



LIFE - III



The Financial Instrument for the Environment



European Commission



The Financial Instrument for the Environment

Launched in 1992, LIFE (The Financial Instrument for the Environment) is one of the spearheads of Community environment policy.

LIFE cofinances environmental initiatives in the European Union and certain third countries bordering on the Mediterranean and the Baltic Sea and in central and east European accession candidate countries that have decided to participate in LIFE.

LIFE has been implemented in phases:

- 400 million euros were allocated for the first phase (1992-1995),
- approximately 450 million euros were allocated for the second phase (1996-1999),
- the current phase, "LIFE III" (2000-2004)¹ has a budget of 640 million euros.

In the framework of sustainable development, LIFE should contribute to the implementation, development and enhancement of the Community environmental policy and legislation as well as the integration of the environment into other EU policies. LIFE should also lead new solutions facing EU environmental problems being explored.

Life is the instrument which should work towards the implementation of Community policy defined by the Sixth Action Programme for the Environment based on a practical approach.

Open to all "natural and legal persons", projects financed by LIFE must meet the following general criteria:

- correspond to the priorities established at Community level and contribute to the objectives defined above;
- be submitted by technically and financially sound participants;
- be feasible in terms of technical content, timetable and budget and offer good value for money.

LIFE consists of three thematic components: "LIFE-Nature", "LIFE-Environment" and "LIFE-Third countries".

Each year a call for proposals is published in the Official Journal (OJEC), the Member States and third countries send the Commission their project proposals. The Commission publishes the closing date in the Official Journal and evaluates the proposals. The Commission is responsible for the financial control and monitoring of the implementation of LIFE projects. Accompanying measures ensure the on-site monitoring of projects, dissemination of results and, in the case of LIFE-Nature, encourage certain forms of cooperation between similar projects ("Co-op" measure).

2050 LIFE projects were supported from 1992 to 2002:

- 700 LIFE-Nature projects,
- 1199 LIFE-Environment projects,
- 161 LIFE-Third country projects.

¹ Regulation (EC) No 1655/2000 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 July 2000 concerning the Financial Instrument for the Environment (LIFE).

This Regulation repeals Regulation (EEC) No 1973/92 which established the LIFE financial instrument.

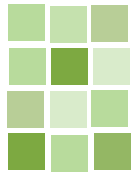
Community environmental policy

The environmental policy of the European Union is based on the precautionary principle and on the principles that preventive action should be taken, environmental damage rectified at source and that the polluter should pay.

Moreover, the Treaty of Amsterdam stipulates that Community policy on health, safety and the environment must aim at a high level of protection, taking account of new developments based on scientific data.

The European Union has a proactive environmental policy aimed at protecting the soil, water and air, the climate, fauna and flora. In thirty years, six **Community Environmental Action Programmes** have been successfully implemented and over 700 legal texts (Directives, Regulations, Decisions, etc) adopted concerning the environment.

The range of environmental instruments has grown with the development of Community environment policy. In addition to adopting framework legislation, which provides a high level of protection for the environment while guaranteeing the operation of the internal market, the European Union has established a number of non-regulatory instruments (voluntary agreements, environmental monitoring, economic instruments, etc) and a financial instrument for the environment: LIFE.



LIFE - Nature

The specific objective of LIFE-Nature is to contribute to the implementation of Community nature protection legislation: the “Birds” Directive (79/409/EEC) and the “Habitats” Directive (92/43/EEC), and in particular the establishment of the “Natura 2000” network (see below) for the in situ management and conservation of Europe’s most remarkable fauna and flora species and habitats.

Nature conservation projects which contribute to maintaining or restoring natural habitats and/or species populations to a favourable conservation status within the meaning of the Habitats Directive are eligible for LIFE-Nature. Projects must concern Special Protection Areas or Sites of Community Importance and the species listed in these Directives.

The European Union has allocated approximately 300 million euros for LIFE-Nature for the period 2000-2004. The rate of Community cofinancing may be up to 50% of the costs. By way of exception, for projects concerning priority natural habitats or priority species defined in the Habitats Directive the Commission can finance up to 75% of the eligible costs.

