

Programme for the environment and climate action, LIFE 2014-2020

2011/0428(COD) - 06/11/2017 - Follow-up document

The Commission presented a report accompanying the mid-term evaluation of the LIFE programme 2014-2020, the EUs funding instrument for the environment and climate action. The mid-term evaluation covers the programmes first two years (2014-2015) and is largely based on the external study by an independent consultant.

This evaluation comes at an early stage of the programmes implementation: most projects have yet to start and few projects have finished. This is why the evaluation has focused mainly on: the processes put in place to reach its objectives, the ongoing activities (such as contracts/projects already financed) and, where relevant, their anticipated results.

The evidence collected so far shows that LIFE programme is:

- the only programme with environment and climate action upfront;
- a flexible instrument, which finances projects of different sizes and attracts small, medium and large enterprises, universities, research centres, national and local authorities, civil society as well as various NGOs;
- appreciated for its quick reaction to changing political and societal needs;
- known for the relevance and quality of its activities, which answer local needs and are visible and appreciated across the EU by stakeholders and the general public;
- expected to provide value for money and so far can demonstrate a direct and measurable impact, e.g. on reducing emissions and energy consumption or on protecting biodiversity by improving species conservation status;
- extremely appreciated for its EU added value because it ensures that EU environmental and climate legislation and policies are applied in a consistent manner across the EU. It represents an EU level platform for sharing best practice and demonstration activities;
- well positioned to provide a contribution to the economy by incentivising EU industry to further develop green technology capabilities, which form one of EUs competitive advantages and supporting long-term economic viability and stability by promoting sustainable development;
- well managed as demonstrated by its very low error rate. This means that funds are used according to the financial rules while delivering measurable results with a substantial impact on the ground. This is ensured by the monitoring system, which allows timely management decisions.

Recommendations: the evaluation also highlights some recommendations for improvement:

- the need to focus on existing and new priorities: the circular economy, delivery of the 2030 climate and energy framework especially by encouraging innovation, the implementation of the Paris Agreement, the possible review of the EU adaptation strategy, the achievement of the objectives of the Nature Directives, the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs, within available financial resources. These priorities will be addressed through fine-tuning the financing per priority area;
- the scope and demand for simplification of LIFE procedures for grants remain, in particular for the submission of proposals and reporting;
- the communication strategy needs a more active and responsive approach to better target audiences and deliver key messages that are objective-specific and target-specific;
- increase project replicability and transferability by targeting obstacles preventing activities continuing after the project ends (such as lack of financial resources and capacity/human resources for investment planning) thereby developing a pipeline of projects for investment from other Union and private sector sources;
- the national contact points need a stronger role.

These LIFE mid-term evaluation findings will guide the preparation of the next MAWP 2018-2020 and the post-2020 MFF.