



**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**

**EuropeAid –Co-operation Office  
Latin America Directorate**

**alfa**

**LATIN AMERICA ACADEMIC TRAINING**

**Academic Co-operation Programme between  
European Union and Latin America**

**GUIDELINES FOR APPLICANTS**

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## INTRODUCTION

ALFA is a programme of co-operation in higher education between the European Union and Latin America, for which the legal basis is Council Regulation (CEE) No. 443/92 of 25<sup>th</sup> February 1992 on financial and Technical Assistance to, and economic co-operation with the developing countries of Asia and Latin America.

According to the Decision of 4<sup>th</sup> December 1998 regarding the second phase of this regional de-centralised Programme, ALFA will receive 42 million Euro from the European Commission over 6 years.

The ALFA Programme seeks to promote co-operation stemming from mutual interests therefore the Commission's financing is based on the assumption that the participating institutions will fund at least 25% of each project.

ALFA remains faithful to its original objective: to promote co-operation in higher education between Europe and Latin America as a means of fostering economic and social progress, by improving conditions of training highly qualified human resources.

In this second phase, the ALFA Programme also proposes on the one hand to continue co-operation in matters of institutional management, and on the other hand, matters of scientific and technical training, by means of two sub-programmes as specified below. The primary purpose of the Programme will be to foster post-graduate and student mobility at different training levels, *i.e.* Doctorate, Master degrees or post-doctoral vocational specialisation courses for post-graduates as well as for undergraduate students. Short (residential) courses for researchers are also foreseen.

## **1 GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE PROGRAMME**

### **1.1 OBJECTIVES**

In addition to maintaining the impetus created concerning the preparation and development of joint projects between European and Latin American higher education institutions, the programme's main objectives are:

- to create/strengthen links between higher education institutions by enhancing the dialogue between the academic communities of both continents;
- to create systematic and sustainable mechanisms of co-operation between those involved in higher education in Europe and in Latin America, in order to encourage the establishment of mechanisms for mobility between the two continents and at regional level in Latin America;

ALFA also considers the need to involve those institutions that are relatively less developed, as well as to maintain a suitable geographic balance of participation between the Programme's eligible regions.

### **1.2 DURATION**

ALFA II has a six-year approved term (2000-2005). New project proposals will be evaluated and accepted during the first four years.

The last two years, 2004 and 2005, will focus on the execution of approved projects, the follow-up of their results and the Programme's final evaluation.

### **1.3 BUDGET**

The European Commission allocated an indicative budget of 42 million Euro to the total execution of the ALFA Programme.

The Commission expects to approve projects up to a total of 4.3 million Euros in each evaluation session.

#### **1.4 ELIGIBLE COUNTRIES**

The countries eligible to participate in the Programme are the 15 Member States of the European Union: Austria, Belgium, Germany, Denmark, Spain, Finland, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden, United Kingdom, and,

The following 18 Latin American countries: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela.

Institutions from the countries not mentioned above can participate as observers (without receiving EC financing).

#### **1.5 CALL FOR APPLICATIONS**

A single call for applications was launched for the first four years of the ALFA II Programme.

Upon receipt, project proposals will be analysed by the Commission, once their conformity to all requirements of the ALFA regulations has been verified and if formally correct, they are analysed by the ALFA Group of Experts during the corresponding evaluation session.

#### **1.6 EVALUATION SESSIONS**

Eight evaluation sessions will be held during the first four years of ALFA II, one every semester (in June and in December).

Proposals may be sent to the Commission during the first four years of the Programme.

The lists of proposals to be evaluated in 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003 include the formally correct proposals received by the Commission before or by the following deadlines:

- 1<sup>st</sup> Semester: 30<sup>th</sup> April
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Semester: 30<sup>th</sup> October

## **1.7 PRIORITISED SCIENTIFIC FIELDS**

The following scientific fields will be given priority:

### **Medicine and health sciences**

Including all projects that may contribute to the improvement of public health conditions in the beneficiary countries, or the regions.

### **Engineering**

Including all projects with direct impact on the development of communications, transport or energy infrastructure, while particularly taking environmental protection into consideration.

