



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Brussels, 5.6.2012
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COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING DECISION

of 5.6.2012

concerning the adoption of the 2012 work programme for the implementation of activities of "Technical assistance and dissemination of information on the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and an improved knowledge of macro-regions strategy" to be financed under budget line 13 03 31, serving as a financing decision

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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) No 1083/2006 of 11 July 2006 laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1260/1999¹, and in particular Article 45(2) thereof,

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 Communities² (hereinafter referred to as the 'Financial Regulation'), and in particular 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 Communities³ (hereinafter referred to as the 'Implementing Rules'), and in particular Article 90 thereof,

Whereas:

- (1) Article 45 (1) of Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 defines the technical assistance actions at the initiative of or on behalf of the Commission which can be financed by the European Regional and Development Fund (ERDF).
- (2) In addition to the ERDF technical assistance covered on available credits from budgetary line 13 01 04 01 (ERDF) and 13 03 20 (ERDF), a budget line for "Technical assistance and dissemination of information on the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and an improved knowledge of macro-regions strategy" was introduced in the 2011 budget (13 03 31) by the European Parliament and continued in the 2012 budget (13 03 31).

¹ OJ L 210, 31.07.2006, p. 25.

² OJ L 248, 16.9.2002, p. 1.

³ OJ L 357, 31.12.2002, p. 1.

- (3) 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.
- (4) In accordance with Article 110 of the Financial Regulation an annual work programme must be adopted for grants.
- (5) The 2012 work programme being a sufficiently detailed framework in the meaning of Article 90(2) and (3) of the Implementing Rules, the present decision constitutes a financing decision for the expenditure provided for in the work programme for grants and procurement.
- (6) Under Article 168(1)(c) of the Implementing Rules, grants may be awarded without a call for proposals in the case of bodies with a *de jure* or *de facto* monopoly, duly substantiated in the award decision. During the Danish presidency a grant without call for proposals may be awarded to the Capital region of Denmark, designated by the Danish Presidency for the organisation of the Annual Forum on the Baltic Sea Region strategy. In addition one or more grants will be awarded to the Priority Area Coordinators (PACs), the Horizontal Action Leaders (HALs) and Flagship Project Leaders (FPLs) dealing with thematic priorities under the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. Since those Priority Area Coordinators, Horizontal Action Leaders and Flagship Project Leaders have been designated in the strategy endorsed by the European Council they are in a *de facto* monopoly situation. The Baltic Development Forum is also designated as a Horizontal Action Leader.
- (7) This financing decision may also cover the payment of interest due for late payment on the basis of Articles 83 of the Financial Regulation and 106(5) of the Implementing Rules.
- (8) 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.
- (9) In accordance with the procedure referred to in Article 103(2) of Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006, the Coordination Committee of the Funds was consulted and delivered a favourable opinion on the work programme for 2012,

HAS DECIDED AS FOLLOWS:

Article 1

The 2012 annual work programme for the implementation of the activities of "Technical assistance and dissemination of information on the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and an improved knowledge of macro-regions strategy", as set out in the Annex, is hereby adopted. It constitutes a 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 programme is set at EUR 2 500 000, to be financed from budget line 13 03 31 of the General Budget of the European Union for 2012.

These appropriations may also cover interest due for late payment.

Article 3

Grants may be awarded without a call for proposals to the Capital region of Denmark designated by the Presidency for the organisation of the Annual Forum on the Baltic Sea Region strategy, to Priority Area Coordinators (PACs), the Horizontal Action Leaders (HALs) and Flagship Project Leaders (FPLs) dealing with thematic priorities under the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region bodies with a *de facto* monopoly situation, in accordance with the conditions detailed in the annexed work programme.

Article 4

Cumulated changes of the allocations to the specific actions covered by the work programme 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 may adopt such changes in accordance with the principles of sound financial management and of proportionality.

