EU Outermost Regions (ORs) and Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs) are home to exceptional and unique biodiversity. The 34 political entities include more than 150 islands and one Outermost Region in South America: French Guiana. Together, they cover a total land area equivalent to the EU area, and a marine territory which is the largest of the world. In 2008, representatives of ORs, OCTs, EU Member States, the European Parliament and the European Commission came together for the Conference «The European Union and its Overseas Entities: Strategies to counter Climate Change and Biodiversity Loss». The Conference led to the «Message from Reunion Island» which – inter alia – called for EU Member States and the European Commission, together with the ORs and OCTs, to establish a voluntary scheme for the protection of species and habitats.
A European initiative to foster action in 7 regions of global importance

**Caribbean region**
- Coral reef conservation and restoration
- Marine/terrestrial protected area creation and management
- Invasive species control and management (lion fish, terrestrial vertebrates)
- Ecosystem services quantification: agroecosystems, MPAs
- Native and endemic species conservation: reptiles, bats and plants
- Watershed and key biodiversity area (KBA) conservation
- Financing mechanism for coral reef monitoring

**Polar/Sub-Polar**
- Seabird conservation
- Community biodiversity monitoring
- Sustainable fishing

**Macaronesia**
- Ecosystem services of seagrass

**Indian Ocean**
- Island dynamics following rat eradication
- Terrestrial and marine reptile species conservation
- Environmental education
- Fisheries by-catch mitigation
- Forest protection
- Seagrass conservation

**South Atlantic**
- Forest restoration & biosecurity
- Educational nature trails and Gumwood restoration
- Marine spatial planning
- Climate change risk assessment
- Offshore pelagic ecological assessments

**Amazonia**
- Species monitoring

**Indian Ocean**
- Legend
- EU Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs)
- EU Outermost Regions (ORs)
- African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) group of states and island states of the same regions
- Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of the EU

**Macaronesia**
- Community biodiversity monitoring
- Sustainable fishing

**South Atlantic**
- British Antarctic Territory (BAT)

http://ec.europa.eu/best/
Global

Global partnerships
Multilateral agreements
Developing Regional Ecosystem Profiles and Investment Strategies

Polar/Sub-Polar

Identifying Important Marine Areas
Climate change impact monitoring
Whale and krill research

Legend

EU Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs)
EU Outermost Regions (ORs)
African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) group of states and island states of the same regions
Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of the EU

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List of BEST projects (2011-2016)

**European and Global (3 projects)**
- Building partnerships and awareness of biodiversity and climate change in Europe overseas for the future of BEST
- Piloting the development and implementation of national-level joint activities between the Rio Conventions in support of ecosystem-based approaches to climate change mitigation and adaptation
- BEST III: Measures towards Sustaining the BEST Preparatory Action to promote the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services in the EU Outermost Regions and Overseas Countries and Territories

**Amazonia (1 project)**
- SOPPAG - White-lipped peccaries monitoring from the Parc amazonien de Guyane – national park of French Guiana / SOPPAG - Suivie opérationnelle des Pécaris à lèvres blanche du Parc Amazonien de Guyane

**South Atlantic (6 projects)**
- TEFRÁ - Terrestrial ecosystems of the Falklands – a climate change risk assessment
- Forest restoration and improved biosecurity on Nightingale Island
- Trails and interpretation improvements in the Peaks National Park, St Helena
- Restoration of Peak Dale’s St Helena gumwood forest
- Developing a site-based conservation approach for sei whales (*Balaenoptera borealis*) at Berkeley Sound, Falkland Islands
- An ecological assessment of Ascension Island’s shallow-water seamounts as candidate MPAs

**Caribbean (20 projects)**
- EcoServPlantain - Quantification of Ecosystem Services in Agroecosystems, case of Plantain banana in Martinique / EcoServPlantain - Quantification des services écosystémiques associées aux agroécosystèmes - Cas des systèmes à base de bananes plantains en Martinique
- MANG - Giving impetus to a collective movement in favour of the preservation of coastal wetlands in EU overseas territories.
- Consering Species and Sites of International Importance by the Eradication of Invasive Alien Species (IAS) in the Caribbean UK Overseas Territories
- CARIPES - Quantification of ecosystem services provided by marine protected areas (MPAs) in the Caribbean with a view to their payment
- RESCOQ - Restoration of Ecosystem Services and Coral Reef Quality
- Securing pockets of paradise in the Caribbean; embedding capacity for invasive alien species management in UKOT based organisations
- Marine Park Aruba
- Saving the sea turtles of Anguilla: combining community action with scientific evidence to drive legislative change
- Scaling-up efforts to rehabilitate threatened coral communities using recruits reared from wild-caught gametes
- Enacting a new regional recovery plan for the Lesser Antillean iguana: an endangered ecological keystone species
- Capacity building and increased financing for long term monitoring programmes for coral reefs in the Turks and Caicos Islands
- North Saba National Park Phase 1
- Understanding the East Caicos KBA’s corals and coast: A key to safeguarding TCI’s future
- Watershed & biodiversity conservation on Bonaire
- Best of Bats!
- A nursery for endemics and key native species
- Management of invasive lionfish hotspots: conservation of biodiversity on mesophotic coral ecosystems in Bermuda
- Improving the management of the invasive lionfish, *Pterois volitans*, by determining movement patterns and depth preference
- Restoration of Key Biodiversity Areas of St. Maarten
- Combining local ecological knowledge and ciguatera analysis to rule lionfish toxicity and edibility and catalyse infestation control
Macaronesia (1 project)
- Changes in submersed vegetation: assessing loss in ecosystems services from fondose to depauperate systems dominated by opportunistic vegetation

