Programme for the environment and climate action, LIFE 2014-2020

2011/0428(COD) - 28/09/2012 - Committee report tabled for plenary, 1st reading/single reading

The Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety adopted the report by Jutta HAUG (S&D, DE) on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of a Programme for the Environment and Climate Action (LIFE).

The committee recommends that the position of the European Parliament adopted in first reading following the ordinary legislative procedure should amend the Commission proposal as follows:

General aims of the LIFE Programme: these aims must include: (i) supporting the management of areas that form part of the **Natura 2000 network** and the conservation of the natural values included in that network, in particular the species and habitats considered priorities in accordance with Union legislation; (ii) supporting the implementation of the Union Environmental Action Programme.

Furthermore, the LIFE Programme shall contribute to the Union biodiversity strategy to 2020, the Roadmap to a Resource Efficient Europe, the Roadmap 2050 and the Energy Roadmap until 2050.

Members want the Programme to be **open to the participation of the overseas countries and territories referred to in Decision 2001/822/EC.**

Budget: in line with the EP's overall approach to the Multiannual Financial Framework negotiations, Members abstained from making any precise proposals as to the amount of the LIFE budget. However, they recall that in its resolution on the EU Biodiversity strategy, Parliament **expresses disappointment** in relation to the proposed allocation for the new LIFE programme and takes the view that the challenges addressed in the biodiversity and nature conservation plan call for a substantial increase in the funds allocated to the LIFE programme.

In this context, the report recommends that approximately **75 %** of the overall financial envelope be allocated to the sub-programme for **Environment** and that approximately **25 %** of the overall financial envelope be allocated to the sub-programme for **Climate Action**. At least **80 %** of the budgetary resources for LIFE Programme shall be allocated to innovative financial instruments and projects supported by means of action grants.

Members want at least **75 %** of the budgetary resources allocated to projects supported by way of action grants under the sub-programme for Environment to be dedicated to projects supporting the **conservation of nature and biodiversity.**

Integrated projects: the report introduces a new article dedicated to integrated projects and providing mechanisms to assist Member States to put this new approach into practice. These Projects shall focus primarily on the areas of **nature, water, waste, air, and climate change mitigation and adaptation.**

Integrated Projects shall serve as concrete instruments for mainstreaming environment and climate objectives into overall Union expenditure, promoting coordination with and mobilisation of other Union funding sources as well as national and private funding. Members stress that the Commission and Member States shall actively support and facilitate the development of Integrated Projects.

Eligibility criteria, geographical balance and technical assistance: where possible, projects financed by the LIFE Programme shall promote the use of green public procurement and synergies between different objectives. The selection of funding for all projects other than Integrated Projects shall be based on **merit and quality.**

Members ask that a **Member State that has been awarded fewer than two projects** in two subsequent years, or has received far less than its indicative national allocations under the programming period 2007-2013, be entitled to receive **special technical assistance** to support the preparation of high quality projects for the following year might apply for a **capacity building project.**

Given the novelty and the specific planning approach required for Integrated Projects it is crucial that all Member States gain experience with this type of project during the next LIFE programming period. It is therefore suggested that **each Member State be entitled to funding for at least two integrated projects,** provided that these cover different areas.

Rates of co-financing: Members consider that a general increase in the cofinancing rate (as proposed by the Commission) would only be possible at the expense of the total number of projects and the leverage effect of the LIFE instrument. They propose that the maximum co-financing rate be **50 %** of eligible costs and **60 %** of eligible costs for integrated projects. **Member States with temporary budgetary difficulties** may apply for an increased rate of up to **75 %** of eligible costs. The maximum co-financing rate under the priority area "Nature and Biodiversity" for seriously threatened habitats and species shall be **75 %.**

Admissible costs: the report states that **VAT shall be deemed an eligible cost** in the case of project beneficiaries who cannot recover VAT costs in the relevant Member State, except in the case of non-taxable persons as defined in Council Directive 2006/112/EC (VAT Directive).

Staff costs for all beneficiaries, including salary costs of the personnel of national administrations, shall be considered an eligible cost for projects to the extent that they relate to the cost of activities that the beneficiary would not have carried out if the project concerned had not been undertaken.

Multiannual work programmes: an amendments states that each multiannual work programme shall have a duration of **at least three years and be renewable**, provided that the thematic priorities laid down in that multiannual work programme remain valid. Furthermore, the Commission shall regularly **make available the most meaningful results** of the projects funded under the LIFE Programme in order to facilitate feedback and exchange of good practices across the Union.

Visibility of the LIFE Programme: Members want the **LIFE logo**, which has been very successful in ensuring the visibility of the Union's funding, to be used for all communication activities and to appear on notice boards at strategic places visible to the public.