# Joint Baltic Sea Research and Development Programme (BONUS)

2009/0169(COD) - 29/10/2009 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: to allow the Community's participation in a Joint Baltic Sea Research and Development Programme (BONUS-169) undertaken by several Member States.

PROPOSED ACT: Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council.

BACKGROUND: the Baltic Sea ecosystem is seriously impacted by many natural and human-induced pressures. The sea and coasts are particularly affected by combined and increasing negative impacts from pollution, eutrophication, climate change, acidification, invasive alien species, overexploitation of living resources and loss of biodiversity.

Although many research activities are taking place in the Baltic Sea region, these efforts remain, to a large degree, uncoordinated and lack a jointly agreed regional action plan.

Given the limited research possibilities available at national, regional or local level to individually meet the complex environmental challenges of the Baltic Sea region as a whole, action at Community level in the Baltic Sea region is urgently called for.

To respond to this, the Commission is presenting this proposal on the participation of the Community in a joint research and development programme for the Baltic (BONUS-169) to be undertaken by several Member States. By bringing together all 8 EU Baltic Sea Member States, this initiative aims to achieve sustainable coordination and cooperation among their research policies and scientific communities in tackling common European challenges and thus to make a significant contribution to the structuring of the European Research Area (ERA) in the Baltic Sea Region by removing barriers between nationally funded research programmes.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT: **three policy options** have been considered for meeting the general and specific objectives of the initiative. These are:

**Policy option 1:** continuation of policies so far developed under FP 7 ("business as usual");

**Policy option 2:** recourse to regionally-oriented trans-thematic call(s) under the Framework Programme;

**Policy option 3:** recourse to Article 169 with three alternative approaches (A, B and C) varying in the extent and depth of the strategic orientation and the stakeholder involvement in the streamlining and implementation of the calls for proposals

- ***Policy option 3 through approach A***– recourse to Article 169 with a focus limited to marine research and with the immediate launching of science-driven calls for proposals,
- ***Policy option 3 through approach B***– recourse to Article 169 with a focus broadened to include the Baltic Sea drainage basin and with a strategic vision and roadmap to be developed prior to the start of the initiative and Commission proposal,
- ***Policy option 3 through approach C*** – recourse to Article 169 with a focus broadened to include the Baltic Sea drainage basin and with a strategic vision and roadmap developed during the first phase of the initiative.

**Policy option 3 through approach C is the preferred option** since it can effectively address the shortcomings identified above by achieving long-lasting and durable integration at Member State, institutional and research community level. The Community contribution would ensure that truly European interest would be reflected in the working programme of the initiative, building upon, but not being limited by, activities addressed at purely national level.

CONTENT: the purpose of this proposal is to establish the participation of the Community in a Joint Baltic Sea Research Programme (BONUS-169) undertaken by all eight EU Baltic Sea Member States (Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Sweden) in support of the Baltic Sea region's sustainable development. There will be scope for participation of the Russian Federation in the Joint Research Programme provided that the necessary legal requirements are met. BONUS-169 will provide scientific outputs to facilitate the implementation of ecosystem-based management in the Baltic Sea region and support the development and implementation of 'fit-for-purpose' ecosystem-based regulations, policies and management practices aimed at safeguarding the sustainable use of the ecosystem's goods and services. BONUS-169 will integrate the national research programmes and activities of the 8 Baltic Sea States into a single joint research programme and support, in particular, the research and environmental objectives of the Baltic Sea Strategy (see COM(2009)0248), the Marine and Maritime Strategy and the Water Framework Directive.

In order to reach its objectives, BONUS-169 will be implemented in two distinct phases:

- **an initial strategic phase**, lasting two years, during which appropriate consultation platforms for active stakeholder involvement will be set-up, a strategic research agenda prepared, and precise implementation modalities will be further broadened and developed;
- **an implementation phase**, of minimum 5 years, during which a minimum of three joint calls will be launched in view of funding strategically targeted BONUS-169 projects specifically addressing the objectives of the initiative.

Since the future success of BONUS-169 will depend to a large extent upon the achievement of the objectives set out for the strategic phase, the Commission will evaluate the maturity and readiness of the initiative and, provided that the results of the evaluation of are positive, the Commission and the BONUS EEIG shall conclude the implementation agreement. The participating states have agreed that the Baltic Organisations Network for Funding Science, BONUS EEIG, established in Helsinki, Finland, will be the dedicated BONUS-169 implementation structure.

BUDGETARY IMPLICATION: the budgetary implications of this horizontal proposal are already mentioned in the legal basis of FP7 as well as in the "Cooperation" Specific Programme of FP7. The agreement to be concluded between the Commission and the dedicated implementation structure shall ensure that the financial interests of the Community are protected. The Community shall make a financial contribution of up to **EUR 50 million** for all the duration of BONUS-169 shall match the contribution of the participating states, bringing the total expected budget for the initiative to **EUR 100 million**.

The **strategic phase** will be implemented by a grant according to the rules set out in this Decision and on Regulation (EC) no 1906/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down the rules for the participation of undertakings, research centres and universities in actions under the Seventh Framework Programme and for the dissemination of research results (2007-2013). For **2010**, the contribution from DG RTD for the strategic phase will amount to **EUR 1.25 million** (the participating states have to contribute an equivalent amount).

The **implementation phase** will be implemented by indirect centralised management, according to the provisions of Art. 54(2) (c) of the Financial Regulation. According to the Financial Regulation, the

Commission will first obtain evidence of the existence and proper operation of, *inter-alia*, grant-award procedures, an internal control system, an adequate accounting system within the entity to which it entrusts implementation, and an independent external audit.