordinator through a duly endorsed document (“the mandate”) to take full legal responsibility for the implementation of the agreement and agree to do everything in their power to help the coordinator fulfil its contractual obligations. The Mandate is signed by each co-beneficiary and must be annexed to the grant agreement that is signed between the Agency and the coordinator.

The definition of a memorandum of understanding / partnership agreement between the participating organisations is an example of good practice and strongly recommended. Furthermore, it demonstrates the quality and reliability of the cooperation mechanisms of the consortium.

11. When does my project start? Under which period exactly are my costs eligible?

Action 3 projects must start in autumn of the application year. The maximum project duration is 36 months. Costs are eligible only for activities carried out during the eligibility period.

12. Can I receive more than one grant for my project?

According to the financial regulation applicable to the general budget of the European Union, the same project must not receive more than one grant from the European Union budget. If your project is selected to receive an Erasmus Mundus grant, the beneficiary cannot receive a grant from another European programme for the same project and funding period.

13. Can a Higher education institution or an organisation active in the field of higher education who is participating in another Erasmus Mundus project under Actions 1 and/or 2 be financed under Action 3?

It is possible that a Higher education institution or an organisation active in the field of higher education which is already participating in another Erasmus Mundus project under Actions 1 and/or 2 to be financed under Action 3 as a coordinator or project partner. However, this is only eligible on the condition that the grant is not related to the same action or the same work programme. In no circumstances shall the same costs be financed twice by the Erasmus Mundus programme.

Furthermore, in the case a coordinator manages two projects in the framework of Erasmus Mundus or is involved in a second as a partner, it should demonstrate that it has the capacities to do so and that it will be able to remain available and committed for the successful implementation of the respective projects.
14. How are the submitted proposals selected?

The proposals are selected through a competitive system based on their quality from the content and organisational points of view and are all subject to the same application rules. The Erasmus Mundus Unit of the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency is responsible for performing the eligibility check and for verifying whether the proposals fulfil the selection criteria. The quality assessment of each eligible application against the set of Award Criteria (Programme Guide, Section 7.4) is performed by independent experts. On the basis of the academic experts' assessment and their final score awarded to each application, an Evaluation Committee composed of Commission and Agency staff draws up a list of projects to be selected. The selection decision is taken by the Director of the Agency taking into account the recommendations of the Evaluation Committee.

15. What are the general financial conditions? How is my project going to be financed?

The grant application must contain a detailed budget estimation in which all prices are given in euro. The budget must have revenue and expenditure in balance and show clearly the costs which are eligible for financing from the European Union budget. The source and amounts of any other funding received or applied for the same project must be indicated. The EU grant will not cover more than 75% of the eligible costs. For more information on the eligibility of costs please consult the Programme Guide (Section 7.5).

16. How to use the bank account related to my project?

The account specified in the Grant Agreement and to which the Erasmus Mundus grant will be paid should be:

- in the name of the Coordinator (personal accounts are not acceptable under any circumstances);
- denominated in EUR, if at all possible;
- specific to the project, where possible;
- in one of the Member States of the EU or an EEA-EFTA State.

Cash withdrawals from the account should be avoided. In cases where it is impossible to avoid cash withdrawals they must be substantiated by receipts. Moreover, the reasons for cash withdrawals should be clearly stated in the Final Report. Interests gained on pre-financing payments must be declared at Final Report stage and will be deducted from the final payment or added to a possible reimbursement.

17. What exactly is meant by “dissemination” and “exploitation” of the project?

The activities of dissemination and exploitation are closely related but distinct from one another.

Dissemination can be defined as a planned process of disseminating information on the activities, outputs and results of programmes and projects to key actors and target groups. It occurs as and when the results of programmes and initiatives become available. Exploitation consists of ‘mainstreaming’ and ‘multiplication’, where:

- mainstreaming is the planned process of transferring the successful results of programmes and initiatives to appropriate decision-makers at local, regional, national or European level;
- multiplication is the planned process of convincing individual end-users to adopt and/or apply the results of programmes and initiatives.
B. BENEFICIARIES

18. Who is responsible for the management of the Erasmus Mundus grant within the partnership?

The coordinating institution is responsible for the management of the Erasmus Mundus grant. Consensus of the partners and transparency in the management of the grant are crucial elements. Following the coordinators lead the partners should agree on the way the grant awarded will be distributed taking into account the composition of the partnership, the work plan, the nature of activities and their venues.

