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**COMMISSION STAFF WORKING PAPER**

**First annual report to the Council and the European Parliament  
on the implementation of the ARGO programme (2002-2003).**

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The Council adopted the ARGO programme, which is intended to promote the administrative co-operation in the fields of external borders, visas, asylum and immigration by a Decision of 13 June 2002<sup>1</sup> (hereinafter called ARGO decision). This document constitutes the first implementation report prepared by the Commission in accordance with Article 14 of the ARGO decision covering fully the first year of implementation, 2002, and partially 2003.

The present report provides a narrative description and some statistical tables of the actions proposed by the Member States following the call for proposal as well as the proposals made by the Commission which were funded under the 2002 budget. The report will also provide an outline of the eligible actions submitted in response to the two calls for proposal published in 2003. Finally some conclusions are drawn from the implementation so far of the programme in accordance with Article 14 of the ARGO decision. However, this does not constitute a proper evaluation exercise of the programme that will be launched in 2005.

## **2. THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2002 BUDGET**

Due to the late adoption of the legal basis the 2002 implementation of the ARGO programme was delayed. The Commission could only adopt the 2002 annual work programme and publish the call for proposals in August 2002<sup>2</sup>. The total budget available was 3.000.000 shared between Member States' actions: € 2.000.000 and Commission's actions: € 700.000, the remaining amount being earmarked for specific (urgent) actions. Since Member States made no proposals of this type, this amount was put at the disposal of Member States' actions.

### **2.1. Member States' actions**

The Commission received a total of 15 proposals where five of them were declared ineligible. After having received a positive opinion of the ARGO Committee at its meeting on 3 December 2002 the Commission adopted the list of selected actions. This list contained eight projects<sup>3</sup> that obtained the highest scores after the assessment by the evaluation committee and that could be co-financed with the available appropriations for 2002. The two projects with the lowest ranking remained in a reserve list. Some of the projects selected are not yet completed and the final reports are still pending. A description of the selected projects is annexed to this report (Cf. annex I)

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<sup>1</sup> Council Decision adopting an action programme for administrative co-operation in the fields of external borders, visas, asylum and immigration (2002/463/EC). O.J. L 161 of 19.6.2002

<sup>2</sup> Notices (2002/ C 195/05) O.J. C 195 of 15.8.2002

<sup>3</sup> Eight projects that became in fact seven because two of them proposed by the same applicant were merged in one single project.

### 2.1.1. *Non Budgetary Indicators*

The ten eligible actions can be distributed in the following thematic groups:

Field	No of actions
External borders	8
Visa	0
Asylum	2
Immigration	0

Regarding the type of actions proposed by the Member States in 2002 a vast majority of them consisted of joint operations and training activities. The development of best practices was also one of the main activities foreseen resulting from seminars or conferences organised for the implementation of the projects. It is to be noted that staff exchanges as well as projects aiming at the use of latest IT technologies were not part of the selected actions.

### 2.1.2. *Budgetary indicators in € for the eligible and selected projects*

1	Total cost of eligible projects	6.783.080
2	Amount of requested co-financing for the eligible projects	3.437.310
3	Budget reserved for Member States' actions	2.300.000
4	Total cost of selected projects	4.309.474
5	Amount of requested co-financing for the selected projects	2.189.171
6	Amount committed <sup>4</sup> for the selected projects	1.908.969

#### **“Leverage effect”**

The amount of financial support granted by ARGO was € 1.908.969, which mobilised a total of € 4.309.474 for the selected projects. The leverage effect was 226 %. This figure is based on the assumption that the projects would not have taken place without Community funding.

#### **Demand/offer**

The demand of grant funding (cf. point 2 table) exceeded in 1,70 times the budget available (cf. point 3).

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<sup>4</sup> One project is stalled and there is no decision on the final granted amount, the requested amount has been used instead for making the total.

## 2.2. Commission's actions

The 2002 annual work programme included two studies that were proposed by the Commission:

- (1) Study regarding the control of the EU sea borders. This study was launched in December 2002 and the final report was delivered in July 2003. The total value of the contract signed with Civipol for the execution of the study was € 300.000.
- (2) Feasibility study on a visa information system that was also outsourced by the Commission to Trasys (Tractebel) for an amount of € 400.000. The study was initiated in September 2002 and the final report delivered to the Commission in April 2003.