### **Social and economic sciences in general**

Including all fields related to political, social and educational development.

*Disciplines from other domains may be considered in addition to these three large scientific fields, provided that each concrete proposal impacts on sustainable regional development in general and its specific academic interest contributes to the strengthening of institutional, academic and/or scientific relations between the two continents.*

## **1.8 CHANGING FACTORS TO BE CONSIDERED**

Some priorities, namely geographical or thematic may be altered, depending on the way ALFA's geographic balance and scientific fields evolve in terms of approved projects.

Accordingly, once the second annual evaluation session has been completed and the Commission has taken its decision, all parties concerned will be informed of the geographic and scientific priorities for the next sessions. The ALFA Programme Website and the Commission provide this information, which will also be published in the Official Journal of the European Communities.

## 2 NETWORKS OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

ALFA is a regional decentralised co-operation programme, implemented by networks that submit joint proposals to develop projects based on the objectives, structure and rules of the programme. This section describes the attributes of these networks.

### 2.1 ALFA PARTNERS

- Higher Education Institutions (HEI) recognised by their respective national authorities.
- Other institutions may join the network to participate in project design and implementation.

NB: Under no circumstances will the ALFA Programme provide financing on an individual basis (either to individuals or to individual institutions).

### 2.2 NETWORK STRUCTURE

Minimum membership requirement:

The ALFA networks should be composed of at least **six Higher Education Institutions**: 3 European and 3 Latin American (respectively from 6 different countries in total). The network is expected to ensure the active participation of all its members.

Other institutions may join the network as associated members, provided that their involvement is pertinent, contributes to the fulfilment of the network's objectives and brings added value to the project proposal.

Entities will be recognised as higher education institutions according to the law of their respective country.

In each network the international component (*i.e.* the number of member institutions from different countries) should at all times be greater than the national component (*i.e.* the number of different member institutions from one same country).



Institutions that are unable to show that they are formally recognised as Higher Education Institutions will not be taken into consideration to fulfil the minimum membership requirement and must not represent the majority of members in a network.

### **2.3 NETWORK CO-ORDINATION**

Each ALFA network must appoint a co-ordinating institution. This co-ordinator will act as the network's representative towards the European Commission. The co-ordinating institution will be the signatory of the contract together with the European Commission and will be responsible for the good management of project's activities as well as of funds allocated by the Commission for project execution.

In order to encourage a stronger participation of Latin American institutions as project co-ordinators, the division of functions performed by the co-ordinating institution may be authorised in duly justified cases. For example a network could assign the responsibility for the financial execution of a project to a European institution, while leaving all technical and academic aspects to the co-ordination to a Latin American institution.

Thus the legal co-ordinator (*i.e.* the signatory of the contract) would co-ordinate the budget component while another institution of the network would take charge of technical and academic co-ordination – as will appear in the Terms of Reference of the corresponding contract. Due justification will be considered when, for specific conditions affecting one institution (or one country, whichever applies) it is impossible to maintain an appropriate communication flow with the ALFA management structure, or there are problems concerning the financial transactions, or country's economic stability.

#### **2.3.1 Functions performed by the Co-ordinating Institution**

The Rector/President of the co-ordinating institution, or one representative legally empowered to act on behalf of the institution, should sign all application forms and financing contracts drawn up by the European Commission, as well as all technical and financial reports resulting from project execution. He/she will be responsible for ensuring the network's co-financing contribution to the project.

After the end of the contracts, all documents that could prove the proper financial execution of the project and which were not included in the financial reports sent

to the Commission, should be kept by the co-ordinating institution for consultation or for auditing purposes and this for a period of 5 years.

The legal representative of the co-ordinating institution should appoint a project (co-ordinator) interlocutor who will ensure project's management and development of the activities according to the terms of the contract signed between the both parties. Reference will be made to this co-ordinator in the contract signed by the European Commission and the co-ordinating institution.

### **2.3.2 Specific aspects of network's co-ordination**

Generally speaking, depending on the evolution of the Programme in each evaluation session, special attention will be paid to projects co-ordinated by Higher Education Institutions in Latin America with a view to encouraging their active participation and the development of their management capability.

