



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Brussels, 21.2.2012  
C(2012) 1037 final

**COMMISSION DECISION**

**of 21.2.2012**

**concerning the adoption of the 2012 work programme in the framework of the Preparatory Action BEST (Voluntary scheme for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services in Territories of the EU Outermost Regions and Overseas Countries and Territories)**

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### **concerning the adoption of the 2012 work programme in the framework of the Preparatory Action BEST (Voluntary scheme for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services in Territories of the EU Outermost Regions and Overseas Countries and Territories)**

THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION,

Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,

Having regard to Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002 of 25 June 2002 on the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the European Communities<sup>1</sup>, and in particular Articles 49(6), 75 and 110 thereof,

Having regard to Commission Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 2342/2002 of 23 December 2002 laying down detailed rules for the implementation of Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002 on the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the European Communities<sup>2</sup> and in particular Article 90 thereof,

Whereas:

- (1) In its Conclusions of 25 June 2009 the Council recognised the critical importance of biodiversity conservation in the Union's outermost regions and overseas territories. It welcomed the efforts to develop a voluntary scheme to promote conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystem services in Union's outermost regions and overseas entities which are not covered by Union nature legislation, inspired by the experience acquired with Union nature conservation policy, including NATURA 2000.
- (2) In its Conclusions of 19 December 2011 the Council encouraged the Commission and Member States to continue promoting a common approach to nature conservation in the whole Union territory, including Member States' outermost regions and overseas territories which are home to several important global biodiversity hotspots. It also welcomed, in this regard, the Commission's initiative BEST (Voluntary scheme for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services in Territories of the EU Outermost Regions and Overseas Countries and Territories).
- (3) The Commission in its Communication Our life insurance, our natural capital: an EU biodiversity strategy to 2020<sup>3</sup> committed to expand and promote the BEST

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<sup>1</sup> OJ L 248, 16.09.2002, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> OJ L 357, 31.12.2002, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> COM(2011) 244 final.

(Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services in Territories of European Overseas) initiative to promote biodiversity conservation and sustainable use.

- (4) This Decision should allow for the payment of interest due for late payment on the basis of Article 83 of Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002 and Article 106(5) of Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 2342/2002.
- (5) For the application of this Decision, it is appropriate to define the term 'substantial change' within the meaning of Article 90(4) of Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 2342/2002,

HAS DECIDED AS FOLLOWS:

#### *Article 1*

The 2012 work programme for the implementation of the Preparatory Action – BEST scheme (Voluntary scheme for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services in Territories of the EU Outermost Regions and Overseas Countries and Territories) (hereinafter 'work programme') as set out in the Annex, is adopted.

#### *Article 2*

The maximum contribution for the work programmes is set at EUR 2 000 000 and shall be financed from article 07 03 27 of the General Budget of the European Union for 2012. Those appropriations shall cover interest due for late payment.

#### *Article 3*

Cumulated changes to the allocations to the specific actions not exceeding 20 % of the maximum contribution set in Article 2 are not considered to be substantial within the meaning of Article 90(4) of Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 2342/2002, where those changes do not significantly affect the nature and objective of the work programme.

The authorising officer responsible may adopt such changes in accordance with the principles of sound financial management and of proportionality.

Done at Brussels, 21.2.2012

*For the Commission*  
*Janez Potočnik*  
*Member of the Commission*

## ANNEX

### **2012 WORK PROGRAMME FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PREPARATORY ACTION — BEST SCHEME (VOLUNTARY SCHEME FOR BIODIVERSITY AND ECOSYSTEM SERVICES IN TERRITORIES OF EU OUTERMOST REGIONS AND OVERSEAS COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES)**

#### **1. INTRODUCTION**

This work programme contains implementing measures for the second year of the preparatory action - BEST scheme (Voluntary scheme for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services in Territories of the EU Outermost Regions and Overseas Countries and Territories). In the first year (2011) an open call for proposals was launched: it attracted 42 proposals, out of which 8 proposals were shortlisted and 15 proposals, which complied with the selection and award criteria, were included on a reserve list.

##### **1.1. Legal basis:**

Preparatory Action within the meaning of Article 49(6) of Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002 of 25 June on the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the European Communities (OJ L 248, 16.9.2002, p. 1).

##### **1.2 Budget article: 07 03 27**

##### **1.3. General objectives of the preparatory action:**

According to the budgetary remarks, this preparatory action is intended to finance a programme to promote the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystem services in European overseas entities, drawing on the experience gained with Union nature conservation programmes such as NATURA 2000, from which most Union Outermost Regions and Overseas Countries and Territories are excluded. Found in every ocean, from polar to tropical latitudes, the Union Outermost Regions and Overseas Countries and Territories are home to a unique diversity of species and ecosystems of global significance, which are highly vulnerable to human impacts, invasive species and increasingly the impacts of climate change.