LIFE-Nature in action

LIFE-Nature finances nature conservation projects; this can cover a very wide range of projects, reflecting the diversity of natural environments in Europe. Examples include:

Belgium: acquisition of land to protect areas of special importance.

Denmark: restoration of riverbanks and wetland habitats; reintroduction of grazing.

Germany: restoration of wetlands.

Estonia: preservation of Baltic boreal coastal meadows.

Greece: protection of almost extinct species such as the Mediterranean monk seal.

Spain: protection of grasslands, wetlands, dunes, lagoons and coastal and maritime areas; protection of declining species (brown bear, European black vulture, European mink, bats, etc.).

France: ecological land management contracts with groups of farmers.

Ireland: enhancement of Ireland’s natural heritage, in particular through eco-tourism.

Italy: protection of certain species (wolves, bears, bats, etc.) or certain habitats (e.g. wetlands, river ecosystems, springs).

Latvia: restoration and protection of extensive natural areas.

Luxembourg: restoration of biodiversity destroyed by farming.

Hungary: conservation of the wolf and the lynx in the north-east of the country.

Netherlands: reintroduction of spontaneous processes to recreate natural landscapes.

Austria: “green bridge” above a motorway to allow brown bears to move into the Alps and strengthen the bear population.

Portugal: management plans for Natura 2000 sites.

Romania: national action plan to protect dolphins in the Black Sea.

Slovenia: protection of peatbogs.

Finland: monitoring of certain species of butterfly, indicators of the state of the environment.

Sweden: restoration of large areas of coastal meadows and wetlands on the islands of the Baltic sea.

United Kingdom: protection of birds which nest on the land, which may involve the removal of non-native animal species such as the American mink which are proliferating in the Hebrides.



A European ecological network: Natura 2000

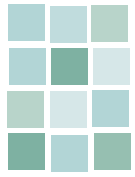
The purpose of the Natura 2000 network is to preserve biodiversity by maintaining or restoring natural habitats of Community importance.

To combat the serious decline in biodiversity and following closely on the 1992 Rio conference, the European Union adopted the “birds” directive of 1979 and the “habitats” directives of 1992 on the conservation of habitats and species. The Natura 2000 network has been established as a result.

The objective is to promote the conservation of natural habitats and the habitats of wild fauna and flora while taking into account the economic, social and cultural requirements and specific regional and local characteristics of each Member State.

The Natura 2000 network is primarily based on a policy of contracts concluded with all the local partners: elected representatives, proprietors, managers, etc. Their support constitutes the best guarantee of the long-term success of the network. The emphasis has therefore been placed on local consultations prior to drawing up proposals for sites suitable for inclusion in the network. However, the European Commission does have other regulatory tools to ensure progress on Natura 2000 should the contract-based policy fail to meet the objectives set in the Member States.

It should be stressed that the purpose of Natura 2000 is not to create “nature sanctuaries” where all human activity is prohibited (for example, forestry resources can be exploited in the designated areas). On the contrary, today, the presence – or resumption – of beneficial human activity is often essential for maintaining biodiversity, especially in rural and forested areas.



LIFE - Environment

The specific objective of LIFE-Environment is to contribute to the development of innovative techniques and methods by cofinancing demonstration projects.

The LIFE Regulation defines five areas eligible for funding:

- land-use development and planning,
- water management;
- reduction of the environmental impact of economic activities;
- waste management;
- reduction of the environmental impact of products through an integrated product policy.

LIFE-Environment does not finance research or investment in existing technologies or infrastructure. The purpose of the programme is to bridge the gap between research and development results and their large-scale application. To this end, demonstration projects based on the results of projects which have been supported under past or ongoing technological research and development programmes are encouraged.

The dissemination of results is essential for ensuring that innovative technologies and procedures for protecting the environment are widely applied.

The European Union has allocated approximately 300 million euros for LIFE-Environment for the period 2000-2004. The rate of Community cofinancing can be up to 30% for projects generating substantial net revenue, 50% in other cases.