The Commission will seek to prevent the same co-ordinating institution from accumulating projects in the same scientific field, over the same period.

### **3 SUB-PROGRAMMES AND ACTIVITIES**

ALFA II is divided into two sub-programmes:

- Sub-programme A: Institutional and academic management
- Sub-programme B: Scientific and technical training:  
Post-graduate and student mobility;  
short courses for researchers

Both sub-programmes should finance projects that promote knowledge-transfer in relevant scientific and administrative academic domains. Projects should strengthen the presence of women, through their active participation in the networks of Higher Education Institutions.

#### **3.1 SUB-PROGRAMME A: INSTITUTIONAL MANAGEMENT**

This sub-programme aims at developing the management capacities of Higher Education Institutions in the following fields:

- academic and administrative personnel management;
- curriculum development and teaching management;
- research management;
- academic evaluation;
- certification of degrees and diplomas;
- curriculum harmonisation;
- administrative management;
- management of university extension services;
- management of university/business co-operation schemes;
- management of services to the university community.

Sub-programme A focuses on institutional strengths considering development of skills and instruments.

Special attention will be paid to proposals that consider continuing education in the framework of projects centred on two themes, i.e. university/business co-operation and management of university extension (university services to the society).

### 3.1.1 Activities and duration

Activities to be financed within the framework of institutional co-operation projects will be the following:

- Design, preparation and implementation of institutional and academic management material;
- preparation and publication of work undertaken as part of projects.

Generally speaking the expected results are:

- publication of studies and/or results of meetings and/or seminars;
- institutional documents resulting from meetings held as part of the project;
- proposals of academic improvement measures and on the management of higher education;
- preparation of web pages for the electronic dissemination of debates and documents relevant to institutional and academic management;
- academic and administrative management handbooks;
- agreements regarding studies' recognition;
- other significant tangible results related to the programme objectives.

As to the specific actions aimed at developing the above-mentioned activities, the ALFA Programme may provide financial support for the organisation of colloquia and/or seminars, in addition to short-term residences. Namely, two meetings (seminars or colloquia) with a maximum five-day duration may be included in each year of the project and short-term residences with a maximum duration of 15 days per year and per person (duly justified).

All activities in the sub-programme A should be developed by **managers, and/or teachers performing management functions**, in their respective institutions. Seminars and colloquia held in the framework of sub-programme A must not concern the training of either university post-graduates or students or teachers who do not perform management functions. Education and training projects are taken into consideration within the sub-programme B.

Activities included in this sub-programme will have a duration of two years.

### **3.2 SUB-PROGRAMME B: SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL TRAINING: POST-GRADUATE AND STUDENT MOBILITY, SHORT TRAINING COURSES FOR RESEARCHERS**

Sub-programme B *aims at promoting the integration of existing training skills into the improved fulfilment of specialised training needs in one specific region.* This will be put into practice by developing activities that favour a two-way mobility of university post-graduates and students, either between institutions of the European Union and Latin America or between the Latin American beneficiary countries.

#### **3.2.1 Project attributes**

Project proposals submitted to this sub-programme should specifically refer to:

- the attributes of the training provided by the network, explaining the differences vis-à-vis other training opportunities currently available,
- the comparative advantages for each participating institution,
- the network's operating strategy, in view of its proposed strategic objectives, and
- the anticipated operating schedule, once the Programme's support has finished.

#### **3.2.2 Activities and its duration**

This sub-programme awards partial and/or additional grants to promote mobility in the following fields:

- **Advanced training:** Doctorate (especially with co-tutoring), Master degrees or post-doctoral vocational specialisation courses (residences of 6 to 20 months by grant-holder).
- **Complementary training:** final year student mobility (residences of 6 to 10 months).
- **Short-term training:** as part of post-graduate studies (residences of up to 3 months).
- **Researchers training:** specialised scientific courses for researchers (residences of up to 6 months).

Research training will only include activities enabling researchers to acquire skills in specific research domains. Projects merely related to research will not be financed.

Activities proposed within mobility projects (sub-programme B) may be developed over a maximum period of 3 years.

