

Environmental measures in developing countries in the context of sustainable development

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OBJECTIVE: the provision of financial assistance and technical expertise for activities conducted in developing countries which enable the people in those countries to integrate environmental protection and sustainable development concepts more easily into their daily life

COMMUNITY MEASURE: Council Regulation No 722/97 on environmental measures in developing countries in the context of sustainable development

SUBSTANCE: Assistance under the regulation complements and reinforces assistance provided under other instruments of development cooperation and centres on:

- . designing and implementing national strategies for sustainable and equitable development,
- . improving policies and practices for management and conservation of ecosystems, sustainable use of renewable natural resources and environmentally sensitive use of non-renewable natural resources,
- . preserving biological diversity,
- . preserving areas of high environmental pressure and/or transregional ecosystems,
- . improving practices for soil conservation and management in agriculture, livestock farming, forestry and the fight against desertification,
- . improving the environment and regional planning through urban development planning and the implementation of technologically adapted plans and pilot projects for transport, waste water, the provision of drinking water and air pollution,
- . applying and transferring technologies adapted to local environmental constraints and needs,
- . activities aimed at avoiding emissions harmful to the climate,
- . facilitating the adaptation of production processes in developing countries and increasing awareness of environmental constraints that may have an impact on trade,
- . making local populations more aware of the notion of sustainable development,
- . initiatives aimed at protecting ecosystems and habitats and maintaining biological diversity.

- Projects eligible for financing under the general objectives include:

- . pilot schemes in the field likely to contribute to sustainable development, environmental protection and long-term management of natural resources,
- . establishment of guidelines and operational instruments aimed at promoting sustainable development and environmental integration,
- . environmental impact studies on sustainable development projects, programmes, strategies and policies, and assessment of their repercussions on social and economic development,
- . inventory, accounting and statistical work, in order to improve environmental data and indicators.

Particular attention will be given to projects arising from local initiatives, schemes to build up the operational and institutional capacities, prior consultation of the local populations and regional activities.

- Aid recipients and cooperation partners: States, regions, decentralized departments, regional bodies, public agencies, traditional and local communities, private operators and industries, including cooperatives and NGOs and associations representing local people.

- Eligible expenditure: Community financing may cover investment, with the exception of the purchase of buildings, and recurring expenditure (including administrative, maintenance and operating expenditure). It also includes expenditure relating to research, technical assistance, education, training or other services, supplies and works, audits, and evaluation and monitoring missions. Opportunities may be sought for cofinancing with Member States and the international organizations concerned, according to the nature of the operation and the means of the cooperation partners.

- Form of the aid: grants.

- Profile: measures will be taken to emphasize the Community character of the aid provided.

- Consistency and complementarity: the Commission may take all necessary coordination measures to guarantee optimum efficiency for operations with all partners, including the Member States (establishment of a system for the exchange of information and on-the-spot coordination). There will also be coordination with the activities of other international organizations in this area.

- Decision-making procedure: the Commission will administer and implement operations covered by the regulation. It will be assisted by the geographically-determined Committee (ALA, MED, EDF) acting under the regulatory committee procedure (III a). The Commission shall inform the Committee succinctly of any financing decisions it intends to take with regard to projects of less than ECU 2 million in value. Decisions relating to grants higher than this amount are taken with the agreement of the committee. Participation in invitations to tender and the award of contracts is open on equal terms to the recipient country and the Member States and may be extended to other developing

countries. In exceptional cases supplies may originate elsewhere. - Information: the Commission will submit an annual report to Parliament and the Council summarizing the operations financed in the course of that year and evaluating them (contracts, external assessments, etc.). It will also inform the Member States, one month after the decision, of the operations and projects that have been approved. An exchange of views shall take place once a year between the Commission and the various committees concerned on the general guidelines for the operations to be carried out in the year ahead. - Assessment: the Commission will regularly assess operations financed with a view to establishing whether the regulation's objectives have been achieved. The assessment reports will be submitted to the various committees, and to the Member States that so wish. - Budget: ECU 45 million for the period 1997 to 1999. Annual appropriations will be authorized by the budgetary authority within the limits of the financial perspective. ENTRY INTO FORCE: the regulation entered into force on 28 April 1997. It is applicable until 31 December 1999.