



EUROPEAN COMMISSION



Humanitarian Aid

## **VOICE Guidelines for New Member State Participation in Capacity Building Activities**

### **1. Introduction to VOICE**

Based in Brussels, VOICE is an independent organisation under Belgian law since 2001. It is a network representing some 90 European NGOs active in humanitarian aid worldwide; it seeks to involve its members in information sharing, training, advocacy and lobbying. VOICE is the main NGO interlocutor with the European Union on emergency aid, relief, rehabilitation and disaster preparedness. As a European network, it represents and promotes the values and specificities of humanitarian NGOs, in collaboration with other humanitarian actors.

### **2. VOICE Objectives**

#### **Support to the VOICE members**

VOICE assists its members with DG Humanitarian Aid (ECHO) donor requirements. It profiles the network internally and seeks to increase high quality membership. It promotes quality and standards, and provides training support.

#### **Authority vis-à-vis the European institutions and the wider humanitarian community**

VOICE aims at influencing the European Parliament on humanitarian aid issues. It participates in the strategic dialogue with EC DG Humanitarian Aid. It also works towards recognition in other EU institutions. It builds alliances with other NGO bodies and liaises with relevant humanitarian aid actors.

#### **Monitoring of humanitarian policies and procedures**

VOICE monitors EU policy issues in humanitarian aid delivery and explores lobby opportunities in this field. It initiates strategic policy thinking within the network.

### **3. VOICE Activities**

VOICE is active in communication and facilitates information sharing between its members and other stakeholders at European level. By means of its website, its information bulletins (Flash) and newsletter, VOICE encourages discussions and innovation on humanitarian policy and practice, as well as on quality, standards and accountability in European Humanitarian Aid.

#### **4. Specific Activities for NMS Involvement**

Under an ECHO co-financed project<sup>1</sup>: *Supporting capacity building: Networking, Training, and Coordination for humanitarian actors in Europe with special focus on new Member States*<sup>2</sup>, VOICE organises trainings, meetings and seminars on ECHO procedures, humanitarian policy and issues, and standards and accountability in HA. In the framework of the current project, VOICE has the opportunity to support the increased participation of humanitarian/development organisations from New Member States (NMS) in VOICE activities, by offering financial support.

**(a) Transversal focus on building the capacity of new EU Members States NGOs/Platforms:** VOICE aims to support the integration of new Member States into the wider EU Humanitarian community, while simultaneously facilitating their capacity for strengthened advocacy, and lobbying activities, as well as increasing their knowledge of ECHO procedures, with a view to obtaining ECHO funding for relief activities in third countries. NGOs in the NMS need, first of all, to get actively involved in concrete Europe-related activities and have the capacity and platform to share their expertise with other EU organisations.

The main purpose of this transversal activity is to facilitate and increase the participation of NGOs in NMS to capacity building and awareness activities.

- VOICE will encourage NGOs from NMS - who wish to attend VOICE trainings and events (organised in the framework of this project) and VOICE annual General Assembly - to approach us for financial support for travel and accommodation costs.
- Special attention will be given by the VOICE staff to the trainees and guests from NMS (specific briefing and debriefing and/or counselling will be offered).

#### **(b) Organisation of an ad hoc workshop in a NMS**

The operation involves 1 workshop (2/3 days) on DG ECHO and EU humanitarian aid / Project Cycle Management. The participants will mainly come from NGOs and national platforms of new Member States, seeking to ensure a representation of the broad diversity of NGOs concerning size and expertise. Participation of other ECHO partners will be also promoted in order to guarantee networking, information exchange, mutual learning, and partnership between NGOs coming from new and old MS.

In order to facilitate and enhance the relationship between ECHO and its partners, VOICE proposes that ECHO staff will actively participate as resource persons alongside their NGO counterparts. The courses will be open to NGOs, while the opening session on EU humanitarian aid will be open to a wider public in order to reinforce the knowledge that civil society has of the EC and NGOs' work.

The workshops will be realised by VOICE staff and external trainer(s). The event will be organised in collaboration with an NGO of the hosting country. Moreover, participation of New Member States Humanitarian Organisations will be strongly encouraged at these events.

#### **(c) Organization of a public event in a new Member State**

This activity involves:

- Providing opportunities for increased networking, information exchange, mutual learning and partnership, between NGOs from new and old MS.
- Increasing awareness of civil society actors concerning humanitarian issues and the role of NGOs in EU Development policies.

The event will be most probably organised in the framework of the Czech Presidency in cooperation with local NGOs.

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<sup>1</sup> The "*Supporting capacity building: Networking, Training, and Coordination for humanitarian actors in Europe with special focus on new Member States*" is a project co-financed under the ECHO Grant Facility action. The project is implemented by VOICE from 1 January 2008 until 28 February 2009.

<sup>2</sup> New Member State (NMS) refers to those twelve countries who became members of the European Union following the last two rounds of European Union enlargement in 2004 and 2007.

## 5. Guidelines of NMS involvement in the project

### Eligibility and Conditions

- Eligible organisations will be from the twelve New Member States of the European Union following the 2004 and 2007 enlargements.
- Organisations must have experience and be active in the development and humanitarian sector.
- Beneficiaries of this funding must be staff of NGOs active in the field of Humanitarian Assistance or Development
- Participants who benefit from the funding support must have the intention to use the knowledge and skills gained in order to strengthen the ability of their organisations to engage with the wider European Humanitarian/ Development community, in lobbying, advocacy, and also to enhance, or embark upon a relationship with DG ECHO.
- Priority will be given to those organisations which are partners or potential partners of ECHO. Participants must have sufficient experience in and commitment to the field of HA and/or development.
- Requests for funding will only be accepted if in line with the objectives of the VOICE/ ECHO Grant Facility project and the organisation (VOICE).
- All spending must be in accordance with the financial regulations governing the EC Grant Facility Project.
- Travel costs of up to EUR 450 can be covered by VOICE for participation of a NMS organisation.
- Supporting original documents (Receipts, Boarding Passes, Invoices) must be provided in order to receive reimbursement of costs.
- Payments for travel or accommodation cannot be made in advance.

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