### **3.2.3 Mobility flows**

Each network should propose the content and object of the courses to be attended by the grant-holders and the specific mobility flow to be financed by the project. The proposed mobility flow should respect the following principles:

- exchanges will only involve the network institutions;
- grant-holders participating in exchanges between network institutions must be registered students at the institution of origin;
- at least 70% of the proposed exchanges should consist of grant-holders from Latin American countries;
- grant-holders participating in exchanges between Latin American institutions should travel to a country other than the one of their institution of origin;
- the minimum number of grant-holders per project shall be twice the number of network member institutions;
- grant-holders should be nationals of the Programme's beneficiary countries.

### **3.2.4 Selection of grant-holders**

The network should specify the proposed system for selection of grant-holders, as well as the proposed method of information of potential grant applicants. Once the contract is signed, the network should submit the list of grant-holders and description of the adopted selection procedures.

The network, through its co-ordinator, should send a list comprising the names and addresses of the selected students, annexed with respective CVs, together with information on the adopted selection procedure and its results. All this information should be sent to the European Commission.

The European Commission will check the list of selected grant-holders and will verify if they comply with the Programme's mobility regulations. The EC Offices in Europe and Delegations in Latin America will subsequently inform each grant-holder of his/her selection.

### **3.2.5 Host institution**

Normally, a grant holder should use his grant to study in one single institution. In exceptional cases, grant-holders may attend module classes in more than one institution: up to a maximum of three network member institutions. This formula will be approved according to the content and significance of the proposed training programme.

### **3.2.6 Other activities associated with the mobility projects**

Mobility projects may include language improvement scholarships, to be granted when required for the proposed training.

In addition, teachers (tutors or lecturers) of network institutions participating in the proposed training programme may benefit from residence and travel grants. To this end, the European Commission may finance a maximum of 2 trips and 2 grants (up to 15 days per stay) in each 10-month period of the training programme per institution.

Finally, projects including long-term grants (advanced training) for post-graduation courses may include one or two meetings (duly justified) for grant-holder tutors with a maximum duration of five days.

NB: These activities should be developed in accordance with the concrete project objectives. It should also be taken into account that, in general terms, all projects approved under Sub-programme B must seek to integrate the existing training skills, and their results should have a positive effect on the training capacities of the participating institutions.

### **3.2.7 Mobility management**

Projects incorporating mobility count among eligible costs administrative and management expenses of the *host institution*. These costs include : registration and exam fees (students are exempted), organisational costs (i.e. lodging), etc. The costs of the co-ordinating institution to organise the mobility carried out within the framework of the project are also eligible (see application forms “VII additional information: notes on eligible costs”).

Similarly, expenses incurred by the *institution of origin* related to the preparation of mobility may also be taken into account –but only those incurred after

*signature of the contract.* Expenditures under this item may include language pre-training, introduction to cultural aspects of the receiving institution, information, etc., aspects that can facilitate the integration of the grant-holders during their stay abroad and thus provide for a good studying environment.

### **3.2.8 Projects for preparation for mobility**

Projects concerning activities to prepare mobility projects will be financed only in those exceptional cases which – involve Higher Education institutions that have *never obtained ALFA financing or when the network clearly has no experience regarding student mobility.*

Activities to be financed in this case will be 2 meetings of no more than 5 days, attended by one representative from each participating institution.



#### 4 SUBMISSION OF APPLICATIONS/PROPOSALS

The reason for launching an open call for applications is intended to both ease the application procedures and to diminish the rejection rate of project proposals for reasons of non-conformity to programme's formalities.

Networks should submit their applications using the appropriate application forms, which may be obtained from either the European Commission (EuropeAid, Latin America Directorate, Social Development Unit E4), in the European Commission Representation Offices in the Member States, in the European Delegations in Latin America, and in the Programme's website.

