LIFE II: financial instrument for the environment (amend. regul. 1973/92/EEC)

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In analysing the proposal to amend the LIFE Regulation, the ESC stressed the critical importance of the following: an adequate level of funding, long-term coherence and conformity with the strategy of sustainable development. It was also important, given the participatory approach and the principle of sharing out responsibilities under the fifth Action Programme, to evaluate the stimulus given to partnership schemes involving socio-economic actors and non-governmental organisations and producing multiplier effects. Areas of activity The ESC was in agreement with the general principle of reducing the number of areas of activity and defining them more carefully, but believed that the Commission’s current choice was too restrictive and did not adequately highlight at least two areas where Community action was necessary and opportune (the prevention and reduction of atmospheric emissions and the protection of soil quality). Project selection criteria The ESC considered that these criteria were spelt out with sufficient clarity. To be effective, however, the priority actions and strategies within each area of activity - which applicants had to take into account and adhere to when preparing their projects - should be clearly defined at an early stage of the annual publication of the invitation to submit applications. Dissemination of information If the aim of the LIFE instrument was to support demonstration projects and projects setting examples for the transfer and dissemination of findings, then strong, on-going action to ensure the dissemination of know-how and information was crucial. Account should also be taken of the need to set in motion systematic procedures for monitoring and checking the progress of projects receiving financial support so that appropriate preventive action could be taken to limit the failure rate. The ESC therefore stressed that the various financial instruments needed to be closely coordinated, with uniform aims, strategies and concrete decisions, so that Community action was not contradictory and did not lead to duplication. Even though its budget was relatively modest, the LIFE programme should play a dynamic role in stimulating and guiding all other environmental funding from a variety of Community instruments.