



European  
Commission



# BEST PA

## The BEST Preparatory Action

Promoting biodiversity action  
in the EU's Outermost Regions  
and Overseas Countries and  
Territories

Printed in Luxembourg

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It can be accessed through the Europa server (<http://ec.europa.eu>).

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Print	ISBN 978-92-79-73431-1	KH-01-17-982-EN-C	doi:10.2779/87346
PDF	ISBN 978-92-79-73432-8	KH-01-17-982-EN-N	doi:10.2779/516800

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# CONTENTS

	Foreword	
1.	Executive Summary .....	4
2.	History .....	5
3.	Objective and Implementation of the BEST PA .....	6
	3.1 Objective of the BEST PA	
	3.2. Implementation of the BEST PA	
	3.2.1 Overview	
	3.2.2 Projects funded under BEST 2011 and BEST 2012	
	3.2.3 Outcome of the open call for tender in 2013: BEST III	
4.	Political Recognition .....	15
	4.1. EU-level documents	
	4.2 OR and OCT level documents	
	4.3 International level	
	4.4 Events in the European Parliament	
5.	Partnerships .....	17
	5.1 Additional funding	
	5.2 International visibility	
6.	Further Investments .....	18
	6.1 BEST 2.0 Programme	
	6.2 BEST RUP Project	
7.	Lessons learnt .....	19
	7.1 Response to the open calls for proposals	
	7.2 Grant execution	
8.	Conclusion .....	20



# FOREWORD



*Maurice Ponga, Member of the European Parliament*

Chères lectrices,  
Chers lecteurs,

Lancée en 2011, l'action préparatoire BEST a été un véritable succès et une réalisation concrète de l'intervention de l'Union européenne dans l'ensemble des territoires ultramarins européens pour protéger la biodiversité et valoriser les services écosystémiques permettant ainsi de rapprocher l'Union européenne de ses territoires éloignés du continent et parfois un peu oubliés. Pourtant la biodiversité ultramarine est d'une richesse incroyable tant pour l'Union européenne que pour le monde ce qui nécessite une protection et une valorisation particulières.

BEST est une initiative remarquable qui devrait être poursuivie tant les besoins sont nombreux. J'en suis convaincu et c'est pour cela que j'ai soutenu la prolongation de cette action préparatoire durant 3 ans et que je défends avec vigueur la mise en place d'un instrument pérenne après 2020.

L'approche inclusive qui a été retenue, et son pragmatisme mérite d'être soulignés. En effet, BEST est ouvert à tous les territoires ultramarins - indépendamment de leur statut de Régions ultra périphériques (RUP) ou de Pays et territoires d'outre-mer (PTOM) ce qui permet d'avoir des actions par bassin et au niveau régional et ainsi d'avoir une approche cohérente et plus efficace. La méthode BEST a fait ses preuves sur le terrain. Elle doit être poursuivie et pourrait même être élargie à d'autres domaines tels que l'énergie tant les liens sont étroits avec la protection de la biodiversité et l'adaptation au changement climatique.

Restons donc tous mobilisés pour pérenniser l'initiative BEST, et sachez que vous pouvez compter sur mon engagement au Parlement européen !





*Daniel Calleja Crespo, Director General for Environment,  
European Commission*

One of my first interventions as Director General for Environment was during the event on 'Promoting partnerships in the European overseas' organised in the European Parliament hosted by Mr Maurice Ponga, MEP in the run-up to the Paris Climate Change Conference in December 2015.

Participants discussed the pivotal role of EU's Outermost Regions and Overseas Countries and Territories for protecting biodiversity. From the Tropics to the Poles they are home to more diverse biodiversity and ecosystems than continental EU, and they are particularly vulnerable to human induced and natural impacts including climate change. I highlighted – inter alia – the value of nature and the importance of investing in nature as our life insurance and the fact that biodiversity and climate change are intrinsically linked.

As this brochure demonstrates, the BEST preparatory action was very successful and delivered a wide range of concrete results which contribute to halt and reverse the loss of biodiversity and fight Climate Change in the global biodiversity hotspots that are the EU's Outermost Regions and Overseas Countries and Territories.

The outcome of the actions supported through the BEST preparatory action provide a solid basis for building a sustainable partnership as called for in the Message from Guadeloupe. Partnerships are at the heart of the EU's Biodiversity Strategy and the experience with the BEST 2.0 Programme clearly demonstrates the value of small and medium action grants for unlocking the local potential.

I would like to thank the European Parliament and the French Development Aid Agency for having provided the seed money for the BEST initiative and IUCN and their partners and all local actors for their good work.

# 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



The **BEST initiative** started as a follow up to the ‘**Message from La Reunion Island**’<sup>1</sup> that called for a dedicated funding mechanism to support the conservation of EU Overseas’ biodiversity. BEST promotes the conservation of biodiversity and sustainable use of ecosystem services, including ecosystem-based approaches to climate change adaptation and mitigation, in the ORs and OCTs. It has helped to raise awareness of the ecological importance of ORs and OCTs for conserving global biodiversity.

The **BEST Preparatory Action**<sup>2</sup> (**BEST PA**) provided seed money for the BEST Initiative, which allowed funding of projects on the ground and of measures to sustain the preparatory action (see section 3.2).

The BEST PA was first adopted by the European Parliament in 2010, then resubmitted twice in 2011 and 2012, with an overall budget of 6 million Euros. The 16 projects (see sections 3.2.2.1 and 3.2.3) funded through the 2 open calls for proposals (BEST-2011 and BEST-2012) supported activities for:

- the designation and management of terrestrial and marine protected areas,
- combatting invasive alien species,
- establishing synergies using ecosystem services for climate change adaptation and mitigation,
- the valuation of ecosystem services,
- increasing knowledge, networking, education, capacity building and outreach activities.

They involved organisations in the ORs, OCTs and, in Member States, including NGOs, public bodies, regional and international organisations and research institutes for the implementation of activities at local and regional levels.