Indian Ocean (7 projects)
- Coca Loca - Connectivity of Loggerhead turtle (Caretta caretta) in Western Indian Ocean: Implementation of local and regional management.
- MIROMEN - Migration Routes of Megaptera Novaeangliae (Humpback Whales).
- Creation of new protected areas in the public forests of La Réunion and Mayotte / Création de nouvelles aires protégées dans les forêts publiques à la Réunion et à Mayotte
- DyCIT - The Dynamic and Conservation of the Island of Tromelin / DyCIT - Dynamique et Conservation de l’île Tromelin
- REPT’ILE - Terrestrial Reptiles of the Scattered Islands / REPT’ILE - REPTiles Terrestres des Iles Éparses
- BIOT Environmental interpretation and education project
- COPRA - Conservation and integrated management of phanerogam seagrass meadows in the Glorieuses Marine Nature Park and their functional role for marine turtle populations / COPRA - Conservation et gestion intégrée des herbiers de phanérogames marines du parc naturel marin des Glorieuses et rôle fonctionnel pour les populations de tortues marines

Polar - North (3 projects)
- PISUNA - Protecting biodiversity and creating multiple benefits for local communities in Greenland.
- Determining the feeding areas used by the community of seabirds breeding on the island of Grand Colombier / Détermination des zones d’alimentation utilisées par la communauté d’oiseaux marins se reproduisant sur l’île du Grand Colombier, Archipel de Saint Pierre & Miquelon
- Sustainable fishing in the Arctic; Can the harvest of Greenland’s biggest export be compatible with the conservation of benthic ecosystems?

Polar - South (2 projects)
- Identifying important marine areas for macaroni penguins (Eudyptes chrysolophus) in the UK and French Overseas Territories
- Where are they right now? Right whales in the South Georgia marine ecosystem

Pacific (19 projects)
- Green-NC - Comprehensive management strategies for environment and natural areas: biodiversity and ecosystem services in New Caledonia / - Gestion raisonnée de l’environnement et des espaces naturels : biodiversité et services écosystémiques de Nouvelle-Calédonie
- Protection and sustainable management of French Polynesia landbirds threatened by extinction / Protection et gestion durable des oiseaux terrestres de Polynésie française menacés d’extinction et de leurs habitats
- CORAIL - Coral reefs in a changing world - ecosystemic services from coral reefs : public tools for decision making in New Caledonia and French Polynesia
- PACIOCEA - Pacific Ocean Ecosystem Analysis
- Pacific Biodiversity Blue Belt
- BIOPELAGOS - Biodiversity of oceanic pelagic ecosystems for a better conservation and management of outstanding natural areas
- Protect and restore the dry forest of the coast of New Caledonia / Protéger et restaurer la forêt sèche du littoral de Nouvelle-Calédonie
- Safeguarding the two most threatened bird species in French Polynesia from extinction / Sauver de l’extinction les deux oiseaux les plus menacés de Polynésie française
- Tukemaragai - Ecological restoration of the small islands of the South-East of Gambier / Tukemaragai - restauration écologique des petites îles du Sud-Est des Gambier
- Conserving the remaining natural forests of Punarua Valley on Tahiti / Conservation des vestiges de forêts naturelles du plateau de Maraëti’a, vallée de la Punarua, Tahiti
- Sustainable management of Wallis and Futuna’s forests / Gestion durable des forêts de Wallis et Futuna
- Conservation of the critically endangered Niau Kingfisher by the local community / Conservation du Martin-chasseur de Niau, en danger critique d’extinction, par la communauté locale
- Innovative and sustainable water management: optimizing agricultural irrigation / Gestion innovante et durable de l’eau : optimisation du fonctionnement des périmètres irrigués agricoles (Aqualone)
- Biodiversity and sustainable management of the marine and coastal environment and related resources in the context of climate change in Wallis and Futuna / Biodiversité et gestion durable de l’environnement marin et côtier et des ressources associées dans le contexte du changement climatique à Wallis et Futuna
- Strengthening the local capacity to protect the terrestrial natural heritage of Rimatara / Renforcement des capacités locales pour la protection du patrimoine naturel terrestre de Rimatara
- Hei Moana, Ocean Sentinels / Hei Moana, les Sentinelles de L’Océan
- Strengthening conservation measures and tools for threatened conifers and palms of the rainforests and scrubland of New Caledonia / Renforcement des mesures et outils de conservation des palmiers et conifères menacés des forêts humides et des maquis de Nouvelle-Calédonie
- Saving the endangered flora of the raised Anaa atoll and the definition of priority areas for conservation based on the flora and fauna / Sauvegarde de la flore menacée de l’atoll soulevé de Anaa et définition de zones prioritaires de conservation basées sur la flore et la faune
- Strengthening the drinking water supply system of the commune of Houailou by maintaining the ecosystem services of the upstream water catchment / Renforcement du réseau d’adduction d’eau potable (AEP) de la commune de Houailou par le maintien des services éco-systémiques en amont des captages d’eau
Since 2010, the growing involvement of the European Union’s (EU) Outermost Regions and Overseas Countries and Territories in the work of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) has arguably been one of the most exciting contributions to the Convention’s programme of work on island biodiversity. The EU’s many overseas islands, spread out over seven biodiversity hotspots and wilderness areas, cover an area (mostly marine and coastal) equivalent in size, but with more endemic animal and plant species, to continental Europe. Additionally, the EU has island Parties (e.g. Malta) and Parties with islands (e.g. Greece, Italy) around the Atlantic and the Mediterranean, increasing the importance of islands for the EU and its partners in the CBD.

New and more sustainable approaches to agriculture, forestry, bioprospecting and fisheries management are being studied on these biodiverse islands as contributions to sustainable use of biodiversity. These new approaches may prove beneficial for neighbouring islands and hold valuable lessons for the continental territories of EU member states. The combined exclusive economic zone of the overseas areas of EU member countries, including non-islands, covers over 15 million km². It includes significant fishing stocks as well as extensive coral reefs of global importance. It is also important to note that the biodiversity on these islands is often more threatened and less visible than the biodiversity found in continental Europe.