The European Commission is expected to assist the applicants, with the submission of their proposals as far as formal aspects are concerned. The Commission will provide to the networks mainly regarding the following points:

- the network's composition (minimum number of Higher Education Institutions required from the different beneficiary countries);
- each and every member of the network has formally expressed its will to participate and play an active role in the development of the project, by having the application signed by the respective rector – or academic representative duly empowered to legally act on behalf of the institution;
- the network has formally undertaken to co-finance the project, as required for each type of project, *i.e.* 25% of total proposed budget, or a minimum of 15% for projects, exceptionally approved, to prepare student mobility projects (look for details on the application form for submitting proposals – chapter VII);
- the methodology adopted to finance the proposed activities conforms to the established regulations;
- all necessary agreements required have been duly taken into consideration in the application form (mainly in the case of mobility projects);
- the proposed mobility flows are in accordance with the Programme regulations;
- the activities proposed for each project are included in the regulations established for the corresponding type of project.

## 5 EVALUATION OF PROJECTS

Once the Commission considers that the ALFA formal requirements have been met, each proposal is included in the list to be appraised by the ALFA Group of Experts in the next evaluation session. The Group of Experts will give their opinion on each proposed project, considering the following aspects:

- fulfilment of the general objectives of the ALFA II Programme and potential impact of the proposed activities on:
  - the efficiency and effectiveness of the participating higher education institutions (in the case of Sub-programme A);
  - the quality of training and its relevance to the needs of the region in each specific field (in the case of Sub-programme B);
- project quality, in academic and scientific terms;
- project consistency in terms of proposed ends, project objectives, methodology and available resources;
- content evaluation of the training programmes proposed for the mobility projects, as well as their academic adequacy;
- match between the size and structure of the network and the tasks to be performed (network functionality requirement);
- previous experience of the network member institutions;
- comparative analysis of each proposal vis-à-vis the other proposals in the same call for applications, to identify those which best fulfil the ALFA objectives;
- prioritised scientific fields according to ALFA priorities;
- appropriate geographic distribution of the mobility flows; adequate match between the origin and destination of grant-holders and the academic content of the proposed training programme;
- co-financing level;
- preference given to those networks that foresee the possible recognition of studies made in other institutions as part of the project;
- preference given to those networks including institutions from countries or regions that are either relatively less developed or have fewer possibilities to develop their academic system;
- preference given to projects involving institutions that did not participate in the first phase of the Programme;
- preference given to projects that encourage the participation of women.

## **6 DECISION ON PROJECT FINANCING**

After each evaluation session, the ALFA Group of Experts will report the outcome of its work to the European Commission. In turn, the Commission will take the final decision on the opportunity to fund each proposal submitted for evaluation.

The co-ordinating institution of each network will be officially informed of the Commission's decision. This decision usually explains the reasons why the proposal was approved or, if applicable, the reasons why the project was rejected.

## **APPENDICES**

### **ALFA PROGRAMME ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT**

## I ALFA FINANCING CONTRACT

Following the approval of a project, administrative work begins to prepare the contracts to be signed by the European Commission and the co-ordinating institutions of each network. *Project execution may only begin after the signature of said contract.* The contract will be drafted according to the standard financing contract drawn up by the competent services of the European Commission.

### I.1 Formal arrangements

On reporting project approval (and, if necessary, in subsequent contacts), the Commission will request from the network all data required to draw up the contract.

The network shall send all documents requested for contract drafting purposes to the Commission within 30 days.

All contracts, both for Sub-programme A and Sub-programme B projects, shall consist of:

- Specific Conditions\*
- Terms of Reference (Appendix I)
- General Conditions (Appendix II)\*
- Budget and summary of financing conditions (Appendix III)
- General Undertakings of the Beneficiary (Appendix IV)\*
- Report forms (Appendix V)\*
- Contracts for mobility projects (Sub-programme B) will also include:
- Mobility agreements duly signed by all member institutions of the network, on the application forms. These agreements assure acceptable host conditions, fee exemption, and academic recognition. (Appendix VI).

*The terms of reference and the budget in Appendices I and III respectively, must conform to those submitted for evaluation and approved by the European Commission. No variations to said appendices will be permitted, other than those suggested by the European Commission following the advice of the ALFA Group of Experts, as reflected in the letter reporting project approval.*

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\* Link web to contract's model

## **I.2 DURATION**

Contracts for Sub-programme A projects will have a duration of 24 months. Contracts for mobility projects may last up to 36 months, so that the proposed academic activities can integrate the different academic terms (LA and UE).