The third and last year of the BEST PA was implemented through an open call for tender for ‘Measures towards sustaining the BEST PA’

(BEST III). The selected consortium, led by IUCN, brought together key actors of all 7 regions where ORs and OCTs are located. The BEST III contract (see section 3.2.3 and BOX 2) helped to build BEST as:

- An **open partnership**: a professional team led and supported staff liaising with the local actors, the European Commission, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Secretariat, donors and high level scientific and funding experts as advisers.
- A **field-based and participative approach**: regional knowledge hubs, coordinated by staff involved in local projects, working for and with local stakeholders.
- A **science-based action strategy**: for each region, with the participation of local actors, the regional hubs elaborated regional ecosystem profiles. This is a proven tool to guide long-term conservation efforts and investments with the identification of Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) and conservation priorities as the basis for regional investment strategies.
- A **networking instrument**, connecting projects needing support with funders interested in saving biodiversity hotspots and wilderness areas of international importance.

The work enabled by the BEST PA led to further investments through the **BEST 2.0**<sup>3</sup> and **BEST RUP**<sup>4</sup> Programmes (see section 6) and to international recognition. The BEST initiative was recognised in 2016 as the **first inter-regional challenge** of the **Global Island Partnership (GLISPA)**<sup>5</sup> (see section 5).



## 2. HISTORY

Spread over 5 oceans of the world and in the Amazon region, the EU's Outermost Regions (ORs) and Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs) host biodiversity of global importance with more endemic animal and plant species than the whole of territory of the mainland EU. They are part of 4 biodiversity hotspots<sup>6</sup> and contain wilderness areas covering a terrestrial area equivalent the EU territory. With a combined Exclusive Economic Zone of over 19 million km<sup>2</sup>, the EU Overseas' marine domain is the largest in the world, it is home to significant fishing stocks and over 20% of the world's reefs and lagoons ecosystems<sup>7</sup>. Some are recognised as ecologically and biologically significant marine areas (EBSAs)<sup>8</sup>, Particularly Sensitive Sea Areas (PSSAs)<sup>9</sup> as well as Mission Blue Hope Spots<sup>10</sup> and part of 10 of the world's 66 Large Marine Ecosystems (LMEs)<sup>11</sup>.

In July 2008, a conference on «The European Union and its Overseas Entities: Strategies to counter Climate Change and Biodiversity Loss» was organised by IUCN in La Réunion under the French Presidency of the European Union<sup>12</sup>. Paragraph 13 of the resulting «Message from Reunion Island» states:

***«There is an urgent need for EU Member States and the European Commission, together with the ORs and OCTs, to establish a voluntary scheme for the protection of species and habitats, inspired by the Natura 2000 approach. This scheme should be easily accessible, flexible, adapted to the local situation, balance conservation and development needs, as well as take into account existing mechanisms and tools. The implementation of the scheme should be based on local commitment and shared financing.»***

Following up on this recommendation, the EC in collaboration with the EP set up a draft concept with general objectives and basic principles. It resulted in the BEST Initiative that started with the BEST PA as a «Voluntary scheme for **B**iodiversity and **E**cosystem **S**ervices in **T**erritories of European Overseas»<sup>13</sup>.

Actions to conserve and restore biodiversity in the ORs and OCTs play a decisive role for the achievement of international and European biodiversity targets. In addition, ORs and OCTs represent strategic gateways for regional cooperation and global ocean governance. Already the **EU Biodiversity Action Plan** from 2006 included an action devoted to biodiversity in European overseas and the **EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020**, released in 2011<sup>14</sup>, encourages the development of partnerships. It states that «the [European] Commission and Member States will work with the ORs and OCTs through the BEST initiative to promote biodiversity conservation and sustainable use of ecosystem services».

Balance between the conservation and development needs is critical in the socio-geographical context of the EU Overseas. Valuable ecosystems in the ORs and OCTs are faced with development activities and often include zones with major interaction between human activities and biodiversity. Thus the BEST initiative also aims to promote sustainable development – inter alia - by supporting

conservation approaches, which emphasise conservation and livelihood benefits including ecosystem-based approaches to climate change adaptation and mitigation.

Many economic and social activities in ORs and OCTs directly depend on healthy ecosystems and valuable ecosystem services. Therefore, the BEST initiative is not limited to conservation measures in the strict sense, but also promotes measures that encourage and guarantee the sustainable use of biodiversity, ecosystems and ecosystem services.

The BEST PA was adopted by the European Parliament in 2010 and resubmitted twice in 2011 and 2012 with a budget of 2 million Euros/year. The adoption of the two prolongations of the BEST PA was backed by the high numbers of proposals submitted to the open calls for proposals BEST-2011 and BEST-2012.





## 3. OBJECTIVE AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BEST PA

### 3.1 Objective of the BEST PA

The objective of the BEST PA, as stated in Commission Decision C(2011) 1258 final of 1 March 2011, was *to provide further means to protect biodiversity and ecosystem services in the EU ORs and OCTs*. Specific objectives were to:

*a) promote the establishment and effective management of marine and terrestrial protected areas (PAs) in the EU ORs and OCTs, taking into account already existing PAs;*

*b) implement sustainable management of marine and terrestrial resources, which contribute to protecting important species, habitats and ecosystem functions outside PAs;*

*c) strengthen conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystem services in the EU ORs and OCTs by :*

- addressing the wider ecosystem challenge of climate change by maintaining healthy, resilient ecosystems and fostering green infrastructure and ecosystem-based approaches to climate change adaptation and mitigation, which often bring multiple benefits;*