This is why I warmly welcome the EU’s “Voluntary Scheme for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services in Territories of European Overseas” (BEST) framework initiative. The BEST initiative, submitted by an island champion, European Parliamentarian Maurice Ponga of New Caledonia and subsequently adopted by the Parliament, was announced in 2010 at the Island Summit parallel to the eleventh Conference of the Parties (COP 11) and seeks to promote the conservation of biodiversity and sustainable use of ecosystem services including ecosystem-based approaches to climate change adaptation and mitigation in the EU’s Overseas Regions and Outermost Countries and Territories. The Secretariat of the CBD, together with IUCN and the EU as a Party to the Convention, coordinated a BEST project to help build the capacity of New Caledonia and Bermuda to identify and capitalize on opportunities to enhance links through knowledge exchange on such issues as vulnerability, ecosystem based approaches to adaptation to climate change and invasive alien species. And IUCN’s Europe Overseas programme has been playing a catalytic role, advocating for the definition of BEST as a dedicated mechanism at the EU level, and working in close collaboration with European stakeholders, major groups, and the Global Islands Partnership (GLISPA).

One of the strategic opportunities under BEST is to enhance regional outreach and cooperation for the EU’s overseas islands. These islands can review or develop Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans and measurable goals associated with the Aichi Biodiversity Targets in coordination with regional “island challenges” and initiatives. To that end, EU islands such as Réunion, the British Virgin Islands, New Caledonia, Aruba and Guadeloupe are cooperating with the Oceania 21 initiative and with other islands in implementing the CBD at the national level.

I welcome the efforts of the European Commission to sustain the BEST Initiative and I congratulate the Government of France and IUCN for the continuation of the IUCN EU Outermost Regions and Overseas Countries and Territories programme. I look forward to continuing the advisory role the Secretariat and GLISPA have been playing to ensure contributions to COP 12 and beyond.

Braulio Ferreira de Souza Dias
Executive Secretary, Convention on Biological Diversity
My background as an evolutionary biologist has given me a natural attraction for islands. Islands provide exceptional examples of evolution and biodiversity - indeed islands were key to allow Darwin to shape his evolutionary theory. Furthermore, Islands are microcosmoses, which make them prone to serve as true ‘laboratories’ in the quest for sustainable development.

Most of the EU Outermost Regions (ORs) and Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs) are islands. I feel a genuine interest in these places, which host an exceptionally rich biodiversity and which are at the same time most vulnerable to climate change and other environmental challenges. Looking at the world-map, the wide geographical spread of the EU ORs and OCTs has frequently struck me as an opportunity to showcase the huge European opportunity in terms of regional cooperation in seven globally important regions of the world and thus to contribute to the advancement of sustainable development and resilience.

The BEST initiative has helped to raise awareness on the ecological importance of ORs and OCTs for conserving global biodiversity, but such awareness still needs to be increased further in the EU. The Mid-term Review of the EU Biodiversity Strategy showed that although progress has been made, efforts need to be considerably stepped up in order to achieve its targets. Such efforts should focus on maintaining and restoring healthy ecosystems, including where biodiversity is richest, such as in the ORs and OCTs. BEST has helped to show that investing in biodiversity is one of the most cost-effective ways to mitigate climate change and to adapt to its impacts, while also contributing to achieve wider sustainability goals and objectives.

At the same time, fighting climate change and addressing its effects is fundamental to ensuring proper ecosystem functioning and services, human health and socio-economic security. Ecosystem-based approaches have consistently emerged as a key instrument to confront these concerns across sectors of business and society, offering multiple benefits in a potentially cost-effective manner. Hence it is timely and useful that one of the objectives of BEST is to promote ecosystem based approaches to climate change adaptation and mitigation.

With this vision in mind, I wish the BEST initiative - which in the past years has proven to be a strong initiative inspired by a true vision - a continued success, with perseverance, creativity and inspiration. We are committed to promote and facilitate the transition towards a sustainable partnership dedicated to mobilise resources to protect the unique ecosystems and societies in the EU Outermost Regions and Overseas Countries and Territories.

Humberto Delgado Rosa
Director for Natural Capital, DG Environment, European Commission

Foreword was originally a contribution to BEST Newsletter 3.
All BEST newsletters are available as pdf and e-book on the BEST website:
http://ec.europa.eu/best/
Piloting the development and implementation of national-level joint activities between the Rio Conventions in support of ecosystem-based approaches to climate change mitigation and adaptation

The project built the capacity of pilot countries to identify and capitalize on opportunities to enhance links between three interconnected environmental issues (biodiversity, climate change and land degradation) and related processes. It helped identify actions needed to implement three Rio conventions – the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) – in an integrated manner fostering synergies through the development and use of ecosystem-based approaches to climate change adaptation and mitigation.
Building partnerships and awareness of biodiversity and climate change in Europe overseas for the future of BEST

This “facilitating project” contributed to improving biodiversity conservation and climate change adaptation in Europe overseas through strengthening strategic partnerships, elaborating on governance and financial mechanisms, mobilising support for action using targeted communication and awareness raising events at the EU and international levels. It successfully leveraged support for the BEST Initiative and increased the visibility and consideration of Europe’s overseas’ biodiversity and climate change at the EU, European overseas and international level. The project was implemented in collaboration with stakeholders and actors including the Overseas Countries and Territories of the European Union Association (OCTA), European Parliament and European Commission services.

BEST III: Measures towards Sustaining the BEST Preparatory Action to promote the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services in the EU Outermost Regions and Overseas Countries and Territories

As the last round of the BEST preparatory action, BEST III has established a BEST platform by setting up BEST working teams with a central team and 7 regional knowledge hubs, building the BEST website and other communication and outreach material and organising regular meetings with partners, potential donors and other stakeholders to exchange and facilitate the establishment of a sustainable funding mechanism for the EU Overseas as one of the key objectives. In a participatory and science-based approach and coordinated by the knowledge hubs at the regional level, regional ecosystem profiles and investment strategies are developed in consultation with regional and local actors as a tool to guide long-term conservation efforts and investments.
Amazonia

French Guiana comprises an important component of the Guiana Shield, a region considered as one of the world’s last wilderness areas. It is covered by the largest expanse of undisturbed tropical rainforest, of which 80% is in pristine condition and home to one of the highest biodiversity rates on Earth.

As the only European tropical forest of significant size, it harbours more tree species in 1 ha than all continental Europe forests combined. The socio-economic value of many ecosystem services of global importance is yet to be quantified.