## 3. THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2003 BUDGET.

This chapter can only constitute an interim report because the 2003 exercise is not completed yet. This report will focus on the eligible projects that have been submitted in response to the two calls for proposal published in 2003.

The Commission adopted the 2003 annual work programme and published the call for proposals in April 2003<sup>5</sup>. The total budget amounted to € 8.000.000 shared between Member States' actions, € 6.550.000, and Commission's actions, € 650.000, the remaining amount (€ 800.000) being earmarked for specific (urgent) actions.

Following the first call for proposals the Commission services received only 15 proposals where three of them were declared ineligible. Given the low number of projects and grant amount requested in comparison with the available budget (cf. table below) the Commission published a second call for proposals<sup>6</sup> governed by the same rules as the first call. The Commission received in response to this second call nine proposals among them two were not eligible.

### Budgetary indications regarding eligible projects submitted in 2003

	1 <sup>st</sup> call	2 <sup>nd</sup> call	Total
Cost of eligible projects	3.769.057	4.396.522	8.165.579
Amount of co-financing requested for the eligible projects	1.760.138	2.643.664	4.403.802
Budget reserved for Member States' actions	6.550.000 <sup>7</sup>		

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<sup>5</sup> Notice (2003/C 111/02) OJ C 111 of 9.5. 2003

<sup>6</sup> Notice (2003/ C 180/08) OJ C 180 of 31.7.2003

<sup>7</sup> Earmarked exclusively for actions in the field of external borders: 3.000.000

The Commission services are currently in the process of preparing the final list of selected actions in view of consulting the Committee and preparing the final adoption by the Commission.

#### **4. CONCLUSIONS**

The Commission in accordance with Article 14 of the ARGO decision shall in the annual report “analyse all the progress achieved accompanied where necessary by any proposals for ensuring homogeneous application in the Member States of Community legislation based on Articles 62 and 63 of the Treaty”. As most of the final reports of the projects selected for grant funding in 2002 are not available yet, it is therefore not possible to evaluate the progress achieved with regard to the objectives pursued by the ARGO programme.

With respect to 2003 there is, however, a clear indication of “underperformance” of the ARGO programme in its second year of implementation. Taking into account the two calls for proposals, the total budget and the amounts requested (eligible actions) in 2003 have only slightly raised with regard to 2002. Bearing in mind that the budget available for Member States’ actions was more than triple that in 2002, it can be clearly concluded that the response of Member States was not up to the expectations. The reasons for this lack of success differ from one Member State to another. However, it seems that the national administrations or agencies competent in the fields of external borders, visas, asylum and immigration have difficulties to adjust to the Community financial rules in particular with regard to grants.

Two factors could explain the scarce utilisation of the ARGO funds: insufficient publicity of the programme and the difficulty that national administrations seem to have in mobilizing the requested co-financing. The first requires both, the Commission's services and the national administrations, to step up the promotion and publicity of the programme and the conditions for benefiting from the grants. Thus, Commission services made a first presentation for Member States’ representatives at the last ARGO Committee meeting on the main financial rules applicable to grants. Further more targeted sessions for addressing specific questions or issues could be organised following a request of one or more Member States. The second factor lies more with the national administrations, which apparently so far do not foresee in their annual or multi-annual financial planning the inclusion of funds necessary for the co-financing of the envisaged actions.

These two factors clearly require a closer co-operation between the Commission's services and the national administrations in view of ensuring, on one hand a larger diffusion of the terms of the ARGO grants and on the other that national administrations establish annual or multi-annual activities’ programmes in a multinational framework. The Member States need to start to co-operate in planning the financial estimates for their joint operations. One way forward could be that Member States submit to the Commission their planning of activities and allocation of resources for administrative cooperation actions for 2004. The Commission would via the ARGO Committee share this information with the other Member States which would help them to coordinate their efforts and to identify and work out proposals to submit in response to the forthcoming call for proposals.

## ANNEX I: LIST OF SELECTED ACTIONS IN 2002

Project: 2002/ARGO/01

Organisation: ES - MINISTERIO DEL INTERIOR - GUARDIA CIVIL DG

Title of the project: OPERACION ULISES

Total estimated cost: € 838.409,83

Granted co-financing: € 670.727,86

Description: Two distinct joint shore patrol operations in the Mediterranean and Atlantic waters lasting several days with and aiming to fix up a joint control and surveillance and a EU network to fix up a joint control and surveillance and a EU network in the fields of control of illegal immigration on the sea borders.