## **I.3 ENTRY INTO FORCE**

The contract will come into force on the first day following the date of the last contract signature of both parties. The date on which the second entity signs shall be deemed as date of signature. Activities should be developed during the term mentioned in the contract.

Once the European Commission has signed the contract, the network co-ordinator will receive three copies for signature. The co-ordinating institution will keep one of the original copies and send the other two to the European Commission.

*Activities in the framework of the approved projects may only begin after the entry into force of the contract.*

*Community financing will not cover any expenses incurred outside the term of the contract.*

*Likewise, community funding cannot be used to finance any activity that has not been foreseen and budgeted for in the contract.*

## **I.4 AMENDMENTS**

*Full compliance with the terms of the contract is required.* Accordingly, activities developed should be those described in the respective terms of reference.

*As an exception* and when justifiable, beneficiaries may request amendments to the terms of reference of the contract. Said amendments shall be drawn up as addenda to the contract (modification of the initial contract). The signature of the addenda will follow the same administrative procedure adopted for the contracts.

Addenda will be considered whenever the respective request has been duly justified and sent in writing to the Commission within a minimum delay of three months, before any expenditures are made or any academic activities are developed that were not foreseen in the original contract.

Addenda will be approved only if the European Commission accepts the justification presented by the network. Nevertheless it should be remembered that contract amendments are authorised exceptionally and only on account of reasons beyond network control that prevent the scheduled activities from being developed or the results defined in the contract from being obtained.

*In no case shall addenda requests be considered after the expiry date of the contract.*

Addenda involving an amendment to the duration of the contract may generate an extension of six months (minimum) to one year (maximum). Each contract may have no more than two addenda, irrespective of the underlying cause. On the whole, no contract may be extended for more than 18 months.

*The proposed amendments must never cause the objectives of the approved contract to be changed or the community contribution to the budget to be increased. Amendments should relate to either contract duration or changes to the proposed project activities, whenever such changes are deemed necessary to fulfil the project objectives.*

## **II PROJECT FOLLOW-UP AND COMPLETION**

Every project, having signed a contract with the European Commission must submit execution reports to the latter, as follows:

### **1. Short-term contracts (one year)**

One technical report and one financial report within two months of the date foreseen for the end of project activities.

### **2. Long-term contracts (more than one year)**

One intermediate technical report per year, according to the terms of the contract. The reception and acceptance of the content of this intermediate report are required prior to the payment of the corresponding segment of community financing.

One final technical report and one final financial report, within two months of the date foreseen for the end of project activities.

### **3. All contracts**

The final reports (technical and financial) shall be submitted within the months of the date foreseen for the end of the action. Their reception and acceptance is required prior to the approval of project activities and the payment of the last segment of community financing, corresponding to the balance and liquidation of said financing.

*In exceptional instances* (due to a justifiable delay, subject to the Commission's acceptance), reports may be submitted later than the established deadline. Nevertheless, no document will be considered valid if submitted six months after the date foreseen for the end of the action.

There will be two forms for technical reports, one for Sub-programme A projects and another for Sub-programme B projects. These forms (both for intermediate and final technical reports) will be part of the documents sent to the co-ordinator, along with the contract signed by the European Commission.



## **II.1 FINANCIAL REPORT**

The ALFA budget provides funding for actions aimed at fulfilling the Programme objectives, following the maximum amounts indicated in this guide. The use of such funds should be strictly directed towards said objectives, no amendments are possible without prior authorisation from the European Commission.

At the end of the contract, a Final Financial Report must be submitted, along with the Technical Report, to account for all expenditure. This report consists of the following forms and statements attached to the contract, which the project co-ordinator is expected to fill out:

- *General Information Page*, including project identification, basic project data (*i.e.* name, co-ordinating institution, number of contract, bank account of the beneficiary, etc.), as well as the signatures of the co-ordinator and of the entity which is legally responsible for the contract.
- *Accounting table* including a breakdown of funds by item and co-financing entity: Network, EC or Third Parties. This table is similar to the budget table of the original contract, indicating the amounts actually spent in each activity.
- *Specific expenditure statements*, one for each item, confirming that the proposed activities were financed with the funds allocated in the budget. There are specific statements (travel, meals, grant-related expenses, etc.) for each type of project.