However, this treasure is threatened by human activities: Illegal gold mining is one of the main pressures on French Guiana biodiversity as well as massive deforestation and illegal, unregulated fishing in its freshwater and marine ecosystems. To ensure long-term benefits for all measures for sustainable resource management need to be developed not only within currently existing protected areas, such as the Guiana Amazonian Park (Parc Amazonien de Guyane).
SOPPAG - White-lipped peccaries monitoring from the Parc amazonien de Guyane – national park of French Guiana / SOPPAG - Suivie opérationnelle des Pécaris à lèvres blanche du Parc Amazonien de Guyane

French Guiana
Monitoring distribution and movements of white-lipped peccaries to better understand a species that is of biological importance to the Amazonian forest ecosystem and constitutes a main source of food for the local populations. In addition to raising awareness in the population recommendations for better management practices are provided.
Located in the South Atlantic Ocean, the 4 island groups of Ascension Island, St Helena, Tristan da Cunha and the Falkland Islands differ immensely in climate, fauna and flora but all show a high number of endemic species due to their remoteness.

The smallest of the territories in equatorial waters, Ascension Island, is unusual for having a high-abundance but low-diversity, sub-tropical biodiversity. St Helena has a diverse landscape with seven ecological zones which are determined by elevation and rainfall, ranging from semi-desert in low lying areas to a small ‘cloud forest’ at the highest peaks. The Tristan da Cunha archipelago encompasses four main islands, only one of which is inhabited. It has a mild but wet climate with a mixture of grassland, woodland and bracken communities and is a globally important site for breeding seabirds. The Falkland Islands provide breeding ground to 70% of the world’s Black-browed Albatross (Thalassarche melanophrys) and a third of the global Southern Rockhopper Penguin (Eudyptes chrysocome) population. The flora of the islands consists of 163 native vascular plants, yet no native trees, and a highly diverse range of lichen and moss species.

All four territories are sparsely populated, with all 10,000 islanders closely connected to their natural environment. Despite many proactive, locally-led conservation initiatives the biodiversity and ecosystems in the region face many threats common to islands, such as invasive alien species, along with habitat degradation and the impacts of climate change.

Main themes of BEST projects:
- Forest restoration & biosecurity
- Educational nature trails and Gumwood restoration
- Marine spatial planning
- Climate change risk assessment
- Offshore pelagic ecological assessments

 Territories

- Ascension Island
- St Helena
- Tristan da Cunha
- Falkland Islands (Malvinas)
TEFRA - Terrestrial ecosystems of the Falklands – a climate change risk assessment
Falkland Islands
Providing the Falkland Islands Government with the tools and knowledge to effectively conserve native plants, the habitats they form and the services they provide in the face of a changing climate.

Forest restoration and improved biosecurity on Nightingale Island
Tristan da Cunha
Securing the future of the Wilkins’ bunting through the restoration of its Phylica woodland habitat on Nightingale Island and developing a biosecurity protocol to prevent the spread of invasive species to the island.

Trails and interpretation improvements in the Peaks National Park, St Helena
St Helena
Upgrading the trails in the Peaks National Park and installing educational signs for visitors. The trails will ensure safe access to the park while minimizing disturbance to the fragile cloud forest ecosystem.

Restoration of Peak Dale’s St Helena gumwood forest
St Helena
Halting the decline of the last remnant of gumwood forest on Saint Helena through the development of a best practice technique for gumwood forest restoration and the development of local capacity in restoration.

Developing a site-based conservation approach for Sei whales (Balaenoptera borealis) at Berkeley Sound, Falkland Islands
Falkland Islands
Undertaking surveys of Sei whales in Berkley Sound to assess the potential impact of increased commercial marine activity at an already busy shipping harbour and advise decision-makers on marine spatial planning measures.

An ecological assessment of Ascension Island’s shallow-water seamounts as candidate MPAs
Ascension Island
Undertaking the first detailed ecological studies of Ascension Island’s three shallow-water seamounts. The results will feed into a major marine spatial planning exercise currently being led by AIGCFD, and inform the need for their inclusion in a large-scale pelagic Marine Protected Area (MPA) that is planned for the Territory.

South Atlantic
The Caribbean region includes 16 European Outermost Regions (ORs) and Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs) - almost half of all 34 European overseas entities!

These islands are part of the Caribbean Biodiversity Hotspot and host an extremely rich terrestrial, aquatic and marine biodiversity with particularly high numbers of endemic species thanks to their insularity. The diversity of habitats in the region is high, including dry forests and scrublands, tropical rainforests, rivers, coral reefs, seagrass beds and mangrove forests. The islands’ population, ranging from 50 to just over 1000 inhabitants/km², depends largely on healthy ecosystems for their services.

However, today numerous anthropogenic factors impact the Caribbean islands’ biodiversity and ecosystem resilience, such as invasive species, destruction or fragmentation of habitats, unregulated development and pollution.

Main themes of BEST projects:
- Coral reef conservation and restoration
- Marine/terrestrial protected area creation and management
- Invasive species control and management (lion fish, terrestrial vertebrates)
- Ecosystem services quantification: agroecosystems, MPAs
- Native and endemic species conservation: reptiles, bats and plants
- Watershed and key biodiversity area (KBA) conservation
- Financing mechanism for coral reef monitoring
EcoServPlantain - Quantification of Ecosystem Services in Agroecosystems, case of Plantain banana in Martinique

Measuring the ecosystem services of plantain field systems especially in terms of conservation of arthropods and plant diversity, of regulation of pests, and of production, with a view of guiding the development of sustainable agricultural practices in tropical agroecosystems.

MANG - Giving impetus to a collective movement in favour of the preservation of coastal wetlands in EU overseas territories

Trans-regional: Caribbean, Amazonia and Indian Ocean

Establishing and promoting a method to assess the value of coastal wetlands, as well as management measures that are supported by public and private stakeholders.

Conserving Species and Sites of International Importance by the Eradication of Invasive Alien Species (IAS) in the Caribbean UK Overseas Territories

UK Overseas Territories

Addressing the threat and demonstrating best practice for the prevention, control or eradication of IAS - notably black rats and feral livestock - to protect threatened seabirds, iguanas and land-bird species and their habitat.