19. Can the composition of the Consortium be modified after having been selected?

A change in the partnership is possible and can be implemented following a request for an official amendment of the grant submitted by the coordinator. A change in the composition of the partnership may result either from the arrival of an additional partner, the departure or replacement of a partner. The amendment of the partnership may not lead to an increase in the grant awarded. The amendment request should be accompanied by a revised work plan and a revised breakdown of the overall budget and grant between the partners as well as the signed letters of mandates of the respective new partners. The approval of the amendment is subject to an evaluation process by the Agency.

20. What other modifications to the project can take place during its implementation?

These include a change of the coordinator, a major change in the work plan, a modification of the eligibility period or transfers between budget headings exceeding 10% of the amount of each heading for which the transfer is intended. All requests for such modifications require an official amendment to the grant agreement that will be examined by the Agency and will be subject to approval.

Other types of modifications which require only the formal approval or notification to the Agency include minor changes in the work plan, a modification of the deadlines for submission of reports, a change of the legal representative or a contact person within the coordinator, a modification of the bank account or small transfers between budget headings (lower than 10%).

Modifications of the grant agreement should occur only if necessary for the smooth running of the project. Detailed information on the modifications of the grant agreement and the relevant procedures can be found in the Administrative and Financial Handbook - Action 3 (Section II).

21. Is VAT an eligible cost? How about customs duties and other taxes on goods and services?

In principle, VAT is ineligible unless the coordinator and partners can prove that they are unable to recover it. For this purpose evidence must be provided in the form of an official document, from the appropriate tax authority, certifying that the beneficiary is not subject or is exempt for the actions in question.

Other types of taxation, duties and charges related to the project expenditure are eligible costs if they have finally been spent by the partnership. The coordinator must ascertain from the competent national authorities the provisions, rules and legislation governing the taxation of project expenditure in their countries.
22. What is the 10% rule?

This refers to the possibility to transfer amounts between budget headings of maximum 10% of the amount of the heading in question without an official amendment. Budget transfers among headings of eligible costs that exceed 10% of the amount of each heading for which the transfer is intended are subject to an official amendment procedure. Such transfers may not affect the overall implementation of the project and may never lead to a higher grant than the amount stipulated in the grant agreement.

23. How important is the dissemination and exploitation of project results?

Significant emphasis is placed on the impact of the EU co-financed projects and on ensuring that what they produce will be widely distributed and used. It is recommended that the beneficiaries have a strong plan for dissemination and exploitation of results from the start of the project. Project results are the products, methods, experiences and policy lessons that the projects may realise as well as the international cooperation they may generate. A detailed listing of what may be regarded as a project result is displayed in the Administrative and Financial Handbook – Action 3 (Section VII).

The results generated, the lessons learned and the experiences or cooperation gained by each project should be made available to the widest possible public. Dissemination and exploitation is a means of maximising the impact of the project results, optimising their value and using them actively in systems and practices at local, regional, national and European levels. Well-planned and well-executed dissemination and exploitation ensure that the project results reach beyond those directly involved in the partnership and have an impact that is sustained beyond the project's lifetime.

24. Should the beneficiary acknowledge the support by the Erasmus Mundus programme in publications?

Beneficiaries must clearly acknowledge the support by the Erasmus Mundus programme and use the European Commission’s logo in all communications or publications in whatever form or medium including the Internet.

The logo can be found on the following link:
http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/about/eacea_logos_en.php

Project products and results that are distributed must make reference to the co-financing that the Erasmus Mundus programme has provided and should also incorporate the European Commission logo in order to increase awareness of the programme.

25. How will my project be monitored by the Agency?

The Agency is responsible for monitoring all the projects that have been successful in securing funds from the Erasmus Mundus programme. Monitoring can be performed in one or more of the following ways:

- assessment of the work carried out and reported by the project (progress and final reports);
- visit by Agency representative(s) to the premises of the coordinator;
- visit by Agency representative(s) to a project event or partnership meeting.

A monitoring visit has to be distinguished from an audit. The main purpose of the monitoring visit is
to provide support for each project, offering guidance and advice that can be integrated by the project team to achieve a successful outcome. The monitoring is also aiming at ensuring that the project is aligned with and fulfilling its objectives and that serious problems are avoided through the early identification of any difficulties. Good practices are also identified during monitoring visits and can be disseminated so that others may benefit from these.