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

2004/0218(COD) - 23/05/2007 - Final act

PURPOSE: the establishment of a financial instrument for the environment: “LIFE+”.

LEGISLATIVE ACT: Regulation (EC) No 614/2007 of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning the Financial Instrument for the Environment (LIFE+).

BACKGROUND: environmental protection is one of the key elements of sustainable development. Although much of the EU’s financing on sustainable development is channelled through horizontal financial instruments such as the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), these financial instruments do not cover all environmental priorities, hence the need for a unique financial instrument for the environment capable of providing specific support to the EU’s Sixth Community Environmental Action Programme (6th EAP).

CONTENT: the purpose of this Regulation, therefore, is to establish a financial instrument for the environment, LIFE + to support the EU’s 6th EAP. The general objective of LIFE + is:

- to contribute to the implementation, updating and development of the Community’s environmental legislation;

- to integrate environmental policy objectives into other EU policies to further the principle of sustainable development;

- to support the implementation of the 6th EAP; and

- to finance measures and projects that offer added value at the European level in the Member States.

LIFE+ has been awarded a total financial envelope of EUR 2 143 409 000 covering the period 1 January 2007 to 31 December 2013, with at least 50% of the budgetary resources for LIFE+ dedicated to action grants for projects allocated to the conservation of nature and biodiversity. Three components characterise the LIFE+ programme namely: Nature and Biodiversity; Environment Policy and Governance; and Information and Communication.

Nature and Biodiversity: under this component attention will be given to the implementation – at a local, regional and national level – of the Natura 2000 network, including coastal and marine habitats and species. Support will also be channelled towards consolidating the knowledge base of the Community’s nature and biodiversity policies and legislation; the implementation of policies and instruments that monitor and assess nature and biodiversity and the threat that climate changes poses on biodiversity. It also seeks to further environmental governance by broadening stakeholder involvement.

Environment Policy and Governance: the specific objectives of this component are linked to the objectives of the 6th EAP notably: climate change, health and quality of life; natural resources; and waste. Work will, therefore, focus on the development of innovative policy approaches, technologies, methods and instruments; the consolidation of the EU’s knowledge base for the assessment, monitoring and evaluation of environmental policy and legislation; emphasising environmental implementation at a local and regional level; and supporting improved environmental governance by broadening stakeholder participation.

Information and Communication: this component will focus on raising environmental awareness on issues such as the prevention of forest fires as well as providing support to information campaigns, conferences and training – again on issues such as the prevention of forest fires.

Community grants will be provided in specific forms, such as framework partnership agreements, participation in financial mechanisms and funds, or through co-funding action grants. For action grants, the maximum rate of co-financing will be 50% of eligible costs. However, by way of exception, the maximum co-financing rate for LIFE + Nature and Biodiversity may be up to 75% of eligible costs in the case of projects concerning priority habitats or species.

At least 78% of the budgetary resources for LIFE + must be set aside for action grants for projects, with the Commission responsible for the proportionate distribution of projects through the establishment of indicative annual national allocations (for the periods 2007-2010, and 2011-2013).

Programmes financed through LIFE+ will be open to the participation of third countries notably: EFTA States; candidate countries for accession to the EU; and Western Balkan countries.

In adopting this Regulation a number of benefits are expected to be realised. For example, all existing environmental instruments will be consolidated into one legal framework in a bid to avoid work duplication. The creation of a single, streamlined financial instrument for the environment will lead to the simplification of procedures. Further, the Regulation provides for a smooth transition from LIFE (the current programme) to LIFE+ through the establishment of procedures relating to monitoring, auditing and assessing activities financed under the current programmes following their expiry.

REPEAL: Regulation (EC) No 1655/2000 concerning the Financial Instrument for the Environment LIFE. Decision No 1411/2001/EC on a Community Framework for co-operation to promote sustainable urban development Decision No 466/2002/EC laying down a Community action programme promoting non-governmental organisations primarily active in the field of environmental protection. Regulation (EC) No 2152/2003 concerning monitoring of forests and environmental interactions in the Community (Forest Focus).

ENTRY INTO FORCE: 12 June 2007.