RESCQ - Restoration of Ecosystem Services and Coral Reef Quality

Regional: Sint Maarten, Saint Eustatius, Saba, Turks and Caicos

Restoring Elkhorn (Acropora palmata) and Staghorn (Acropora cervicornis) coral reef zones by establishing coral nurseries on Sint Maarten, Saint Eustatius, Saba, Turks and Caicos and transplanting coral fragments at selected restoration sites.

Securing pockets of paradise in the Caribbean; embedding capacity for invasive alien species management in UKOT based organisations

Regional: British Virgin Islands; Cayman Islands; Montserrat; Turks and Caicos Islands

Addressing invasive alien species (IAS) through capacity building, implementing targeted public awareness campaigns to raise awareness of the problem of IAS, promoting regional cooperation and developing national protocols for British Virgin Islands and Montserrat.

Marine Park Aruba

Aruba

Establishing a multi-use marine park for Aruba by enacting the necessary legislation for its creation and putting in place the structures for its long-term management, including a management organisation and a management plan.

CARIPES - Quantification of ecosystem services provided by marine protected areas (MPAs) in the Caribbean with a view to their payment

Regional

Assessing the value of ecosystem services provided by selected MPAs to increase fishermen’ support to MPAs by actively involving them in conservation efforts, sustainable use of the marine resources and developing a system of payment for ecosystem services.
Saving the sea turtles of Anguilla: combining community action with scientific evidence to drive legislative change

**Anguilla**

Improving the available scientific knowledge, educating relevant local staff and the general public, and engaging stakeholders and decision-makers in policy development and implementation for the conservation of sea turtles.

Scaling-up efforts to rehabilitate threatened coral communities using recruits reared from wild-caught gametes

**Curacao**

Developing a tile that can be seeded with coral recruits and quickly and cheaply reintroduced to degraded reefs. The tile designs will be tested in a field setting with various coral species and under different environmental conditions.

Enacting a new regional recovery plan for the Lesser Antillean iguana: an Endangered ecological keystone species

**Anguilla, St. Barthélemy, St. Eustatius**

Supporting the conservation of the Lesser Antillean iguana by creating a sub-regional framework for species recovery & conservation; improving regional population data for the species; reintroducing the species to a site in Anguilla; implementing standardised bio-security; and increasing national and sub-regional awareness and support systems.

Capacity building and increased financing for long term monitoring programmes for coral reefs in the Turks and Caicos Islands

**Turks and Caicos islands**

Strengthening the capacity of the Department of Environment and Coastal Resources to manage the territory’s coral reefs using sound scientific findings to guide decision-making and investments in natural resources management.

North Saba National Park Phase 1

**Saba**

Preparing legislation to establish the northern part of the island as a national park and appointing Saba Conservation Foundation as the managing organization. Draft legislation for species protection, a draft management agreement and a management plan will be developed.

Improving the management of the invasive lionfish, *Pterois volitans*, by determining movement patterns and depth preference

**Cayman islands**

Improving the understanding of movement patterns of lionfish to inform its management and improve the effectiveness of site selection for targeted removal efforts. A principal output from this project will be the creation of a publicly accessible database and map of the lionfish populations in Little Cayman.

Understanding the East Caicos KBA’s corals and coast: A key to safeguarding TCI’s future

**Turks and Caicos islands**

Improving the long-term conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystem services within East Caicos’ coral reef ecosystems through the development of conservation zones and management and monitoring protocols.

British Virgin Islands © Stewart McPherson
Watershed & biodiversity conservation on Bonaire

Protecting and restoring a threatened dry forest habitat by establishing an extensive protected area around a site called Rooi Sangu, which exhibits high biodiversity. A series of trails will be established to make the area accessible to the public and panels will raise awareness of the value of the area.

Best of Bats!

Aruba, Curacao and Sint Maarten

Contributing to the improved conservation status of bats on Aruba, Curacao and Sint Maarten, by increasing the amount of roosting and nesting sites on the islands. An integral part of the project is the implementation of an education and outreach programme aimed at schools and the general population of the islands.

A nursery for endemics and key native species

Montserrat

Establishing the infrastructure for a nursery to propagate plants of special ecological value in Montserrat, including a number of endangered species. Species found to be effective for dry forest restoration will be propagated and replanted in an effort to restore patches of this ecosystem that are at high risk of being destroyed.

Management of invasive lionfish hotspots: conservation of biodiversity on mesophotic coral ecosystems in Bermuda

Bermuda

This project aims to demonstrate that targeted removal of invasive lionfish will reduce the pressure on local fish populations, resulting in the preservation of localised reef fish diversity. In addition, it will promote the creation of a sustainable lionfish fishery through provision of lionfish to local restaurants followed by surveys to determine market demand.

Restoration of Key Biodiversity Areas of St. Maarten

Sint Maarten

Restoring coastal and terrestrial biodiversity by planting native tree species at ecologically degraded sites - two terrestrial and one coastal wetland - on St. Maarten. A citizen-science initiative will integrate student volunteers who will learn valuable skills and knowledge regarding botany, restoration ecology and conservation issues.

Combining local ecological knowledge and ciguatera analysis to rule lionfish toxicity and edibility and catalyse infestation control

St Barthélemy

Using local ecological knowledge to select a sample of individual lionfish, the project will undertake chemical toxicity analysis to determine their edibility. The results will inform a lionfish control strategy for Saint-Barthélemy.
The region of Macaronesia comprises three volcanic archipelagos in the Atlantic Ocean: the Portuguese autonomous regions of the Azores (9 islands) and Madeira (2 islands), and the Spanish autonomous community of the Canary Islands (7 main islands).

Compared to other European Overseas regions Macaronesia has a relatively high population density with the Canary Islands being the most populated. The region’s economy is strongly specialized in the services sector, where tourism has a prominent role, particularly in Madeira and the Canary Islands. In the Azores, agriculture and fisheries remain relevant income sources.