Done at Brussels, 5.6.2012

For the Commission
Johannes HAHN
Member of the Commission

ANNEX-2012 WORK PROGRAMME

1. Introduction

1.1. *Budget line: 13 03 31*

1.2. *Basic Act: Article 45 of Regulation (EC) n° 1083/2006*

1.3. *Policy context*

In order to promote the success of the Baltic Sea Strategy, the European Parliament decided to introduce an allocation of EUR 2.5 million in the 2011 budget for activities of "Technical assistance and dissemination of information on the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and an improved knowledge of macro-regions strategy". In the 2012 budget the EP has also decided to include a financial allocation of EUR 2.5 million for activities supporting the EUSBSR in order for the Commission to promote:

1) information and communication activities/ organisation of EUSBSR Annual Forum

- organisation of 3rd EUSBSR Annual Forum (indicative date 18/06/2012)

- development of a more ambitious communication strategy on the EUSBSR

- organisation of on-site events to familiarise all interested European regions with the Baltic Sea approach and the principles of macro-regions

- proper circulation of information on the EUSBSR through newsletters, reports, studies and surveys

2) successful governance of the Strategy through the decentralised system and seed money initiative

- successful governance of the Strategy through the decentralised system that has been established, in particular to support Priority Area Coordinators, Horizontal Action Leaders and Flagship Project Leaders

- technical and administrative support for planning and coordination of activities related to the EUSBSR

- seed money for planning and preparing projects supporting the Strategy

- support for civil society participation

2. Description of the action

Two different types of actions will be financed:

2.1. ACTION 1: Information and communication activities/ organisation of Annual Forum

The two sessions of the EUSBSR Annual Forum, held respectively in Tallinn in 2010 and in Gdansk in 2011, proved to be a good platform for ensuring the involvement of stakeholders representing all levels in the Baltic Sea Region. In June 2012 the Commission, together with the Danish EU Presidency, will organise the 3rd Annual Forum in Denmark.

In addition, there is a need to develop a more ambitious communication plan for the EUSBSR. It will enable to coordinate the communication efforts of different actors at European, national and regional level, with the support of Interact. It will also help to communicate the Strategy to a wider public. To strengthen these communication activities some specific tools, such as knowledge management database will be developed. Some specific or thematic seminars will also be organised in order to reach the objective of a better dissemination of information. These seminars will contribute to a better linkage between partners' activities as well as between the Baltic Strategy and EU2020 priorities.

The macro-regional approach has generated a strong interest from other Member States throughout Europe. To familiarise all interested European regions with the Baltic Sea approach and with the principles of macro-regions, organisation of thematic seminars will be supported at the request of national and regional partners. It will contribute to exchange of experiences, practices and reflections on the main principles guiding the implementation of macro-regional strategies, as well as on the first concrete achievements of the EUSBSR.

Moreover reports, studies and surveys might be supported, as part of evaluation works undertaken on performance of the EUSBSR, and/or on the concept of macro-regional strategies.

2.2. ACTION 2: Successful governance of the Strategy through the decentralised system and seed money initiative

The successful governance of the Strategy through the decentralised system is of key importance for the implementation of the Strategy. The main actors of the decentralised governance system are Priority Area Coordinators (PACs), Horizontal Action Leaders (HALs) and Flagship Project Leaders (FPLs). They are appointed by the Member-States involved in the Strategy, and therefore they are in a *de facto monopoly* situation in delivering the Strategy. Their primary role is to take the appropriate measures to ensure the implementation of actions, projects and cross-cutting themes of the Action Plan. This can not be done without involving a large number of stakeholders and partners, and without multiplying contacts and meetings in order to find the right actors at the right place, who will be the guarantors of the success of the Strategy. The experience they have developed so far, related to these different tasks, has highlighted a serious need for technical assistance funding.

