



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
IMPACT ASSESSMENT BOARD

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Opinion

Title **Impact Assessment on: Joint Baltic Sea Research Programme
BONUS (Article 169) - RESUBMISSION**

(draft version of 21 September 2009)

Lead DG **RTD**

1) Impact Assessment Board Opinion

(A) Context

Article 169 of the Treaty provides a legal basis for the Community to support the integration of national research programmes. The history of BONUS dates back to 2003, when the BONUS ERA-NET project started with the aim to develop and broaden the Baltic Sea research funding cooperation. In November 2006, the Commission published a roadmap including BONUS as one of four potential Article 169 initiatives to be implemented. As a bridging phase to the Article 169 initiative, the participating Member States cooperated within the framework of the BONUS Plus scheme. In March 2009 the Competitiveness Council invited the Commission to transform BONUS Plus into a joint research programme based on Article 169.

(B) Positive aspects

The report has discussed the issue of barriers to enhanced integration of the relevant national research institutions and programmes, explained better the value added of EU action, clarified the impact on capacity building in the Member States with lower research achievements, and elaborated on expected structural changes in the national Baltic Sea research systems.

(C) Main recommendations for improvements

The recommendations below are listed in order of descending importance. Some more technical comments will be transmitted directly to the author DG.

General recommendation: While the IA report has been improved, there are several key issues which still require further explanation. Most importantly, the report should provide more direct evidence of the impact that the fragmentation has on the Baltic Sea research, including for the view that this fragmentation is an obstacle to filling the knowledge gaps to be addressed by the joint research programme.

Commission européenne, B-1049 Bruxelles / Europese Commissie, B-1049 Brussel - Belgium. Telephone: (32-2) 299 11 11. Office: BERL 6/29. Telephone: direct line (32-2) 2981898. Fax: (32-2) 2965960.

E-mail: impact-assessment-board@ec.europa.eu

Secondly, it should explain the order of magnitude of additional funds, including from the EU, which will be mobilised as a result of removing existing duplication. Finally, the report should make further adjustments to the objectives so that they set out more clearly the desired policy outcomes of this initiative.

(1) Provide evidence for the fragmentation of research on the Baltic Sea. The revised report has made an effort to substantiate the claim about the fragmentation of Baltic Sea research by explaining that for 2004 only 30% of Baltic Sea research funding was distributed through international calls. However, it should further explain what percentage would allow for the conclusion that this research is sufficiently integrated, and further strengthen the evidence for the research fragmentation by providing concrete examples of poor coordination, duplication or insufficient capacity and of their link to the identified knowledge gaps.

(2) Explain how this initiative will change the financing of Baltic Sea research and substantiate the claim that it will mobilise additional funds. The revised report has provided more details on the issue of financing for each of the options. However, the EU and Member States' expenditures on the Baltic Sea research under the different options should be presented more consistently so that they can be compared more easily (e.g. the report should avoid comparing amounts referring to different timescales). The report should also explain to what extent providing additional (centrally coordinated) funding for Baltic Sea research could result in a reduction in the level of financing outside the joint programme. It should also - as recommended in the first IAB opinion - assess the order of magnitude of additional funds, including from the EU, which would be mobilised as a result of removing existing duplication. In the absence of aggregated data/indicators, this could be illustrated by examples.

(3) Revise the objectives and the monitoring indicators. While the objectives and indicators have been redrafted, they still need to be better aligned to the problems. The specific objectives should set out the desired policy outcome (as seems currently the case only for the third objective) rather than the technical means of achieving it. For example, they could refer to the desired level of research integration, desired reduction of the gap in research capacity between Member States and to the scale of the restructuring of research governance. The monitoring indicators should be adapted accordingly.

(D) Procedure and presentation

It appears that all procedural requirements have been complied with.

2) IAB scrutiny process

Reference number	2009/RTD/004
Author DG	RTD
External expertise used	No
Date of Board Meeting	Written procedure
Date of adoption of Opinion	29 SEP. 2009 The present opinion concerns a resubmitted draft IA report. The first opinion was issued on 11 September 2009.