

Disclaimer: The views expressed in the present document are purely those of the writer and may not in any circumstances be regarded as stating an official position of the European Commission

## **Final Evaluation of LIFE+ Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations**

December 14, 2012

This final evaluation of LIFE+ comes just over two years after the Mid Term Evaluation<sup>1</sup> and one year after the Proposal for a new LIFE programme.<sup>2</sup>

The following main conclusions match with those made in the Mid Term Evaluation and the Proposal for a new LIFE programme:

- LIFE+ has a unique (among EC programmes) focus on the environment. Its large scale, support for large ambitious projects and transnational focus also differentiate it from other EC and Member State programmes.
- Grants to support Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in the environmental policy arena fulfil a useful purpose in promoting and supporting policy debate.
- The administrative burden for participants is slightly higher than for other EC programmes. The participants generally find this acceptable but would like to see it reduce.
- The expenditure on public procurement is appropriate and responds to the needs of the policy cycle. There is some high profile communication and outreach supported, but it is hard to assess its strategic impact. Nevertheless it is delivered in line with quality criteria and strategic need.
- External monitoring is working well and beneficiaries as well as LIFE units are satisfied with the services provided by external monitors.
- There are some impressive results; summing up the project output indicators shows 194m hectares of land purchased, 49 600 actions expected, 95 267 training sessions planned, 6.1m people to be targeted by communications and 1.2m pupils and students to be engaged.

The following conclusions indicate positive changes to the programme made in line with the recommendations of the Mid Term Evaluation:

- The presence of EU added value has been given more weight in bid selection and is more extensively explained in the guidance. Though it is recognised that there is a need to continue reminding projects of this objective and encouraging applicants to look for more.
- The electronic application process, despite some teething problems, has reduced the administrative burden. There is potential to expand the use of electronic reporting in project monitoring.
- There has been an improvement to feedback to NGOs and some improvements on payment timing, though this is limited by EC procedures.
- External and inter-project communication within the programme (which is important to dissemination) has improved, e.g. better website and project database, platform meetings, themed brochures and conferences and clustering of projects.
- Some of the National Contact Points have made extra efforts to attract new applicants.

---

<sup>1</sup> Mid Term Evaluation of the Implementation of the LIFE+ Regulation. Final report in association with Arcadis and VITO, April 2010, available at [http://life.lifevideos.eu/environment/life/publications/lifepublications/evaluation/documents/LIFEplus\\_mte\\_report.pdf](http://life.lifevideos.eu/environment/life/publications/lifepublications/evaluation/documents/LIFEplus_mte_report.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> COM(2011) 874 final - Proposal for a REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL on the establishment of a Programme for the Environment and Climate Action (LIFE), 12.12.2011, [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/about/documents/COMM\\_PDF\\_COM\\_2011\\_0874\\_F\\_EN.pdf?reference=IP/11/1526&format=PDF&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/about/documents/COMM_PDF_COM_2011_0874_F_EN.pdf?reference=IP/11/1526&format=PDF&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en)

The following conclusions relate to issues, some of which were identified in the Mid Term Evaluation, which remain in place:

- National Contact Points feel that LIFE+ could do more to match national issues. Most participants (92%) see a clear synergy with Member States priorities in their projects but only 50% get national match funding.
- Beneficiaries indicated the programme would benefit from more engagement of National Contact Points, as their involvement seems variable.
- Project results could still be better integrated into policy making, though the links in nature and biodiversity are already strong.
- More could be made of output indicators, through the application of a limit on numbers of indicators, some compulsory indicators and simple explanations to projects on what they are for.
- NGOs would like to be able to fund their member organisations, but it is recognised that possibilities for such a support are limited by general EU financial rules.
- Ideally NGOs should be supported across all areas of environmental policy and efforts to ensure broad coverage should be continued.
- Beneficiaries want more support and less administration. However, this is hard to do with fixed Commission resources. Therefore retention of the current continual refinement to the process is the best practical recommendation.
- Projects per desk officer have increased, this has resulted in a lack of Directorate General Environment staff resource to disseminate LIFE+ results and review ex post reports for lessons.
- Beneficiaries would like to see more synergies and coherence with national, regional and local programmes to access co-financing from other sources and foster regional cooperation.

Many of these issues listed above remain in place because addressing them requires structural change to the programme, which was inappropriate or not possible at this late stage in its existence. Some of the key changes are included in the proposal for a new LIFE programme or are proposed in the evaluation:

- National allocations, though supported by some Member States, are not having a major impact on allocation and are conceptually unpopular.
- Integrated projects are seen as positive as they will improve regional cooperation and matching of projects with national needs, improve geographical balance and enhance EU added value.
- If capacity building is an objective of the NGO support, the programme should consider changes, for example in trialling specific standards for small/new NGOs.
- If the operation of the new LIFE programme (2014-2020) is outsourced to an agency, it will be important to retain / capture experience of existing monitors and strategic input and experience of LIFE unit staff in order to keep a sufficient level of integration/co-ordination between the Agency and the Directorate General Environment, i.e. between the LIFE programme and the policy
- Ex post project visits to approximately 10% of completed projects are done but the reports should be better promoted and have greater strategic use made of them, though the Directorate General Environment resource to do this is lacking.

From the evidence collected, there have not been any major changes to the nature of the programme, or the quality of its outputs, in the last two to three years. However there is evidence of the continual improvements in the programme that have been noted in previous evaluations.

Rob Williams

Senior Consultant

Tel.: 44 (0)7950 229 107 – 44 (0) 1938555675

Email: [rob.williams@tripleconsulting.com](mailto:rob.williams@tripleconsulting.com)

Skype: triple.e.rob

[www.tripleconsulting.com](http://www.tripleconsulting.com)