However, economic development also puts pressure on biodiversity and ecosystems. Despite an extensive network of local protected areas and Natura 2000 sites, Macaronesia’s biodiversity is threatened by habitat destruction and invasive alien species.
Changes in submersed vegetation: assessing loss in ecosystems services from fondose to depauperate systems dominated by opportunistic vegetation

Trans-regional: Azores, Canary Islands, Guadeloupe

Comparing the value of ecosystem services from seagrasses and large algae with these from opportunistic vegetation in Canaries, Azores and Guadeloupe to help guide conservation and restoration of these ecosystems, currently declining worldwide.
The Indian Ocean is home to geologically and biologically extremely diverse islands belonging to four European Overseas entities: the two French overseas departments, Mayotte and Réunion Island, the French Îles Éparses (Scattered Islands) and the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT).

The steep volcanic terrain of Réunion Island hosts a rich altitudinal plant biodiversity that is relatively well preserved compared to neighbouring islands. Mayotte has a remarkable diversity of twenty two known marine mammals and one of the world’s most dense tropical island floras. The ecosystems of the uninhabited and remote islands Îles Éparses and BIOT are in near pristine condition and a good representation of what healthy ecosystems may look like when little impacted by human activities. Dispersed around Madagascar, the Îles Éparses (Glorioso, Juan de Novo, Europa, Tromelin and Bassas da India), host a variety of ecosystems from one island to another. The islands’ large fringing reefs are home to a great variety of coral species and form stepping stones of biodiversity, particularly between Madagascar and the east African coast.

Main threats to the biodiversity in the Indian Ocean region include invasive species, climate change impacts, illegal and legal fishing, pollution and soil erosion.
Coca Loca - Connectivity of Loggerhead turtle (*Caretta caretta*) in Western Indian Ocean: Implementation of local and regional management

**Regional: Western Indian Ocean**

Studying the oceanic movements of turtles and establishing regional cooperation to implement best practices in the management of the species and fisheries.

MIROMEN - Migration Routes of *Megaptera Novaeangliae* (Humpback Whales)

**Regional: Indian Ocean waters**

Studying the migration routes of Humpback whales to reinforce conservation measures and to trigger the implementation of new management plans for this species at a local and regional level.

Creation of new protected areas in the public forests of La Réunion and Mayotte / Création de nouvelles aires protégées dans les forêts publiques à la Réunion et à Mayotte

**Réunion, Mayotte**

Developing a strategy for the creation of protected areas in La Réunion, where three new biological reserves were created in the public forests, and setting up a regional coordination with Mayotte focusing on the creation of protected areas in the public forests of Mayotte.

DyCIT - The Dynamic and Conservation of the Island of Tromelin / DyCIT - Dynamique et Conservation de l’île Tromelin

**Scattered Islands**

Assessing the dynamics of the small tropical island of Tromelin following the eradication of rats, including a study on the introduced mouse population to understand its impact and the possibilities for future eradication.

REPT’ILE - Terrestrial Reptiles of the Scattered Islands / REPT’ILE – Reptiles Terrestres des Îles Éparses

**Scattered Islands**

Improving knowledge of the population size, distribution and taxonomy as well as conservation status of terrestrial reptiles on the Glorioso Islands and providing a baseline of the still little known fauna of reptiles and amphibians (herpetofauna).

BIOT Environmental interpretation and education project

**British Indian Ocean Territory**

Raising awareness of the significance of the British Indian Ocean Territory’s biodiversity and promoting more sustainable use of its environment through the development of a forest boardwalk and a snorkel trail on Diego Garcia and signed trails in the northern atoll islands.

COPRA - Conservation and integrated management of phanerogam seagrass meadows in the Glorieuses Marine Nature Park (PNMG) and their functional role for marine turtle populations / COPRA - Conservation et gestion intégrée des herbiers de phanérogames marines du parc naturel marin des Glorieuses (PNMG) et rôle fonctionnel pour les populations de tortues marines

**Scattered Islands**

The project has 3 objectives: (1) Increasing knowledge of the seagrass habitats and their functional role for marine turtles; (2) initiating a regional seagrass monitoring network; and (3) improving the conservation and management of these ecosystems through specific measures to strengthen the PNMG management plan.
Characterised by extreme climatic conditions and an abundance of marine life supporting economically important fisheries, the Polar and Sub-polar region encompasses Greenland and French St Pierre and Miquelon in the North as well as the 3 unpopulated Overseas Countries and Territories French Southern and Antarctic Territories (French acronym TAAF), South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands (UK), and the British Antarctic Territories (BAT) in the South. Both, the Arctic and Southern Oceans are among the most productive marine environments with worldwide influence on large parts of other marine ecosystems in lower latitudes.

Contrary to the Arctic, terrestrial biodiversity on the Antarctic continent is sparse due to isolation from other land masses for 23 million years and almost complete ice coverage for 15 million years, leaving less than 1% for colonization by plants.

The once heavily exploited whale populations in the Sub-Antarctic region are slowly growing again. However, several remain threatened, including the Blue Whale (Balaenoptera musculus) and the Humpback Whale (Megaptera novaeangliae). The Polar and Sub-polar region also face substantial threats from exploitation of natural resources through overfishing and colonization by invasive species. Their ecosystems are the most affected by climate change, with a number of significant direct impacts on biodiversity already documented in both hemispheres.
Polar (North)

PISUNA - Protecting biodiversity and creating multiple benefits for local communities in Greenland

**Greenland**
Engaging local fishers and hunters to help the government monitor natural resources in the face of a changing environment and to increase capacity and involvement in the governance and sustainable use of these resources.

**Determining the feeding areas used by the community of seabirds breeding on the island of Grand Colombier** / **Détermination des zones d’alimentation utilisées par la communauté d’oiseaux marins se reproduisant sur l’île du Grand Colombier**

**Saint Pierre & Miquelon**
Identifying the marine areas used by adult Leach’s Storm-petrels and Atlantic Puffins during the breeding season by tracking a number of individuals using miniaturised GPS devices.

**Sustainable fishing in the Arctic:** Can the harvest of Greenland’s biggest export be compatible with the conservation of benthic ecosystems?