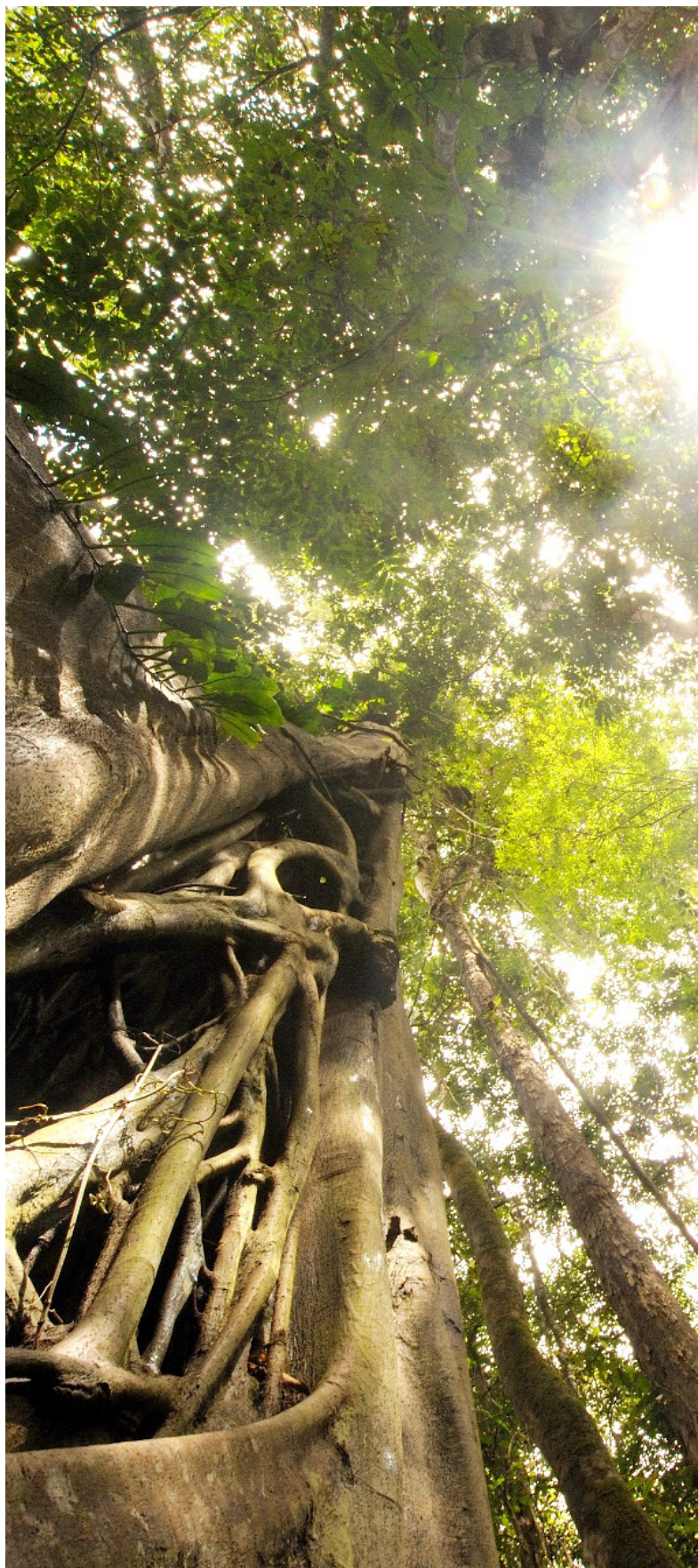
- strengthening capacities at a local and regional scale, including the neighbouring countries, by promoting exchange of information and best practice amongst all stakeholders, including local administration, landowners, private sector, researchers and civil societies etc... ;*

- strengthening existing nature conservation programmes and related efforts within and outside conservation areas;*

- broadening the knowledge base and filling the knowledge gaps, including quantifying the value of ecosystem functions and services;*

*d) encourage and facilitate transboundary work, addressing issues such as invasive alien species, the impacts of climate change and the implementation of international conventions in particular Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and United Framework Convention on Combating Desertification (UNCCD),*

*e) develop mechanisms to lever resources including 'payments for ecosystem-services' (PES).*







## 3.2 Implementation of the BEST PA

### 3.2.1 Overview

The budget for the BEST PA was 2 million Euros for each of the three consecutive years. The means of implementation included two open calls for proposals (BEST-2011 and BEST-2012) and one open call for tender in 2013. The BEST PA enabled funding of 16 grants and one service contract on 'Measures towards sustaining the BEST Preparatory Action' (BEST III). The calls were very successful. The overall requested funding from the 83 submitted project proposals was 6 times higher than the available budget for BEST-2011 and BEST-2012 (see BOX 1), which demonstrated the high demand for biodiversity funding in the ORs and OCTs.

Taking into account the mobilisation and needs two follow up programmes have been funded (see sections 6.1 and 6.2).

#### BOX 1: Budget overview BEST 2011 and BEST 2012

	Nb eligible proposals submitted	requested budget (€)	total cost (€)	own contribution (€)
BEST 2011	41	13,360,486	19,704,643	6,344,157
BEST 2012	42	12,778,097	15,902,307	3,124,210
BEST 2011 + BEST 2012	83	26,138,583	35,606,950	9,468,367

	Nb eligible proposals submitted	requested budget (€)	total cost (€)	own contribution (€)
BEST 2011	9	1,998,757	3,635,777	1,638,020
BEST 2012	7	1,982,090	2,517,196	535,106
BEST 2011 + BEST 2012	16	3,980,847	6,152,973	2,173,126

	Nb eligible proposals submitted	requested budget (€)	total cost (€)	own contribution (€)
BEST 2011	15	5,095,387	8,475,556	3,380,169
BEST 2012	20	5,915,043	7,990,058	2,075,015
BEST 2011 + BEST 2012	35	11,010,430	16,465,614	5,455,184

A total of 16 projects were funded through the BEST PA calls: 9 projects under the BEST-2011 call (see section 3.2.2) and 7 projects under the BEST-2012 call (see section 3.2.2). The projects include activities in the regions of the South Pacific, Indian Ocean, Caribbean, French Guyana, Greenland, Antarctic and Macaronesia. They address issues such as the designation and management of terrestrial and marine protected areas; combatting invasive alien species, using ecosystem services for climate change adaptation and mitigation; the valuation of ecosystem services; increasing knowledge; networking, education, capacity building and outreach activities.

The 16 projects involved organisations in ORs (La Reunion, Martinique, Guadeloupe, French Guyana, Gran Canaria), OCTs (New Caledonia, French Polynesia, Anguilla, Cayman Island, Falkland, Greenland), Member States (Botanic Royal Gardens Kew, British Antarctic Survey, French Marine Protected Area Agency), as well as non-governmental organisations/NGOs (International Union for Nature Conservation/IUCN, BirdLife, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds/RSPB, Wildlife Conservation, Falkland Conservation), regional organisations (Secretariat of the Pacific Region Environment Programme/SPREP, Inuit Circumpolar Council, European Bureau for Conservation and Development/EBCD, Overseas Countries and Territories/OCTA) and International Organisations (Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity/CBD, Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO).

A further 35 proposals passed all evaluation criteria (15 proposals under BEST-2011 and 20 proposals under BEST 2012) but could not be funded as all available budget had been used.



