

Development of a European web-based transparency framework for and about Not-for-Profit-Organisation, based on the GuideStar model

Project plan summary, as of 17 March, 2009

This project aims to promote transparency and reporting of Not-for-Profit Organisations (NPO) across Europe. We believe that the provision of information on NPOs is the first step towards realising better transparency in the nonprofit sector. This project plan positions us contribute to the development of transparency and accountability for the sector as a whole as well as on an organisation-by-organisation basis.

GuideStar Europe aims to be a comprehensive database, the “go to” source of information about not-for-profit organisations in Europe. Based on the GuideStar UK model, information will be sourced from the official registry and/or reporting information available at relevant offices of member states as well as information supplied directly by NPOs via a web platform designed specifically for this purpose. This project will pursue the deployment of the recently completed feasibility work supported by the EC at the national and the European level. This proposal focuses on the EU-wide aspects of deployment. GSI also supports country-level GuideStar developments that are beyond the scope of this specific application.

The GuideStar Europe project aims to achieve the following:

- Analysis of practices on official NPO registration and reporting in European member states (to serve the best practices report which will be disseminated on a European wide basis and to help develop a European reporting framework for NPOs).
- Deployment of the GuideStar Europe Website.
- Displaying available official and self reported data on NPOs in a suitable reporting framework via the GuideStar Europe Website.
- Development of protocols for quality assurance of the GuideStar Europe database and its content.
- Promotion of CSO transparency and reporting in Europe.
- Promotion of the service in order to attract NPO participation as well as usage by the general public, institutions, and donors.
- Development of the sustainability plan for the GuideStar Europe service.

GSI will be the primary manager of the project, providing expertise in nonprofit reporting frameworks, stakeholder engagement, and delivering and hosting the technology infrastructure. There will be major outreach to state offices responsible for official data on NPOs in member states to screen available materials as well as to analyse them so that best practices can be shared regarding official, self reported information and quality standards. Since this is a new field it is essential to advocate and educate NPOs and other stakeholders about the importance of transparency and accountability.

We will develop a GuideStar Europe Portal; a comprehensive, trans-European database founded on a common technical standard to facilitate reporting of NPOs and encourage harmonised transparency standards throughout European civil society. The "transnational" approach is thought to generate interest and market demand in the individual countries about joining the initiative and contributing NPO information from official and/or self reported sources. This requires strong collaboration from state offices which hold data since they can provide information to GuideStar's central system, but also allow for further enhancement of the reports through providing the option for self reporting. GSI also supports the establishment of national initiatives which share the values and principles of GuideStar Europe and encourage such country programmes to become part of the GuideStar Europe network. However, this country-level support is beyond the scope of this grant proposal.

It is an absolutely innovative project as there is no other initiative, that we are aware of, that attempts to combine official information with self reported data of NPOs across Europe. During the eTEN project completed in 2008, a competitors analysis was conducted for the four European countries (The Netherlands, Hungary, Ireland and Germany) as well as for similar European wide initiatives. No similar service was identified. We believe that our goal to make information freely available to the public on the web, will have a positive outcome for all relevant stakeholders.

Potential partners: European Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ECNL), Nonprofit Information and Training Center (NIOK), King Baudouin Foundation (KBF) and other entities sharing our vision.

Length of project: 3 years

Current state of project plan: In fundraising state, the plan has been submitted for funding in an open call for applications to the European Commission (DG Justice, Freedom and Security) on 16th March 2009.

For further information, please visit www.guidestareurope.org