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Project: 2002/ARGO/02

Organisation: FI MINISTRY OF INTERIOR, FRONTIER GUARD HEADQUARTERS

Title of the project: COMMON INTEGRATED RISK ANALYSIS MODEL

Total estimated cost: € 153.110,15

Granted co-financing: € 83.350,15

Description: Through workshops with all the MS the project aims to draft a coherent European notion of common risk analysis to be applied accordingly by all the MS in the activities dealing with the management of external borders. This notion is to be used immediately in the activities of the other running joint operations and actions.

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Project: 2002/ARGO/03-04

Organisation: DE BUNDESMINISTERIUM DES INNERN, BUNDESGRENZSCHUTZ

Title of the project: JOINT OPERATIONS AT THE EXTERNAL LAND BORDERS OF THE EU

Total estimated cost: € 1.182.022,58

Granted co-financing: € 456.095,00

Description 03: Co-ordinated by the Berliner Centre for Land borders, these joint operations aim to have various MS borders guards together in executing the control and surveillance tasks at the external German border and other borders in the future. So, very practical training, which is expressly bound to use the common risk analysis and the core curriculum training for the European borders guards, both notions being elaborated by other projects.

Description 04: This project is to be merged with the previous one on the joint operations. The two, once merged, have a strong meaning in the framework of the road map of political priorities. The centre is an indispensable instrument to evaluate the results of the operations and ensure their usefulness for the other MS and the other projects. Furthermore, the centre will ensure the effectiveness and the continuity of the current and future operations, the coherence of the methodology applied and the maintain of the quality of the actions. Finally, the Centre will ensure the best use and application of the notions, methods and procedures, which are the result of other projects.

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Project: 2002/ARGO/05

Organisation: AT - BUNDESMINISTERIUM FÜR INNERES DER REPUBLIK  
OSTERREICH

Title of the project: DEVELOPMENT OF A CORE CURRICULUM FOR BORDER  
GUARD

Total estimated cost: € 369.374,55

Granted co-financing: € 214.986,55

Description: This project is of great interest for all the MS since the definition of a common, core curriculum training for the European Border guards is essential to step up the building of a common approach for control and surveillance of the external borders. The core team of A and Sw officials will be flanked by academic advisors who should guarantee a good quality of the expected results, which are eagerly awaited by the other MS which are supposed to apply them in the actions and activities of their projects.

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Project: 2002/ARGO/06

Organisation: IT - MINISTERO DELL INTERNO, DIPARTIMENTO DELLA  
PUBBLICA SICUREZZA, DIREZIONE CENTRALE PER LA  
POLIZIA STRADALE, FERROVIARIA , DI FRONTIERA E  
POSTALEI

Title of the project: COMMON BORDER PROJECT



Total estimated cost: € 266.898,85

Granted co-financing: € 210.564,43

Description: This operation concerns the airport controls. The aim is to have the MS officers used to common procedures, notions, evaluations in view of getting harmonised methods for controls in the airports all over the Schengen territory.

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Project: 2002/ARGO/07

Organisation: GR – MINISTRY OF PUBLIC ORDER HELLENIC POLICE HEADQUARTERS

Title of the project: PILOT PROJECT ON THE CONTROL OF THE EASTERN EXTERNAL LAND BORDERS OF THE EU

Total estimated cost: € 231.260

Granted co-financing: € 138.756

Description: This operation is specially conceived to improve the co-operation with Candidate Countries on the eastern Greek border. The aims are the same as the Italian project: better, mutual understanding among MS border guards and finding out together the best ways to apply the same European rules.

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Project: 2002/ARGO/08

Organisation: NL - IMMIGRATIE- EN NATURALISATIEDIENST - MINISTERIE VAN JUSTITIE - THE HAGUE

Title of the project: IMPROVING CO-OPERATION BETWEEN IMMIGRATION SERVICES OF PO, CZ, B AND NL

Total estimated cost: € 224.50,00

Granted co-financing: € 134.490,00

Description: This project between the immigration services of Poland, Czech Republic, Belgium and The Netherlands focuses on improving the co-operation of these organisations, enhancing and harmonising the working methods and encouraging bilateral contacts between professionals of the organisations involved. Leading is the wish to realise practical common working tools, which must be operational in the field.