### 3.2.2 Projects funded under the open calls for proposals BEST 2011 and BEST 2012

A short summary and contact details for all projects can be found on the BEST website under 'Current Projects'.

#### 3.2.2.1 Projects funded under the open call for proposals BEST 2011

##### *Création de nouvelles aires protégées dans les forêts publiques à la Réunion et à Mayotte (Creation of new protected areas in the public forests of La Réunion and Mayotte)*

The project successfully established a strategy for the creation of protected areas in the public forests of La Reunion. Three new reserves were created. A collaboration with Mayotte was initiated with a focus on the creation of protected areas in the public forests. For the concerned territories the project was the beginning of the implementation of planned conservation activities through the established strategies. The results were also be included in the annual programming for further funding dedicated to the ecological restoration in the public forest of La Reunion. The plans developed through this BEST project replied to a direct demand expressed by the forestry agents in charge of the areas.

##### *Piloting the Development and Implementation of National-Level Joint Activities between the Rio Conventions in Support of Ecosystem-based Approaches to Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation*

The project contributed to build a bridge between climate change adaptation/mitigation and biodiversity agendas. Through knowledge exchange with other countries and direct consultations with experts, OCT representatives received guidance on issues such as impacts and vulnerability on biodiversity and ecosystems, ecosystem-based approaches to climate change adaptation and mitigation as well as invasive alien species and shared their experience. Side events held at the Rio+20 and the CBD COP XI in Hyderabad in 2012 generated significant interest. This outreach project contributed to a greater understanding of the unique opportunities and issues in the EU Overseas. It significantly raised the awareness for and the visibility of ORs and OCTs on the international level.



***Protection et gestion durable des oiseaux terrestres de Polynésie française menacés d'extinction et de leurs habitats***  
***(Protection and sustainable management of French Polynesia land-birds threatened by extinction)***

The project successfully safeguarded endemic bird species and enabled the development of a “soft” ecotourism based on these species in two islands. In addition, it contributed to the effective and efficient tackling of invasive species (rats) and established very good collaboration with the local communities through the establishment of GGP (*Groupes de gestion participative* – participatory management groups). This concept may be useful for addressing biodiversity issues in other locations.

The project earned several prizes: *le prix coup de cœur d'EDF* in 2014 and the *premier prix de BirdLife International* in 2014 for its work on the ‘Monarque de Tahiti’. There have been several press articles and a video broadcasted on television.

***CARIPES – Payments for Marine protected area ecosystem services in the Caribbean***

The CARIPES programme was conducted in Martinique, and partially in Sint Eustatius and Grenada. Although the project did not achieve its full potential, due to a sequence of circumstances beyond the reach of the consortium, the deliverables provided valuable information including on ecological assessment and ecosystem health indicators, quantification of ecosystem services and users, users’ capacity and willingness to pay for conservation efforts, valorisation of fishermen’s knowledge, on financing mechanisms in general and on tropical marine ecosystem services. The results of the project will inform follow-up projects on ‘payments for marine protected area ecosystem services in the Caribbean oceans and other oceans’.

***Quantification des services écosystémiques des agroecosystems, cas des systèmes plantain de la Martinique – EcoServPlantain Project***  
***(EcoServPlantain - Quantification of Ecosystem Services in Agroecosystems, case of Plantain banana in Martinique)***

The results of the project contribute to understand the effects of biodiversity and its structuration on regulation processes in agroecosystems. This project also showed the major issues of pest regulation in plantain systems in Martinique.

There was a good complementarity with the “sustainable cropping system” in Martinique supported through the European Rural Development Fund/ERDF. The methods developed in this project to measure ecosystem services in the context of tropical agroecosystems will be useful for coming projects. The EcoServPlantain project allowed addressing the role of biodiversity in cropping systems while the ERDF project was more applied and focused specifically on the design of innovative systems.



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***CORAIL– Coral reefs in a changing world -  
ecosystemic services from coral reefs - public  
policy tools for decision making in New  
Caledonia***

The project outcome provided valuable information on ecosystem services valuation and its use for policy making. The application of ecosystem services valuation methods needs to be connected to governance of ecosystems. The results of the project on coral reefs are particularly useful as they are increasingly threatened. The project CORAIL enabled bridges between on-going research programmes (NERVAL – programme sur 'la valeur des lieux' and LIVE) and other programmes in the region (RESCCUE – *Restoration of ecosystem services against climate change unfavourable effects* and INTEGRE). The mentioned programmes funded by national (France) and EU instruments took over results of CORAIL and allowed perpetuation of the activity.

***Suivi Opérationnel des Pécaris à lèvres blanches  
du Parc Amazonien de Guyane - SOPPAG  
(SOPPAG - White-lipped peccaries monitoring from the  
Parc amazonien de Guyane – national park of French  
Guiana)***

The white-lipped peccary (also known as javelina or skunk pig) is a wild pig species, native to the Americas, which has a significant impact on forest structure and function. SOPPAG was the first stage for the acquisition of data and for the evaluation of the situation of the white-lipped peccary in French Guyana. Exchanges with the local population allowed synthesizing first information about the ecology of the white-lipped peccaries, its diet, behaviour and demography. The collaboration with local communities and stakeholders is a good example how indigenous and local knowledge can complement research findings. The work allowed making first assumptions concerning the fluctuating populations and to propose conservation measures or action to insure the preservation of this ecologically and socially important species. The Parc Amazonien continues the work started under SOPPAG.

***GREEN NC Gestion Raisonnée de l'Environnement  
et des Espaces Naturels :biodiversité et services  
écosystémiques de Nouvelle Calédonie  
(GREEN NC - Comprehensive management strategies  
for environment and natural areas: biodiversity and  
ecosystem services in New Caledonia)***

GREEN NC brought together the three provinces of New Caledonia (Province Nord, Province Sud and Province Iles) by facilitating exchange of experience and cross-cutting actions to establish a foundation for sustainable use of ecosystem services in New Caledonia. The project supported the development and strengthening of a local network connecting sites of major environmental importance, identified and managed by local communities. This close collaboration with local communities is an asset for continuing the efforts. The complementarity with INTEGRE, i.e. the nesting of the BEST project in a bigger framework successfully led to the promotion of the BEST objectives (conservation of biodiversity and sustainable use of ecosystem services). After the project ended, most of the initiatives are pursued on public or project funds. GREEN NC has significantly increased the attention of all partners both on technical as well as on strategic levels in relation to the conservation of biodiversity and management of natural resources.