**Greenland**
Using photographic surveys to document benthic habitats and develop and evaluate management plans for the sustainable use of marine resources in West Greenland. It is also implementing a range of outreach activities for a broad range of stakeholders.

Polar (South)

**Identifying important marine areas for macaroni penguins** (*Eudyptes chrysolophus*) in the UK and French Overseas Territories

**Southern Ocean**
Determining the most important at-sea areas for macaroni penguins, a globally endangered species, to have these designated by the appropriate authorities and to agree on management plans for them with stakeholders.

**Where are they right now? Right whales in the South Georgia marine ecosystem**

**South Georgia**
Undertaking the first baseline survey of Right whales in South Georgia waters to investigate their prey sources, habitat use in relation to the krill fishing, genetic diversity, population connectivity with calving areas and health status. The results will inform the management of the South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands Marine Protected Area.

**Dog-sledding in Greenland © Florian Ledoux**

**Fur seal in South Georgia © Judith Brown**

**British Antarctic Territory © Simon Vacher**

Polar & Sub-Polar
With an overall size of over 7.6 million km², New Caledonia, Wallis & Futuna, French Polynesia and Pitcairn in the Pacific belong to the second largest European Overseas region after the Polar and Sub-polar region.

The five French Polynesian island groups stand out by their remoteness from any continent. Their waters are home to some of the most pristine and best studied coral reefs, which represent an important source of revenue as the ecosystem services they provide are fundamental for the local economy, based mainly on tourism. Home to extremely rich terrestrial and marine biodiversity, New Caledonia has one of the world’s highest observed rates of endemic plant species. With a length of 1,600 km New Caledonia’s barrier reef is one of the longest worldwide. The French entity Wallis and Futuna is still home to areas of remarkable dense forests but a much lower level of biodiversity compared to New Caledonia due to their relatively recent geological formation 2 million years ago and extreme geographical isolation. The Pitcairn Islands pristine atolls are home to a UNESCO World Heritage Site and to over 90% of the world’s Murphy’s Petrels that nest on the smallest of the 4 islands (Ducie, 3.2 km²). In September 2016 the UK government announced the designation of the world’s largest fully protected Marine Reserve of 834,000 km², which encompasses the entire EEZ of Pitcairn excluding the 12 nm territorial sea radius surrounding the islands for local subsistence fishing. The UK Pitcairn Islands Marine Reserve, part of a network of Pacific MPAs resulting from close international cooperation, is on track for designation and contributes to the UK’s intention to establish a “Blue Belt” of MPAs around its overseas marine waters.

Although the Pacific region is considered as one of the last places on earth with minimal human impacts, its biodiversity is threatened by habitat destruction, invasive species, economic activities (tourism, fishing, deforestation, agriculture) and climate change.
Green-NC - Comprehensive management strategies for environment and natural areas: biodiversity and ecosystem services in New Caledonia / GREEN NC - Gestion raisonnée de l’environnement et des espaces naturels: biodiversité et services écosystémiques de Nouvelle Calédonie

New Caledonia
Developing and strengthening a local network connecting sites of major environmental importance, identified and managed by local competent communities, aiming to improve management actions and foundations for the sustainable management of natural resources in New Caledonia.

Protection and sustainable management of French Polynesia land-birds threatened by extinction / Protection et gestion durable des oiseaux terrestres de Polynésie française menacés d’extinction et de leurs habitats

French Polynesia
Developing sustainable management in 32 Important Bird Areas by creating Species Support Groups, engaging local inhabitants in protection measures such as invasive species control and ecotourism promotion.

CORAIL - Coral reefs in a changing world - ecosystemic services from coral reefs: public tools for decision making in New Caledonia and French Polynesia

New Caledonia and French Polynesia
Providing tools to evaluate coral reef services for decision-making in the context of demographic and climate change. In addition to assessing the reefs’ economic values, governance of MPA networks and ecosystem services related to cultural and traditional aspects are addressed.

PACIOCEA - Pacific Ocean Ecosystem Analysis
Regional
Developing marine spatial planning in the tropical south Pacific and the neighbouring countries to strengthen conservation and sustainable management of marine ecosystems, to foster ecosystem-based approaches and to improve climate change adaptation.

Pacific Biodiversity Blue Belt
Regional
Promoting the protection and management of marine and coastal ecosystems and biodiversity of the four Pacific OCTs through developing locally appropriate methodologies for the management of marine protected areas and methodological guidelines on surveillance and monitoring.

BIOPELAGOS - Biodiversity of oceanic pelagic ecosystems for a better conservation and management of outstanding natural areas

New Caledonia; Wallis and Futuna
Increasing the capacity of New Caledonia and Wallis and Futuna to make informed decisions on the conservation and management of their oceanic biodiversity including in the use of biodiversity data to inform management decisions.
Conserving the remaining natural forests of Punaruu Valley on Tahiti / Conservation des vestiges de forêts naturelles du plateau de Maraëti’a, vallée de la Punaruu, Tahiti

French Polynesia

Controlling the rat population of the Punaruu Valley and reducing their impact on endemic and indigenous plant species caused by the consumption of fruits and seeds affecting recruitment, and attacks on young seedlings. It will combine chemical control, through the use of rat poison, and physical control using traps.

Sustainable management of Wallis and Futuna’s forests / Gestion durable des forêts de Wallis et Futuna

Wallis and Futuna

Promoting the conservation of forest biodiversity and the management and sustainable use of forest ecosystems in Wallis through four main results: the completion of an inventory of forests and its uses; the definition of conservation measures with the local population; the establishment of a pilot action for forest rehabilitation; and drafting a management plan and a forest policy.

Conservation of the critically endangered Niau Kingfisher by the local community / Conservation du Martin-chasseur de Niau, en danger critique d’extinction, par la communauté locale

French Polynesia

Improving the status of the critically endangered Niau Kingfisher, which exists only on the Niau Atoll of the Tuamotu Archipelago, by reducing risk of predation by cats, monitoring the demographics of the species, and incorporating measures to protect the Niau Kingfisher in agricultural practices.

