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From : The Commission  
To : Delegations

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Subject : Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on the participation by the Community in a Joint Baltic Sea Research and Development Programme (BONUS-169) undertaken by several Member States  
- Information from the Commission

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Delegations will find attached an information note from the Commission services on the above-mentioned topic.

**Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on  
the participation by the Community in a Joint Baltic Sea Research and  
Development Programme (BONUS-169) undertaken by several Member States**

**Information note from the Commission services**

The sea and the coasts of the Baltic Sea are particularly affected by the combined and increasingly negative impact of pollution, climate change, acidification, overexploitation and biodiversity loss. This has critical implications for the entire Baltic Region, and for the wider European Community. In the coming decades, global change, long-term and long-range influences are predicted to increase, putting additional pressures on the Baltic Sea system.

While many research activities are taking place in the Baltic Sea region, these efforts remain for a large part uncoordinated and lack a jointly agreed regional action plan. An action at Community level in the Baltic Sea region is urgently needed, in order to meet the complex environmental challenges of the Baltic Sea region as a whole.

During the BONUS ERA-Net and ERA-Net Plus, the Participating States recognised that true integration can only be achieved through durable cooperation and to this end they clearly demonstrated their willingness and intention to act together in implementing a Joint Research Programme under an Article 169 initiative.

In its conclusions of 5 and 6 March 2009, the Council (Competitiveness) invited the Commission to submit, in early 2009, to the Council and the European Parliament, a proposal to transform the BONUS ERA-Net Plus into a joint research programme based on Article 169 of the Treaty.

On 29 October 2009, and in accordance with the FP7 Cooperation Specific Programme, the European Commission adopted the BONUS proposal and put it forward to the Council and the European Parliament.

The proposal invites the Member States to work towards improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the Baltic Sea Region's fragmented environmental research by integrating the research activities in the region into a durable, cooperative, interdisciplinary, well focussed multi-national programme.

The proposed two-stage approach, comprising a Strategic Phase followed by an Implementation Phase, would allow for engaging a boarder range of funding institutions, further developing the stakeholders' involvement and establishing a coherent, policy-driven and long term research agenda, allowing as well for continuity in the momentum developed by the BONUS consortium through the previous instruments. To this end, and in order to make full and effective use of the funding, the legislative proposal considers the eligible costs for the Strategic Phase as of 1 January 2010.

The proposal complies with the Van Velzen recommendations, including the one referring to financial integration as a prerequisite for an effective implementation of an Article 169 initiative.

Its aim is to help Europe in responding more effectively to key challenges in the region in relation to environmental protection and sustainable development, tourism, aquaculture, food safety, maritime transport and socio-economic issues. BONUS-169 is fully aligned with the objectives of the European Strategy for Marine and Maritime Research and the Union's Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. In addition, it will also contribute to the achievement of the objectives of the revised Lisbon Strategy by investing in knowledge for growth and jobs.