***Building Partnerships and awareness of  
biodiversity and climate change in Europe  
overseas for the future of BEST –  
'BEST facilitation project'***

The project contributed to better knowledge and awareness on biodiversity and climate change issues and challenges in the EU Overseas. It contributed to raising awareness of the importance of biodiversity in the EU OR/OCTs for the achievement of global and EU biodiversity targets. The project's outreach and communication activities are impressive. Throughout the project's duration, the team led a participatory and collaborative process to bring relevant actors together. Embedding the project's final event into the International Conference on Biodiversity and Climate Change held in Guadeloupe in October 2014 (see BOX 4) allowed a wide distribution of the project results, including the BEST business case, an elaboration of options for the future of BEST. This project significantly contributed to prioritise the engagement of the EU Overseas in the overall strategy of the Global Island Partnership (GLISPA). GLIPSA aims to build resilient and sustainable island communities through innovative partnerships. The project also demonstrated a significant leverage effect, which led to the funding of two additional BEST projects by the Agence Française de Développement (AFD) (see section 5.1).



### 3.2.2.2 Projects funded under the open call for proposals BEST 2012



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#### *Conserving Species & Sites of International Importance by the Eradication of Invasive Alien Species (IAS) in the Caribbean UK Overseas Territories*

The project was designed to develop capacity in the Caribbean UK Overseas Territories to address invasive alien species. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds/RSPB worked closely together with organisations from 5 Caribbean Territories. The project delivered high quality technical planning for IAS removal, successful IAS eradication, control and monitoring, biosecurity protocols and contributed to building capacity through networking and fund raising. Overall the engagement of partners was very positive, plans to eradicate invasive vertebrates advanced, impact of IAS on threatened species was reduced, biodiversity benefits and ecological impacts of IAS management in Caribbean OT evaluated, and capacity and cross territory relationships improved. Training courses and cross territory workshops also contributed to the visibility of the project. Experiences were exchanged with the wider Caribbean IAS stakeholders throughout the project. Finally, the project capitalised on synergies with the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs of the UK government (Defra) funded actions and there are strong indicators that some of the territories mobilised support for continued action on IAS.

#### *PISUNA – Protecting Biodiversity and Creating Multiple Benefits for Local Communities in Greenland*

This pioneering project contributed to improving international policy development on climate change and community observing in the Arctic. The involvement of indigenous and local people in environmental monitoring for resource management is now an explicit part of most major sustainable development efforts in the Arctic region outside of Russia. Greenland now has a community based observation system that provides an opportunity for indigenous and local community members' insight and knowledge on the environment being used and their voices heard. The project enabled the Greenland government to scale up the community monitoring scheme technically and organisationally to beyond the critical point, at which the scheme can continue across the country with minimal further external assistance. PISUNA was referred to in a presentation by Greenland in the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII).

### ***Identifying important marine areas for macaroni penguins (*Eudyptes chrysolophus*) in the UK and French Overseas Territories***

The project led to a comprehensive overview of the at-sea distribution of macaroni penguins around their major breeding sites South Georgia, Kerguelen and Crozet, allowing the identification of marine Important Bird Areas (mIBAs) for the Vulnerable (shortly changed from Globally Endangered) species. The work was considered very useful for informing marine spatial planning across OTs in the future and for catalysing further collaborative work. The project has developed and improved understanding of macaroni penguin habitat preference and distribution across two oceans. The methods generated scientific interest and are promoted as a model for similar work on other European OCTs and globally. The identified areas are now listed as candidate mIBAs and dialogue with policy makers and stakeholders was initiated to establish appropriate management within them.

### ***PACIOCEA: Pacific Ocean Ecosystemic Analysis***

PACIOCEA was a pioneering project undertaking a first attempt to consider marine ecosystem-based management across the Pacific region (over 33 million km<sup>2</sup>) at multiple scales ranging from national to regional extent in order to encompass a wide array of interactions between species, ecosystems and human societies. It showed potential benefits and application of Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) to enhance ocean governance and management in the Pacific Region. PACIOCEA provided a solid base, on which the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) continues to build current and future marine spatial planning projects in the region. Building on the lessons learnt from PACIOCEA the former French MPA agency (*Agence des aires marines protégées*, now *Agence Française pour la Biodiversité*) signed a new memorandum of understanding with SPREP to foster future collaboration. Outcomes and actions of PACIOCEA are being sustained through on-going projects including Marine and Coastal Biodiversity Management in Pacific Island Countries (MACBIO); Biodiversity and Protected Areas Management Programme (BIOPAMA), Enhancing Pacific Ocean Governance (EPOG) and the Sustainable Ocean Initiative (SOI) uses the delivered factsheets and maps. The project contributed to the implementation of sustainable marine strategies for the Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs), such as the Polynesian Action Plan «Ruahatu» and the Pacific Oceanscape Framework. It set the basis for future marine spatial planning projects in the regions while highlighting the need to foster regional cooperation around large-scale MSP processes on the Pacific.

### ***TEFRA: Terrestrial Ecosystems of the Falklands – a Climate Change Risk Assessment***

This first climate change risk assessment project for a UK OCT identified the impacts of climate change, as well as priority risks for terrestrial biodiversity and ecosystem service delivery of the Falkland Islands and developed a set of recommended actions in four categories: policy level, legislation level, research level and practical action. The risk assessment was approved by the Falkland Islands Environmental Committee. The project enabled a close collaboration with local stakeholders, including representatives from the Falkland Islands Government's (FIG) Departments for Environment and Planning, and Agriculture, the farming community and business sector. The FIG approved an updated Biodiversity Framework (BioFrame), which includes climate change as a cross-cutting theme throughout the document.