Innovative and sustainable water management: optimizing agricultural irrigation / Gestion innovante et durable de l’eau : optimisation du fonctionnement des périmètres irrigués agricoles (Aqualone)

New Caledonia

Demonstrating an innovative irrigation technology to increase agricultural production whilst saving water resources. The project will trial the technology at three pilot sites and develop a replicable business model for its adoption to improve food self-sufficiency of New Caledonia and other Pacific islands.

Protect and Restore the Dry Forest of the Coast of New Caledonia / Protéger et restaurer la forêt sèche du littoral de Nouvelle-Calédonie

New Caledonia

Implementing actions to restore part of New Caledonia’s coastal dry forest through protection from damage from grazing; developing and testing of best practices for forest restoration techniques and local awareness-raising.

Safeguarding the two most threatened bird species in French Polynesia from extinction / Sauver de l’extinction les deux oiseaux les plus menacés de Polynésie française

French Polynesia

Safeguarding the Fatu Hiva Monarch and Tahiti Monarch by controlling the predation threats to these species; working with the local populations and assessing the current conservation strategies for the two species and developing Species Action Plans covering the period 2018-2023.

Tukemaragai - Ecological restoration of the small islands of the South-East of Gambier / Restauration écologique des petites îles du Sud-Est des Gambier

French Polynesia

Restoring the habitats and birdlife of 3 islands of Gambier and contributing to the conservation of endangered plants and soil restoration. The project will establish a nursery for native and endemic forest species that are particularly suited to harsh environmental conditions of the target sites and install sound devices and create artificial burrows for breeding seabirds.
Biodiversity and sustainable management of the marine and coastal environment and related resources in the context of climate change in Wallis and Futuna / Biodiversité et gestion durable de l’environnement marin et côtier et des ressources associées dans le contexte du changement climatique à Wallis et Futuna

Wallis and Futuna

Contributing to the sustainable management of mangroves on the island of Wallis by developing a mangrove inventory, establishing a pilot nursery and rehabilitating mangroves, awareness raising among the general public, and implementation of a legal framework for the protection of mangroves.

Strengthening the local capacity to protect the terrestrial natural heritage of Rimatara / Renforcement des capacités locales pour la protection du patrimoine naturel terrestre de Rimatara

French Polynesia

Strengthening the capacity of the local population to protect the terrestrial natural heritage of Rimatara. It will strengthen the protection of the island from invasion by the black rat through training provided to the team that inspects incoming goods, including those arriving by plane. It will also implement a number of awareness raising activities.

Hei Moana, Ocean Sentinels / Hei Moana, les Sentinelles de L’Océan

French Polynesia

This educative and awareness raising project involves the public and schools in the observation and protection of threatened species and marine ecosystems in French Polynesia through three emblematic groups: turtles, marine mammals and coral reefs. It will provide all interested Polynesian inhabitants with the skills and the tools to become actively involved in observing and collecting data on the marine environment.

Strengthening conservation measures and tools for threatened conifers and palms of the rainforests and scrubland of New Caledonia / Renforcement des mesures et outils de conservation des palmiers et conifères menacés des forêts humides et des maquis de Nouvelle-Calédonie

New Caledonia

Protecting New Caledonia’s threatened conifers and palms through the implementation of measures and tools for in-situ and ex-situ conservation of the project’s target species; the creation and dissemination of recognition tools in the fight against the illegal trafficking of species; public communication and awareness raising.

Saving the endangered flora of the raised Anaa atoll and the definition of priority areas for conservation based on the flora and fauna / Sauvegarde de la flore menacée de l’atoll soulevé de Anaa et définition de zones prioritaires de conservation basées sur la flore et la faune

French Polynesia

Conserving endangered flora of the Anaa atoll through a combination of in-situ and ex-situ management, including the establishment of a plant nursery, the reintroduction of a species of dove known to be an important disseminator for many plants with fleshy fruits and defining priority conservation areas and actions.

Strengthening the drinking water supply system of the commune of Houailou by maintaining the ecosystem services of the upstream water catchment / Renforcement du réseau d’adduction d’eau potable (AEP) de la commune de Houailou par le maintien des services éco-systémiques en amont des captages d’eau

New Caledonia

Protecting and managing the upstream catchment, which provides drinking water for the commune of Houailou through reforestation of part of the catchment and implementing measures to protect the area such as fencing, barriers etc. to ensure that it can continue to provide vital ecosystem services.
An open partnership recognized at the international level

The BEST initiative contributes to the achievement of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Strategic Plan and its Aichi Targets as well as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Agreement.

Created as an open partnership, a first collaboration was established with the French Development Aid Agency (AFD) in 2012, allowing additional project funding and support for the establishment of a dedicated scheme to promote conservation of biodiversity and sustainable use of ecosystem services in Europe’s ORs and OCTs – key allies in achieving European and international biodiversity conservation targets.

The BEST Initiative was acknowledged in the CBD Conference of the Parties (COP) Decision XI-15, the 2016 World Conservation Congress (motion 70) and as an interregional challenge by the Global Island Partnership (GLISPA).

Towards a partnership for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services in Europe’s Overseas – BEST

As a follow-up to the recommendations of the Conference «The European Union and its Overseas Entities: Strategies to counter Climate Change and Biodiversity Loss» the European Parliament approved the launch of the BEST Initiative, which aims to promote conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystem services, including ecosystem-based approaches to climate adaptation and mitigation in Europe’s 25 Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs) and 9 Outermost Regions (ORs).

From 2011 to 2016 European investment efforts of over € 13.4 million have allowed

- Funding of more than 60 projects through tailored small and medium-sized grants,
- Unleashing energies and capacity building on the ground and fostering collaboration with stakeholders and authorities
- Elaboration of 7 regional ecosystem profiles and investment strategies in a participatory process, involving relevant local and regional actors.

In addition, BEST seeks to establish long-term funding to support conservation and thus to address the need for a dedicated financing mechanism that sustains action in the European ORs and OCTs and their neighbouring countries.

Join us for fostering more actions in these 7 regions of global importance!

For more information and for contacts visit:

http://ec.europa.eu/best/
https://portals.iucn.org/best/