

Financial Instrument for the Environment (LIFE+) 2007-2013

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The Commission presents its final evaluation of Regulation (EC) No 614/2007 concerning the Financial Instrument for the Environment (LIFE+). The Regulation covers the period 2007-2013 and has a financial envelope of EUR 2.17 billion.

The report's main conclusions are as follows:

- **EU Added value:** the high level of EU added value delivered under the Regulation has been achieved by ensuring that:

- Action grant projects were of high quality individually, and their impact was multiplied through dissemination and sharing of project results, reaching a maximum number of policy makers and stakeholders across the EU;
- NGOs financed were enabled to play an effective role in making and implementing policy;
- Public procurement was well planned and aligned with formally agreed priorities.

However, the EU added value was somewhat compromised by the system of national allocations leading to compromises in the quality of projects financed, and by overly broad priorities which led to insufficient focus on targeted needs and priorities.

- **Selection process and project monitoring:** the rigorous evaluation and selection process for LIFE+ projects has ensured that funded projects are well-designed and therefore likely to be successful.

- **NGOs Operating grants:** Operating Grants have enabled NGOs to participate in EU working groups, produce information and analysis papers, engage in awareness-raising and consultative activities, and carry out long-term projects. The evaluations confirm the continued relevance of this intervention and concluded that the NGOs selected made a necessary contribution to EU policy.

- **Public procurement:** the evaluations show that the expenditure through public procurement has been appropriate and has responded to the needs of the policy. Outputs have included high profile communication and outreach; although it is hard to assess the real full impact of such measures, they were delivered in line with the required quality criteria and based on strategic need.

Challenges and actions within the current framework:

- **Action grants:** the LIFE+ Programme has been evaluated as being relevant. However, the Programme's objectives are not always clear and sometimes lack coherence with other EU policies. The lack of a clear strategic approach and critical mass has been identified as a drawback of the Programme, stemming mainly from limitations in the Regulation. Consequently, implementation of the LIFE+ programme has not been able to reflect the evolution of developing EU policy priorities, especially for the Environment and Information & Communication strands. Furthermore, evaluations concluded that the environment and governance strand of LIFE+ should focus more on implementation of EU environment legislation and the creation of multipliers.

- **Administrative burden:** the administrative burden of LIFE+ has increased over time due to stricter application and reporting requirements, particularly related to financial administration, and thus efficiency concerns have been raised.

- **Application and selection process:** procedures for project application and selection were evaluated as being too long and complex, needing simplification.

- **Project results and integration:** the evaluations propose that the Commission should carry out more *ex-post* visits to the projects, even if this is not required by the Regulation. A more systematic *ex-post* monitoring system would be an improvement on current arrangements, as it would provide evidence of which projects genuinely achieve long lasting benefits. This would help ensure that project results are better utilised and integrated into policy making. More generally, know-how transfer should be improved, especially at EU-level.

- **Communication and outreach:** evaluations have recommended that the horizontal outreach and communication of the LIFE Programme could be improved and the dissemination of project results and knowledge, especially at EU level should be reinforced.

National organisations and management: National Contact Points play an important role in ensuring consistency, complementarity and coordination of the LIFE+ Programme with national programmes. However, the coordination with other, mainly national, sources of funds still seems insufficient.

- **NGOs Operating grants:** although the impact of individual NGOs Operating grants is more difficult to assess than that of Action grants, it has been recognised that the NGO grants programme offers high added value through a contribution to policy development and implementation. The eligibility criteria have generally been considered as appropriate; however, the requirement of having members in many countries is perceived as contradictory to the provision that the support can only be given to the beneficiary and not to the members.