### ***MIROMEN: Migration Routes of Megaptera Noviangliae***

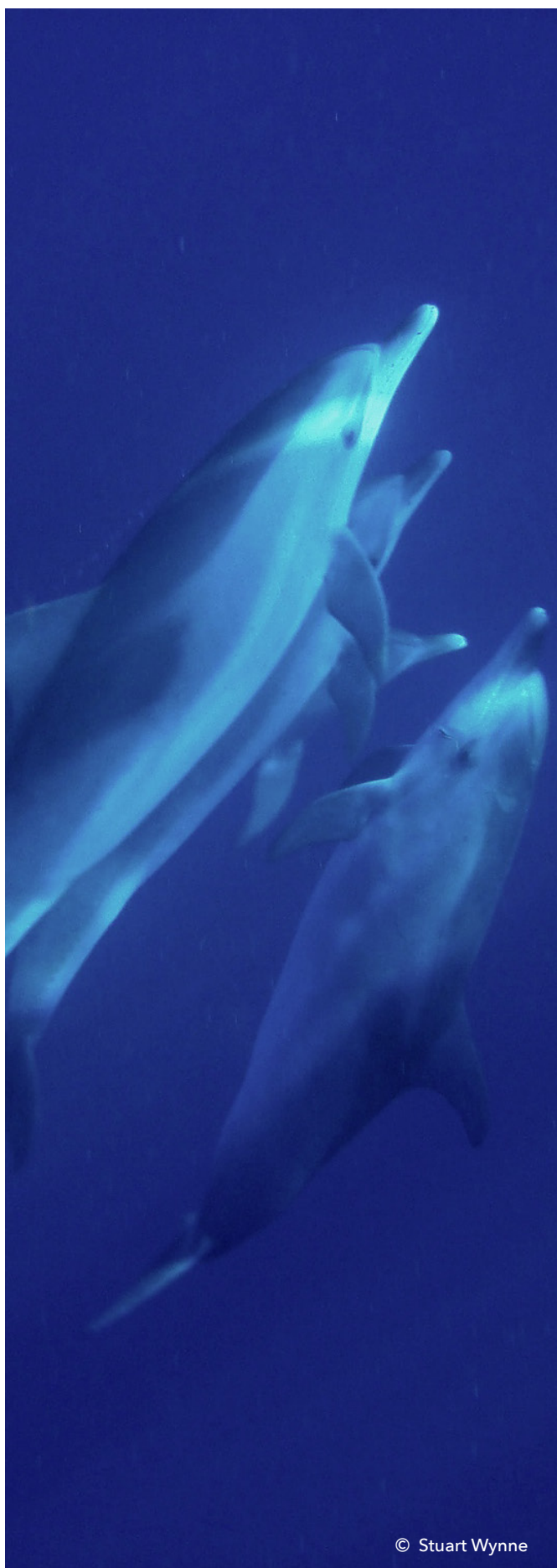
Through the better understanding of the migration routes of Humpback Whales (*Megaptera Noviangliae*) the project helped to reinforce conservation measures and trigger the implementation of new management plans for the target species at local and regional levels. The project contributed to the creation of a new transnational marine protected area (MPA). It contributed to international scientific collaboration and allowed improvement of technology. The project contributed to raise awareness of the general public, notably through activities in schools. The various outputs of MIROMEN increased the profile of the beneficiary (name), which continues to work on whales.

### ***Changes in submersed vegetation: assessing loss in ecosystems services from frondose to depauperate systems dominated by opportunistic vegetation***

The project explored how functioning and provision of ecosystem services differ between different seagrass meadows. Due to the peculiarities of each system, the specific tasks varied from region to region (Canary Islands, Azores and Guadalupe). The overall convergence in results from the studies in Azores and Canary Islands reinforces the notion that habitats constituted by alternative vegetation function differently, with provision of certain ecosystem functions diminishing, such as the supply of primary production and habitat for near-shore fish. The work carried out at Guadeloupe was the first time that a species of seagrass was reported as invasive in the Caribbean. Application for national funds is being planned to continue the started research lines.



### 3.2.2.3 Additional projects funded by a partnership with the French Development Agency (Agence Française de Développement - AFD) in 2012 (see section 5.1)



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#### *MANG - Giving impetus to a collective movement in favour of the preservation of coastal wetlands in EU overseas territories*

The rich biodiversity of wetlands and the ecosystem services they provide, including flood regulation, water treatment, and shoreline protection, are increasingly threatened. The MANG project developed a site assessment method for coastal wetlands in selected pilot sites in French Overseas entities in the Caribbean, French Guiana and the Indian Ocean to fill gaps in terms of knowledge, networks, and capacity building. Allowing a real interregional platform it provided useful and pertinent information to the different stakeholders involved in management and conservation in order to raise awareness and appreciation of the critical values and ecosystem services of these habitats. It promoted the adoption of a participatory management approach that was supported by the public and private by involving all concerned stakeholders for each site in defining appropriate conservation strategies.

#### *COCA LOCA - Connectivity of Loggerhead turtle (*Caretta caretta*) in Western Indian Ocean: Implementation of local and regional management*

Coca Loca aimed to tackle the anthropogenic threats (fishing, plastic ingestion, boat strikes) impacting Loggerhead turtles that occur in the territorial waters of La Réunion and Mayotte. The project brought new valuable information on the regional scale of the turtle's oceanic migration patterns with new tracking data extending to the northern Indian Ocean the interest of regional cooperation between the countries hosting the nesting sites of this species (South Africa, Madagascar, Mozambique and Oman). It also worked in close collaboration with the fisheries sector and local fishermen in order to implement best practices in the management of the species and fisheries and avoid as much as possible by-catch. Thanks to interregional exchanges the project also capitalized on Macaronesia good practices, experiences and scientific knowledge with the Azores, Madeira and the Canary Islands by gathering leading loggerhead turtle scientists from the Indian and Atlantic Oceans, in order to identify future research and conservation actions on marine turtles in Overseas European Territories.

### 3.2.3 Outcome of the open call for tender in 2013: BEST III

To support measures towards sustaining the BEST PA, the entire 2 million Euros budget of the third and last year of the BEST PA was invested in an open call for tender and a consortium led by IUCN was selected to implement the contract (see BOX 2). IUCN plays a central and critical role in supporting biodiversity-related actions in ORs and OCTs: in 2008 under the French Presidency IUCN organised the Conference «The European Union and its Overseas Entities: Strategies to counter Climate Change and Biodiversity Loss» in La Réunion, and it has remained the principal driver of the follow-up to the Conference through the organisation of regular Overseas Roundtable sessions and the co-organisation of the “International Conference on Biodiversity and Climate Change” in Guadeloupe in 2014 (see BOX 4).

