



Brussels, 29.7.2013
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COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING DECISION

of 29.7.2013

concerning the adoption of a work programme for 2013 for the implementation 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

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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 Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union and repealing Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002 (hereinafter referred to as the 'Financial Regulation')², and in particular Article 84(2) 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 and 2013 budget (13 03 31).
- (3) In accordance with Article 84 of the Financial Regulation, 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 128(1) of the Financial Regulation grants shall be subject to a work programme to be published prior to its implementation.
- (5) The 2013 work programme being a sufficiently detailed framework in the meaning of Article 94(2) and (3) of the Rules of Application, the present decision constitutes a financing decision for the expenditure provided for in the work programme for grants and procurement.

¹ OJ L 210, 31.07.2006, p. 25.

² OJ L 298, 26.10.2012, p.1.

- (6) Under Article 190 (1) (c) of the Rules of Application 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 Lithuanian EU presidency a grant without call for proposals may be awarded to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania or a Region or organisation appointed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania, designated by the Lithuanian EU Presidency for the organisation of the Annual Forum on the Baltic Sea Region strategy. In addition, grants will be awarded to the Priority Area Coordinators (PACs), the Horizontal Action Leaders (HALs) and Flagship Project Leaders (FPLs) dealing with thematic priorities, as well as the Seed Money Facility for projects supporting 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. A direct grant may be awarded to the Investitionsbank Schleswig-Holstein, which is also the managing authority of the Baltic Sea Region programme for 2007–2013 and is designated as a Flagship Project Leader (FPL).
- (7) This financing decision may also cover the payment of interest due for late payment on the basis of Article 92 of the Financial Regulation and Article 111(4) of the Rules of Application.
- (8) For the application of this decision, it is appropriate to define the term 'substantial change' within the meaning of Article 94(4) of the Rules of Application.
- (9) The measures provided for in this Decision are in accordance with the opinion of the Committee for the Coordination of the Funds,

HAS DECIDED AS FOLLOWS:

Article 1

The 2013 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 84 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 2013.

These appropriations may also cover interest due for late payment.

Article 3

Grants may be awarded without a call for proposals to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania or a Region or organisation appointed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania, designated by the Lithuanian EU 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), including the Investitionsbank Schleswig-Holstein as regards the Seed Money Facility, 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, 29.7.2013

For the Commission
Johannes HAHN
Member of the Commission

ANNEX
2013 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 budgetary authority decided, every year since 2011, to introduce an allocation of EUR 2.5 million in the 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". For 2013, the budgetary authority has decided to include further a financial allocation of EUR 2.5 million for activities supporting the EUSBSR in order for the Commission to promote:

- the proper circulation of information through newsletters (including on-line), reports and conferences, and specifically an Annual Forum,
- the organisation of on-site events to familiarise all interested European regions with the Baltic Sea approach and the principles of macro-regions,
- successful governance of the strategy through the decentralised system that has been established and, in particular, the operation of the system of priority area coordinators and flagship project leaders,
- technical and administrative support for planning and coordination of activities related to the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region,
- availability of seed money for planning and preparing projects supporting the strategy,
- support for civil society participation,
- the continued helping of priority area coordinators in their coordination activity,
- participation in an implementation facility with the EIB, if requested by Baltic Member States,
- the development of a more ambitious communication strategy on the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region.
- The continuation of the support to the technical assistance action in 2013 should be used to:
 - Keep on helping Priority Area Coordinators in their coordination activity;
 - Participate in an implementation facility with EIB, if requested by Baltic Member-States;
 - Develop a more ambitious communication strategy on the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR).

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

In its conclusions adopted on 15 November 2011, the Council "recommends that the Commission continues the good practice of holding the EUSBSR Annual Forum to provide a stable platform for debates on progress, results, challenges and solutions for implementation between a wide range of actors at all possible levels."

In November 2013 the Commission, together with the Lithuanian EU Presidency, will organise the 4th Annual Forum in Lithuania.

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 Point Turku. 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 EUSBSR and Europe 2020 Strategy objectives.

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. The experience and the lessons drawn so far from the EUSBSR can also help partners developing other strategies (e.g. in the Adriatic-Ionian area, Alpine Space, etc.).

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 national contact points (NCPs), 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 be done by involving a large number of stakeholders and partners, and by 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 2013, the main goal is to provide the technical and administrative support for planning and coordination of NCPs, PACs, HALs, FPLs 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, seed money facility was set-up in 2012 for projects contributing directly to the Strategy. This action that provides the necessary funds for projects that lack sufficient funding, especially in the start-up phase, will be continued in 2013 and implemented by the Investitionsbank Schleswig-Holstein which was also appointed as a FPL. 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 4th Annual Forum

A direct grant will be awarded to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania (or a Region or organisation appointed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania) that holds a *de facto* monopoly position, since it has been appointed by the Lithuanian Presidency to organise the 4th EUSBSR Annual Forum in Lithuania. The ERDF co-financing rate for this action will be up to 90% of eligible costs with an indicative EU contribution of **EUR 500.000**. 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.

b) coordination of information and communication activities, including reports, studies, surveys and organisation of seminars will follow public procurement rules. An indicative number of 4 service contracts (2 direct and/or 2 specific under FWC) may be concluded in 2013. Maximum indicative budget: **EUR 500.000**

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

Based on needs expressed and work programmes, direct grants may be awarded to NCPs, PACs, HALs, FPLs 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 a grant may be awarded without prior call for proposal. 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.

The Investitionsbank Schleswig-Holstein was appointed as a Flagship Project Leader in 2012 to coordinate the implementation of a seed money facility for projects supporting the Strategy. This action will be continued in 2013.

Maximum indicative budget: **EUR 1.500.000**

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	1
2. Successful governance of the Strategy through the decentralised system and seed money initiative	1.5
Total	2.5

5. Indicative calendar for procurement procedures

The main part of the technical assistance budget will be implemented through direct grants. A grant agreement will be signed with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania for the organisation of the 4th Annual Forum. This should be signed no later than October 2013. In addition, NCPs, PACs, HALs and FPLs will also sign the grant agreements no later than September 2013.

For other activities implemented through public procurement the procedures shall take place on the third quarter 2013.

6. Expected outcomes

The expected outcomes are those mentioned under Point 2. Among them, there is an expectation that the organisation of the 4th Annual Forum in Lithuania 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 for NCPs, PACs, HALs and FPLs, it should improve the planning and coordination activities of these actors. The continuation of the seed money initiative will support 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.