LIFE-Environment in action

Project examples:

Belgium: integrated environmental management system for major socio-cultural events (festivals, fairs, etc).

Denmark: decontamination of treated wood waste; ecological label for the retail sector.

Germany: recycling of demolition waste and waste oils; action to improve water quality; local environmental management plans.

Greece: environmental management plan for the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens; environment-friendly olive oil production.

Spain: integrated initiatives to promote sustainable development and sustainable tourism; EMAS in the farming sector.

France: automobile parts design: improving environmental performance; mobility and environment-friendly transport; innovative treatment of waste water.

Ireland: environmental management at regional level; recycling of electronic equipment: creation of jobs providing an entry into the labour market.

Italy: local initiatives to promote sustainable tourism; action to combat the greenhouse effect and air pollution.

Luxembourg: Use of simulation and monitoring software for successful treatment of waste water.

Netherlands: integrated water management in towns and cities; promotion of ecological construction; "bonus points" encouraging the consumption of environment-friendly products.

Austria: sustainable development strategies in urban and rural areas; promotion of bio-fuels and recycled building materials.

Portugal: monitoring of air quality; reducing the environmental impact of pig farming.

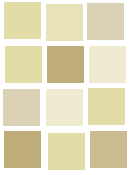
Romania: selective household waste collection system.

Finland: integrated management of coastal areas and river basins.

Sweden: low solvent lacquers based on new binder combinations; ecological treatment of waste; sustainable forest management.

United Kingdom: sustainable urban development; collection, redistribution and reuse of waste IT equipment.





LIFE - Third countries



Technical assistance projects are eligible for LIFE-Third countries if they:

- are of interest to the Community, notably through their contribution to implementing regional and international guidelines and agreements;
- promote sustainable development at the international, national or regional level;
- provide solutions to major environmental problems in the region and the relevant sector.

Priority is given to projects which will promote cooperation at the transfrontier, transnational or regional level.

The European Union has allocated over 38 million euros to LIFE-Third countries for the period 2000-2004. The rate of Community cofinancing can be up to 70% of the maximum cost of technical assistance projects.

The objective of LIFE-Third countries is to contribute to the establishment of capacities and administrative structures needed in the environmental sector and in the development of environmental policy and action programmes in third countries bordering on the Mediterranean and the Baltic Sea other than central and east European accession candidate countries.

LIFE-Third countries in action

Some of the projects recently selected:

Albania: sustainable traffic development in Tirana.

Algeria: creation of an environmental information, awareness and training centre.

Bosnia-Herzegovina: environmental action plan for the Bardaca wetland area; environmental management assistance to regional and local authorities; reduction of the environmental impact of industrial activity; assistance in the preparation of legislation to reduce pollution.

Croatia: introduction of national provisions concerning air pollution and waste.

Cyprus: preparation of a legislative framework for reducing air pollution.

Gaza Strip and West Bank: integrated management of the rural environment.

Jordan: creation of a natural tourist park in Jerash province: environmental aspects.

Lebanon: reduction of industrial pollution and waste, measures to combat forest fires.

Malta: preparation of legislation to combat nitrate pollution.

Russia: environmental technical assistance to the City of Kaliningrad; administrative assistance for the protection of the Baltic coast.

Syria: introduction of environmental management systems (mainly EMAS) in Syrian businesses.

Tunisia: introduction of EMAS and the ISO standard 14001 in SMEs; establishment of pilot desertification monitoring systems (with **Morocco**).

Turkey: measures to improve air and water quality and waste management; programme to combat odorous emissions.





LIFE: further information

More information is available on the LIFE homepage (<http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/life/home.htm>). User-friendly databases contain brief descriptions of LIFE-Nature, LIFE-Environment and LIFE-Third countries projects funded since 1992. The full text of the LIFE Regulation and the infopacks for each LIFE component – including information on how to apply for funding, project selection criteria and application forms – can be found on the LIFE homepage.

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