The BEST III project ran for 4 years from December 2013 to December 2017 and delivered on 2 main elements:

1. Establishing a **BEST platform** with a **BEST working team**, a dedicated **website**, a Steering Committee, regular meetings.
2. Development of **regional ecosystem profiles (EPs)** and **investment strategies (RIS)**.

The **BEST working team** (BEST III Consortium) consisted of a central team, led by IUCN, seven knowledge hubs anchored in the EU Overseas regions, experts from the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) and Conservation International (CI), as well as technical support to build and regularly update the **BEST website** hosted on Europa. The regional knowledge hubs were to ensure that the supported activities meet local and/or regional needs and are implemented in an efficient and effective manner with local support. The regional hub managers and technical advisers were field-based, experienced in working with stakeholders of their region and very knowledgeable of the local natural and human environment. Each hub together with local stakeholders elaborated a regional ecosystem profile, a conservation tool developed and successfully used by the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) that outlines financing niches based on identified key biodiversity areas (KBAs) and conservation priorities to guide conservation actions on the ground.

#### BOX 2: Main deliverables and outcomes of the contract “Measures towards Sustaining the BEST Preparatory Action to promote the conservation and sustainable use of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services in the EU Outermost Regions and Overseas Countries and Territories - BEST III”:

- **7 regional ecosystem profiles (EPs)** identifying over 400 key biodiversity areas (KBAs) and ecological corridors as well as regional thematic conservation priorities
- **7 regional investment strategies** proposing over xx ready-to-be-funded projects requiring xx Euros
- **BEST website** <http://ec.europa.eu/best>
- **4 BEST newsletters**
- **BEST promotion** at international conferences
- **Recognition of BEST** in EU Council Conclusions (Dec 2015) and European Parliament Resolutions on the Mid-term review of the EU's Biodiversity Strategy (Feb 2016), OCT-EU Forum Ministerial Conference (2015, 2016, 2017), OR Memorandum (March 2017), ..., as first GLISPA interregional challenge (2016).

The bilingual website (EN/FR) was set up to facilitate information sharing on existing projects, funding availability, leverage of funds and outreach as well as best practices.

In addition to the BEST website several other communication tools helped mobilising and informing EU Overseas stakeholders:

- **220** EU Overseas Forum members regularly receive relevant news.
- **Over 800** followers of the IUCN Europe Overseas Twitter account (@IUCNEurOverseas).
- **Over 2000** regional contacts subscribed to the BEST newsletter.

**Dedicated events** were held in the European Parliament (see section 4.4). Results of the BEST Initiative were presented in a seminar at the DG DEVCO info point (27 November 2014) and in a conference presenting the preliminary results of the BEST ecosystem profiles at the Committee of the Regions in Brussels (19 October 2015). A full-day workshop on the BEST Initiative was held in the margin of the 15th OCT-EU Forum in Aruba (20 February 2017).

The **BEST regional ecosystem profiles (EPs)** were developed in consultation with relevant local actors, assessing the regions' biodiversity and habitats, socio-economic and political situation as well as existing conservation activities and funding. They were established in a participatory manner through regional knowledge hubs, involving 900 local and regional stakeholders from 340 organizations in over 200 workshops, meetings and many more bilateral consultations.

The **BEST regional investment strategies (RIS)** were developed based on the regional ecosystem profiles (EPs). The RIS define and prioritise conservation needs and propose ready-to-be-funded projects in line with the identified needs and priorities with potential implementers, duration, required budget and (additional) financing sources of the project. They also point out the added-value their funding will bring. The EPs, RIS summary and further information can be found on the BEST website: <http://ec.europa.eu/best>.



## 4. POLITICAL RECOGNITION

BEST has been referred to directly and indirectly in policy documents on EU, OR, OCT and international levels and several dedicated events were organised.

### 4.1 EU-level documents

#### Commission Communications and Reports:

COM (2011)244; COM(2012)287; COM(2015)478;

**Council Conclusions:** Environment Council Conclusions of 25 June 2009, 19 December 2011 and 16 December 2015;

**Council Decision:** 2013/755/EU of 25 November 2013 on the association of the overseas countries and territories with the European Union<sup>15</sup>;

**Resolutions of the European Parliament:** Resolution of the European Parliament of 21 April 2012 and 1 February 2016;



### BOX 3: REFERENCES IN POLICY DOCUMENTS

In its conclusion of 16 December 2015 the Environment Council “NOTED the results of the preparatory action on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services in Territories of European Overseas (BEST), the funding available under the Commission’s Best 2.0 Programme, and URGED the Commission and the Member States to move forward on SUSTAINABLE PARTNERSHIPS dedicated to mobilising resources to protect the unique ecosystems and the services they provide in the EU Outermost Regions and Overseas Countries and Territories.”

On 1 February 2016 the European Parliament adopted a Resolution “calling on the Commission, following on from the BEST preparatory action, to introduce a sustainable funding mechanism for biodiversity protection in the outermost regions and the overseas countries and territories.”

The Mid Term Review of the EU Biodiversity Strategy **COM(2015)478** mentioned BEST “as a contribution to the transition towards swift and easy access to funding for biodiversity protection and sustainable use of ecosystem services.”

Earlier documents:

Commission Communication **COM(2012)287** The outermost regions of the European Union: towards a partnership for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth<sup>16</sup> refers to BEST: “... Biodiversity and ecosystem services. Efforts will be strengthened to support biodiversity and ecosystem services in the OR building upon initiatives such as BEST (voluntary scheme for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services in Territories of the OR and OCTs), which helps to deliver on all relevant targets and actions

of the EU Biodiversity Strategy. Activities in this area can be financed by the structural funds. ...”

