

BONUS update, European Parliament, 13 January 2016

Background:

1. In October 2010, based on co-decision by the European Parliament and the Council, BONUS, the joint Baltic Sea research and development programme was established under Article 185 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU Article 185).
2. BONUS is the first and only programming and funding initiative integrating EU member states' marine and maritime research in a macroregional scale. By this it evolves into a programme not only coordinating and delivering cutting edge science and underpinning national and EU policies, but also contributing increasingly to sustainable blue growth and related EU strategies.
3. BONUS supports long-term sustainable development and ecosystem based management of the Baltic Sea region, the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan, the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive and other European, regional and national coastal and marine environmental policies and plans.
4. BONUS is funded by national funding institutions in the eight EU member states around the Baltic Sea (Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden) and the EU. Russia participates in BONUS through bilateral agreements.
5. The funding for years 2010-2017 is EUR 100 million, of which half comes from the national funding institutions and half from the EU Seventh Programme for research, technological development and demonstration.
6. Currently there are 28 BONUS funded projects being implemented: 15 research projects worth a total of EUR 43 million and 13 innovation projects worth a total of EUR 7 million. BONUS call 2015: Blue Baltic is currently open (9 November 2015-10 March 2016) with a minimum of EUR 30 million funding to be distributed for themes opened in the call www.bonusportal.org/bluebaltic.
7. Projects funded are of high excellence and relevance and transnational. They produce knowledge, scientific evidence and innovation solutions needed for policymakers and other end-users. The interdisciplinarity of the projects ensures that natural sciences as well as socio-economic disciplines are part of the projects.
8. BONUS model consists of 'virtual common pot' funding mechanism and joint rules to all BONUS members.
9. BONUS serves as a model to other European regional seas and areas, such as the Black Sea, the Mediterranean and North Sea as well as for instance the catchment area of Danube River, in implementing sustainable development.
10. In 2009-2011, the BONUS+ programme tested the mechanisms of collaboration in a call that funded 16 research projects worth EUR 22 million. The researchers of these projects served as members or observers in 570 stakeholder and scientific committees and these projects contributed to 37 EC consultations and over 150 public policies and governance action as well as modified 50 policy documents and action plans.
11. BONUS strategic research agenda was developed in 2010-11 together with over 800 stakeholders across the Baltic Sea region, and is continuously updated to reflect the policy development. The agenda underpins all BONUS calls and therefore projects, and commits BONUS to engage with the end-users and the society for the whole duration of the programme's and projects' existence.
12. BONUS visited and informed the European Parliament most recently on 30 September 2015 Roundtable discussion of Experts on the topic of the Environmental State of the Baltic Sea that was hosted by the Member of the Parliament Sirpa Pietikäinen, the chair of the informal Baltic Sea region intergroup. A BONUS information event was held also in November 2013 marking the first full year of implementation of BONUS. The event was hosted by Members of the Parliament Satu Hassi, Tunne Kelam and Marita Ulvskog as well as Director-level representatives of DG Research and Innovation, Environment, Marine and Regio.
13. The most encouragingly positive result of the independent interim assessment of the BONUS programme, commissioned by the European Commission in 2014, was communicated to the European Parliament in early 2015 and copies of a briefing document distributed to the MEPs.
14. The BONUS 2 outline proposal for continuation of the BONUS programme that is to a large extent based on the BONUS example outlined above was submitted to the Commission in November 2015.

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Current status:

1. The outline for the continuation of the BONUS programme was submitted to the Commission on 11 November 2015 by the Minister of Education and Research of the Republic of Estonia for establishment of the joint Baltic Sea and the North Sea research and innovation programme.
2. Participating states include Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, The Netherlands, Poland and Sweden. The negotiations with the United Kingdom to join are ongoing.
3. The joint Baltic Sea and the North Sea research and innovation programme is envisaged to be implemented 2018-2023 with a volume of EUR 200 million and 50% funding from the EU and it is designed to underpin and develop EU and national policies and strategies with particular consideration of Europe's blue growth strategy.
4. The overarching objective of this proposed new programme is to elevate the Northern European regions' research and innovation capacity to a level necessary to achieve a decisive boost in the development of a sustainable marine and maritime economy.
5. The outline document describes the main objectives, scope and basic functioning mechanisms of the programme as well as gives an overview of the two seas' ecosystems linked to the surrounding societies and respective types of policy responses.
6. Article 185 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU Article 185), linked to Horizon 2020, the EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation is considered the most appropriate, efficient and impactful funding instrument for the implementation of the new proposed programme.
7. Next in the process will follow the Commission's ex ante assessment of the BONUS programme after which the Commission will draft the legislative proposal and carry out inter-service consultations.
8. The process for seeking the co-decision of the European Parliament and the Council will commence when the Commission sends the proposed "BONUS 2" legislation for the European Parliament's and the Council's consideration and negotiations in mid-2017.
9. In the European Parliament, the consultation is expected to be channeled through the Industry, Research and Energy Committee (ITRE).
10. For the continuation plans of BONUS, understanding of the plans in key committees such as ITRE and the relevant intergroups of Seas, Rivers, Islands & Coastal areas, and of Climate change, Sustainable development and Biodiversity as well as the informal intergroup of the Baltic Sea region is critically important in the coming months and years, utmost to ensure a broad understanding of the proposed programme, its strengths and value-added to Europe and its delivery against the blue growth and long-term sustainability agendas.
11. BONUS is planning to organise information events to the Members of the European Parliament and their assistants in Brussels and/or Strasbourg regarding BONUS continuation plans. These events are envisaged to take place later this year or in early 2017, i.e. closer to the time when the BONUS 2 legislation arrives from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council (envisaged to happen in mid-year 2017), and BONUS seeks for hosts amongst Members of the European Parliament across different groups.
12. In addition, BONUS is exploring the interest of Members of the European Parliament to learn first-hand more about research and innovation action on the ground, for instance by visiting a BONUS research cruise in one of the ports in the Baltic Sea region. A good opportunity for this next summer are the Almedalen 2016 in Visby or Folkemodet 2016 in Borholmen events where the BONUS shipping cluster is planning to join forces and be on display.
13. For further information, please contact the BONUS Secretariat: Executive Director Kaisa Kononen kaisa.kononen@bonuseeig.fi, +358 40 5811189 and Communications Manager Maija Sirola majja.sirola@bonuseeig.fi, +358 40 3520076 – website: www.bonusportal.org | www.bonusprojects.org
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