Again in 2012, the main goal is to provide the technical and administrative support for planning and coordination of Priority Area Coordinators/ Horizontal Action Leaders/ Flagship Project Leaders activities related to the EUSBSR. Based on a work programme submitted to the Commission, financial assistance to them will cover staff costs and organisation of meetings and conferences (travel costs, room rental, catering), It will also cover studies and/or expert costs for specific questions (on feasibility questions, on thematic issues, etc.)

To enhance successful implementation of the EUSBSR, there is a need for seed money for projects contributing directly to the Strategy. This action will provide the necessary funds for projects that lack sufficient funding, especially in the start-up phase. In addition, it will also answer to non-financial needs of projects through making available the knowledge resources in the Region. This knowledge assistance in the preliminary phases of planning and preparation will help to envisage better links with the Strategy. Seed money initiative can also boost participation of civil society in the EUSBSR.

3. Type of financial intervention

3.1 Information and communication activities/ organisation of Annual Forum

a) Organisation of 3rd Annual Forum

A direct grant will be awarded to the Capital Region of Denmark and the Baltic Development Forum that hold a *de facto* monopoly position, since they have been appointed by the Danish Presidency to organise the 3rd EUSBSR Annual Forum in Copenhagen. The ERDF co-financing rate for this action will be up to 90% of eligible costs.

Indicative EU contribution: **EUR 500.000.**

One grant agreement shall be signed for the implementation of the above mentioned activities.

b) Coordination of information and communication activities, including reports, studies, surveys and organisation of seminars will follow public procurement rules. Indicative number of contracts is 3. Estimated timetable for the public procurement procedures is the second semester of 2012.

Indicative budget: **EUR 300.000.**

3.2 Successful governance of the Strategy through the decentralised system and seed money initiative

a) Based on needs expressed and work programmes, one or more direct grants may be awarded to one or several of the Priority Area Coordinators/Horizontal Action Leaders/Flagship Project Leaders to implement the Strategy. Since those beneficiaries are designated by Member States to coordinate the implementation of the EUSBSR Action Plan they hold a *de facto* monopoly position in this respect and grants can be awarded without prior call for proposal.

b) A consortium of public bodies experienced in development cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region will be appointed to coordinate the implementation of a seed money facility for projects supporting the Strategy. The ERDF co-financing rate for this action will be up to 90% of eligible costs.

One grant agreement shall be signed for the implementation of the seed money facility.

Indicative EU contribution for a) and b): **EUR 1.700.000.**

4. Total budget: **EUR 2 500 000**

The indicative distribution of the budget between the actions is the following:

Actions	Allocation (M €)
1. Information and communication activities/ organisation of Annual Forum	0.8
2. Successful governance of the Strategy through the decentralised system and seed money initiative	1.7

Total	2.5
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5. Indicative calendar for procurement and grant procedures

The main part of the technical assistance budget will be spent through direct grants. The grant agreement or grant decision will be signed with the Capital Region of Copenhagen and the Baltic Development Forum for the organisation of the 3rd Annual Forum. It should be signed no later than May 2012. In addition, the grant agreements and/or decisions are expected to be signed by the Priority Area Coordinators, Horizontal Action Leaders and Flagship Project Leaders no later than September 2012. The award criteria to be applied for the evaluation of the proposals received will be two: a) relevance of the proposal to the objectives and b) efficiency.

For other activities public procurement rules will apply.

6. Expected outcomes

The expected outcomes are those mentioned under Point 2. Amongst them, there is an expectation that the organisation of the 3rd Annual Forum in Copenhagen will ensure an adequate momentum for the Strategy. The communication and information activities, including events through Europe, should foster the macro-regional concept. Regarding the financial support to the Priority Area Coordinators/ Horizontal Action Leaders/ Flagship Project Leaders, it should improve the planning and coordination activities of these actors. A goal of seed money initiative is to provide the financial support for projects that contribute directly to the Strategy. It will also help to reinforce the knowledge resources indispensable for further development of projects related to the Strategy.