The preparation of this report should take into account the following: if fewer activities were developed than those initially foreseen (for example, fewer meetings or fewer people attending the meetings), the subsequent budget changes should be reflected in the documents accounting for the expenses.

## **II.2 PAYMENT OF THE EU FINANCING**

The European Commission will pay the first part of the community funding following the signature of the contract by the co-ordinating institution of the network and the European Commission.

For projects lasting no more than 12 months, the Commission will pay 80% of the total amount of the contract in advance.

For projects with a longer duration or a community funding of more than 100,000 Euros, the Commission will pay 80% of the part of the budget

corresponding to the first twelve months in advance. Intermediate annual payments will be made subsequent to the approval of the corresponding reports. An intermediate payment can only be made if the prior expenses incurred represent at least 70% of the payment already received by the co-ordinator. The sum of the advance payment and the intermediate payments should never exceed 90% of the total community financing.

*In all cases, the network must send the payment requests to the Commission services of the ALFA Programme, using the form attached to the signed contract.*

Contract completion and the settlement of sums to be paid will occur following receipt and approval by the European Commission, of the final technical and financial reports.

Payments will be made in Euros to the bank account indicated by the co-ordinating institution for this purpose. This bank account must not be held by an individual and should be opened in financial institutions of any beneficiary country of ALFA Programme. It shall be dedicated to the project and must not be changed until the last payment has been made under the contract.

### **III ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT OF ALFA II PROGRAMME**

#### **III.1 EUROPEAN COMMISSION**

The European Commission is responsible for the management and execution of ALFA II.

The European Commission perform its functions is supported by the ALFA Group of Experts.

#### **III.2 ALFA Group of Experts**

*The ALFA Group of Experts* is a consultative body reporting to the Commission and is responsible for giving advice on the submitted projects. Its performance should comply with the Programme regulations.

The Group of Experts has 16 members: 8 nationals from European Union Member States and 8 from the Latin American beneficiary countries.

Members of the ALFA Group of Experts are invited *intuitu personae* by the services of the Commission to join the ALFA Programme by virtue of their competence, experience and authority in the main fields of co-operation of the Programme and their in-depth knowledge of higher education in Latin America and Europe.

The Group of Experts will perform the functions established in the Decision concerning the financing of ALFA Programme with a view to helping develop and follow up each phase of the Programme. In addition the Group will assist the European Commission in taking decisions on project approval. In order to fulfil this mission, the ALFA Group of Experts shall:

- make a fully independent appraisal of the submitted projects;
- issue detailed recommendations on the submitted proposals;
- suggest improvements to the Commission regarding the Programme's organisation and execution.

In addition, the Group of Experts should:

- identify and prioritise themes that can be developed as part of the Programme;
- advise the Commission on the Programme's concepts and contents;
- attend specific meetings in which the activities of ALFA Programme are presented to the public, at the request of the Commission services;
- evaluate the project proposals submitted by the established networks and, for this specific purpose:
  - submit to the Commission a guide on technical and thematic analysis, which considers the aspects to be taken into consideration when the Commission decides which actions and projects should be selected as part of the Programme,
  - examine the proposed projects submitted to the Commission and their conformity to the Programme objectives and the established priorities, by applying the guide on technical and thematic analysis, and issue a technical recommendation to the Commission.

The ALFA Group of Experts will report the results of its evaluation to the European Commission. The ALFA Group of Experts should base its evaluation on a system that enables project approval, or its possible modification or rejection. The advice of the Group of Experts is non-binding and the responsibility for the final decision regarding each project lies with the European Commission.

In what concerns its organisation and functioning, the ALFA Group of Experts has been divided into two sub-groups to adjust to the Programme structure. One sub-group evaluates the co-operation projects on institutional management and the other focuses its evaluation on the scientific & technical training projects. In each evaluation session each sub-group is composed of no more than four members.

#### IV SUMMARISED PROCEDURE