The objectives of the preparatory action are to provide further means to protect biodiversity and ecosystem services in the Union Outermost Regions and Overseas Countries and Territories. Specific objectives are:

- (a) promote the establishment and effective management of marine and terrestrial protected areas (PAs) in the Union Outermost Regions and Overseas Countries and Territories, also taking into account already existing PAs; this shall not imply the establishment of an overall plan and a roadmap supervised by the Member States;
- (b) implement sustainable management of marine and terrestrial resources, which contribute to protecting important species, habitats and ecosystem functions outside PAs;

- (c) strengthen conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystem services in the Union Outermost Regions and Overseas Countries and Territories by:
  - (i) addressing the wider ecosystem challenge of climate change by maintaining healthy, resilient ecosystems and fostering green infrastructure and ecosystem-based approaches to climate change adaptation and mitigation which often bring multiple benefits;
  - (ii) strengthening capacities at a local and regional scale, including the neighbouring countries, by promoting exchange of information and best practice amongst all stakeholders including local administration, landowners, private sector, researchers and civil societies;
  - (iii) strengthening existing nature conservation programmes and related efforts within and outside conservation areas;
  - (iv) broadening the knowledge base and filling the knowledge gaps, including quantifying the value of ecosystem functions and services;
- (d) encourage and facilitate transboundary working; addressing issues such as invasive alien species, the impacts of climate change and the implementation of international conventions in particular Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and United Framework Convention on Combating Desertification (UNCCD);
- (e) develop mechanisms to lever resources including ‘payments for ecosystem-services’ (PES).

#### **1.4. Specific priorities for 2012**

In 2012 projects will be launched to implement and showcase the preparatory action.

Projects may include the following:

- (a) nature conservation measures including designation and management of nature conservation sites;
- (b) measures which facilitate the cohabitation of biodiversity conservation and human activities;
- (c) measures which contribute to the sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystem services and maintain and develop social and sustainable economic activities which benefit local communities;
- (d) development and use of ecosystem-based approaches to climate change adaptation and mitigation and implementation of green infrastructure;
- (e) networking, education and capacity building activities.

The Preparatory Action will be implemented by way of grants for the total amount of appropriations in the 2012 Budget (EUR 2.000.000).

## **2. CALL FOR PROPOSALS**

Grants shall be covered by written agreements.

### **2.1 Expected results of actions to be supported**

The aim of the call for proposals is to identify and finance a number of projects to implement and showcase the preparatory action.

The actions shall contribute to the protection of natural and semi-natural habitats which are characteristic for the Union Outermost Regions and Overseas Countries and Territories and promote the sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystem services through practical examples including examples for ecosystem-based approaches to climate change adaptation and mitigation and green infrastructure providing multiple benefits. In addition the actions shall reinforce existing and encourage new partnerships.

### **2.2. Target beneficiaries**

The target beneficiaries are primarily public and private bodies in the Union Outermost Regions and Overseas Countries and Territories, site managers, research institutions, non governmental organisations and international organisations involved in biodiversity conservation and sustainable development actions including also actions for climate change adaptation and mitigation.

### **2.3. Eligibility criteria**

Applicants and their partners must be public or private bodies.

Applicants must be registered in a Member State or in a Union Outermost Region and Overseas Country and Territory or be an International organisation.

Partners from third countries are also eligible.

### **2.4. Selection criteria**

The selection criteria shall make possible to assess the applicant's ability to complete the proposed action:

- (a) Operational capacity of the applicant and partners: professional competencies, qualifications and requirements needed to implement the project;
- (b) Financial capacity: stable and sufficient sources of funding to maintain its activity throughout the period during which the proposal is being carried out and to participate in its funding.

### **2.5. Main award criteria**

The main award criteria are:

- (a) technical coherence: proposal should be clear, detailed, coherent, realistic and feasible in terms of actions and timetable;

- (b) financial coherence and quality of the proposed budget: consistency with the technical proposal, cost-efficiency and value for money;
- (c) contribution to the general objectives of the preparatory action: scope of the project, involvement of different stakeholders, expected results, methodology and proposed assessment mechanisms;
- (d) added value in terms of stimulation of best-practice, innovation, demonstration, potential for sustainability and potential for continuation after the end of the preparatory action;
- (e) geographical scope and potential outreach to Third Countries.

**2.6. Indicative timetable and maximum rate of co-financing**

Finance rate :	Max 95 % co-financing of the eligible costs
Timing of call for proposals :	
- publication date	First quarter of 2012
- closing date	Second quarter of 2012
- finalisation of grant agreements	Fourth quarter of 2012