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EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Brussels, 01/03/2011
C(2011) 1258 final

COMMISSION DECISION

of 01/03/2011

concerning the adoption of a financing decision for 2011 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) covered by budget line 07 03 27

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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 Communities¹ (hereinafter referred to as "Financial Regulation"), and in particular point (a) of Article 49(6) and Article 75 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 Communities² (hereinafter referred to as "Implementing Rules"), and in particular Article 90 thereof,

Whereas:

- (1) In accordance with Article 75 of the Financial Regulation and Article 90(1) of the Implementing Rules, the commitment of expenditure from the budget of the European Union shall be preceded by a financing decision setting out the essential elements of the action involving expenditure and adopted by the institution or the authorities to which powers have been delegated by the institution.
- (2) Under point (b) of Article 49(6) of the Financial Regulation, appropriations for preparatory actions in the fields of application of the EC Treaty designed to prepare proposals with a view to the adoption of future actions may be implemented without a basic act provided the actions which they are intended to finance fall within the powers of the European Union.
- (3) The budgetary authority has earmarked specific funding in the budget of the European Union for 2011, namely in budget line 07 03 27 for a Preparatory Action on a

¹ OJ L 248, 16.09.2002, p. 48.

² OJ L 357, 31.12.2002, p. 1.

Voluntary scheme for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services in Territories of the EU Outermost Regions and Overseas Countries and Territories.

- (4) The 2011 Work programme being a sufficiently detailed framework in the meaning of Article 90(2) and (3) of the Implementing Rules, this Decision constitutes a financing decision for the expenditure provided for in the work programme.
- (5) For the application of this Decision, it is appropriate to define the term 'substantial change' within the meaning of Article 90(4) of the Implementing Rules,

HAS DECIDED AS FOLLOWS:

Article 1

The annual work programme for the implementation of Preparatory Action on a 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 hereby adopted. It constitutes the financing decision in the meaning of Article 75 of the Financial Regulation.

Article 2

The maximum contribution authorised by this Decision for the implementation of the Work programme is set at EUR 2 000 000 to be financed from the budget line 07 03 27 – "Preparatory action — BEST scheme (Voluntary scheme for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services in Territories of the EU Outermost Regions and Overseas Countries and Territories)" of the General Budget of the European Union for 2011.

Article 3

Cumulated changes to the allocations to the specific actions not exceeding 20 % of the maximum contribution authorised by this Decision are not considered to be substantial provided that they 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,

For the Commission
Janez Potočnik
Member of the Commission

ANNEX

PREPARATORY ACTION — BEST (VOLUNTARY SCHEME FOR BIODIVERSITY AND ECOSYSTEM SERVICES IN TERRITORIES OF EU OUTERMOST REGIONS AND OVERSEAS COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES) (BUDGET ARTICLE 07 03 27)

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Budget line: 07 03 27

1.2. Budget amount: 2 000 000 EUR

1.3. Basic Act:

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), as last amended by Council Regulation (EC) No 1525/2007 of 17 December 2007 (OJ L 343, 27.12.2007, p.9).

1.4. General objectives of the preparatory action:

According to the budgetary remarks, this preparatory action is intended to finance a programme, encouraged by the Council³, to promote the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystem services in European overseas entities, drawing on the experience gained with EU nature conservation programmes such as NATURA 2000, from which most Outermost Regions and Overseas Countries and Territories are excluded. Found in every ocean, from polar to tropical latitudes, the EU 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 EU Outermost Regions and Overseas Countries and Territories. Specific objectives are :

- (1) promote the establishment and effective management of marine and terrestrial protected areas (PAs) in the EU Outermost Regions and Overseas Countries and Territories, also taking into account already existing PAs;⁴

³ The Council. *RECOGNISES the critical importance of biodiversity conservation in the EU's outermost regions and overseas territories; RECALLS the "Message from Reunion Island" and WELCOMES efforts to develop a voluntary scheme to promote conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystem services in European outermost regions and overseas entities which are not covered by EU nature legislation, inspired by the experience acquired with EU nature conservation policy, including NATURA 2000; Environment Council Conclusions of 25 June 2009.*

⁴ This shall not imply the establishment of an overall plan and a roadmap supervised by the Member States.

- (2) implement sustainable management of marine and terrestrial resources, which contribute to protecting important species, habitats and ecosystem functions outside PAs;
- (3) Strengthen conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystem services in the EU Outermost Regions and Overseas Countries and Territories by :
 - 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;
 - 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 etc... ;
 - strengthening existing nature conservation programmes and related efforts within and outside conservation areas;
 - broadening the knowledge base and filling the knowledge gaps, including quantifying the value of ecosystem functions and services;
- (4) 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 CITES⁵ and the three Rio Conventions⁶;
- (5) develop mechanisms to lever resources including ‘payments for ecosystem-services’ (PES).

1.5. Specific priorities for 2011

In 2011 projects will be launched to implement and showcase BEST and/or prepare the foundation of a governance structure for durable implementation of the BEST scheme beyond the lifetime of the preparatory action.

Projects may include

- nature conservation measures including designation and management of nature conservation sites;
- measures which facilitate the cohabitation of biodiversity conservation and human activities;
- 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;

⁵ Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species

⁶ Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and United Framework Convention on Combating Desertification (UNCCD)

- development and use of ecosystem-based approaches to climate change adaptation and mitigation and implementation of green infrastructure;

- networking, education and capacity building activities.

The Preparatory Action will be implemented by way of grants for the total amount of appropriations in the 2011 Budget (EUR 2.000.000).

2. CALL FOR PROPOSALS

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 showcase the BEST scheme and to provide the basis for a governance structure for a durable implementation of BEST beyond the lifetime of the preparatory action.

The actions shall contribute to the protection of natural and semi-natural habitats which are characteristic for the EU 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 EU 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, actors and institutions.

Applicants must be registered in an EU Member State or in an EU 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:

- Operational capacity of the applicant and partners: professional competencies, qualifications and requirements needed to implement the project;
- 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:

- technical coherence: proposal should be clear, detailed, coherent, realistic and feasible in terms of actions and timetable;
- financial coherence and quality of the proposed budget: consistency with the technical proposal, cost-efficiency and value for money;
- contribution to the general objectives of the preparatory action: scope of the project, involvement of different stakeholders, expected results, methodology and proposed assessment mechanisms;
- EU 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;
- 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	Second quarter of 2011
- closing date	Third quarter of 2011
- finalisation of grant agreements	Fourth quarter of 2011