European Parliament resolution of 21 April 2012<sup>17</sup>: “The European Parliament,... 106 Encourages the Commission and the Member States to continue promoting a common approach to nature conservation throughout the EU, welcomes the Commission’s acceptance that it needs to cooperate with the Member States to ensure the effective protection of biodiversity in the EU’s outermost regions and overseas countries and territories, which host more endemic species than the entire European continent; wishes to see the strengthening of the specific instruments for safeguarding and protecting biodiversity there, particularly the BEST (Voluntary scheme for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services in Territories of the EU Outermost Regions and Overseas Countries and Territories) preparatory action supported by Parliament since 2011 and providing proper financing for the protection of biodiversity and ecosystem services in the EU’s outermost regions and overseas countries and territories;”

Commission Communication **COM (2011) 244** of May 2011 Our life insurance our natural capital: an EU biodiversity strategy to 2020<sup>18</sup> states: “The Commission and Member States will work with the outermost regions and overseas countries and territories, which host more endemic species than the entire European continent, through the BEST (Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services in Territories of European Overseas) initiative to promote biodiversity conservation and sustainable use.”

## 4.2 OR and OCT level documents

OCT Ministerial Declaration of February 2017<sup>19</sup>;

OR Memorandum March 2017<sup>20</sup>;

## 4.3 International level documents

BEST contributes to the implementation of the CBD's Programme of Work on Island Biodiversity under the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD)<sup>21</sup> and to the implementation of local biodiversity action plans and the different strategies, which are currently under development. The review of the programme of work on island biodiversity adopted during the 11th CBD COP (**CBD COP XI/15**) recognizes BEST's work as "Noting the progress in sustainable financing mechanisms developed in island regions for climate change and biodiversity, including ... ; the European Parliament's Preparatory Action for a Voluntary Scheme for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services in Territories of European Overseas (BEST); and emerging «debt for adaptation to climate change swaps» in islands, ..." <sup>22</sup>

The EU promoted a voluntary commitment<sup>23</sup> in the margins of the United Nation's SDG 14 Conference in June 2017: "The EU commits to fostering action, including through the BEST initiative [...]. These actions are supported by European Regional Development Fund programmes and Cohesion Fund, as well as by the 11th European Development Fund, where biodiversity is a priority for the Regional Indicative Programmes in Pacific, Caribbean and Indian Ocean".

In addition the EU Overseas were recognized in IUCN resolutions and recommendations, adopted at IUCN World Conservation Congresses (WCC):

- Resolution from the 2004 Congress on European policy and biodiversity in overseas territories (**WCC 2004 RES 005**)
- Resolution from the 2008 Congress on European Union and its overseas entities faced with climate change and biodiversity loss (**WCC 2008 RES 079**)
- Recommendation from the 2012 Congress on Strengthening of European provisions for biodiversity in overseas entities (**WCC 2012 Rec 167**)
- Recommendation from the 2016 Congress on Financing for biodiversity projects in the European Union's outermost regions and overseas countries and territories (**WCC 2016 REC 108**)

## 4.4 Events in the European Parliament

Several events related to BEST in particular and on OR/OCT/islands and marine biodiversity in general were held in the **European Parliament**:

- On 20 October 2015 "Promoting partnerships in the European overseas<sup>24</sup>- From the "Guadeloupe Roadmap" to the UNFCCC COP 21", chaired by MEP Maurice Ponga, organised by the EP Intergroup

on Climate Change, Biodiversity and Sustainable Development (CCBSD);

- On 27 January 2014 "The EU's BEST Initiative – Voluntary scheme for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services in Territories of the EU Outermost Regions and Overseas Countries and Territories<sup>25</sup>" Kick off of the BEST III contract. The meeting was chaired by MEP Maurice Ponga, organised by the EP Intergroup on Climate Change, Biodiversity and Sustainable Development (CCBSD);
- On 3 December 2013 "The EU Overseas Countries and Territories Valuing a global asset and developing regional hubs<sup>26</sup>";
- On 7 May 2013 'Seminar on European Islands Challenges<sup>27</sup>' with the participation of Ronny Jumeau, Ambassador Seychelles, GLISPA chair, AOSIS spokesman;
- On 3 December 2012 'Marine biodiversity conservation in EU's Outermost Regions and Overseas Countries and Territories<sup>28</sup>;
- On 20 December 2011 'Islands and Overseas Entities contribution to biodiversity conservation and the fight against climate change<sup>29</sup>;
- On 11 April 2011 "Support for European Overseas off of the BEST Preparatory Action<sup>30</sup>".



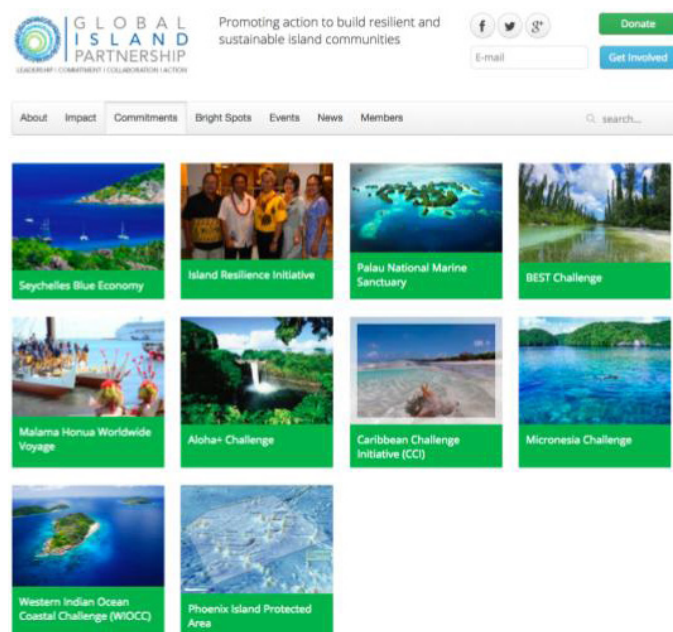
## 5. PARTNERSHIPS

### 5.1 Additional funding

In 2012 the **French Agency for Development (AFD)** provided 800,000 Euros, which allowed funding for two more projects (see section 3.2.2) and additional activities under the IUCN-led **BEST-Facilitating Project** on Building Partnerships and Awareness of Biodiversity and Climate Change in Europe overseas for the Future of BEST, which was supported under the first open call for proposals BEST-2011 (see section 3.2.2). The two project proposals had been submitted and recommended for funding under BEST-2012, but it was not possible, because all of the available budget had been used.

### 5.2 International visibility

In 2016 sovereign island nations, countries with islands and EU overseas entities took another step to strengthen collaboration with the launch of the **BEST Challenge** through the **Global Island Partnership (GLISPA)**. Launched by Dr. Humberto Delgado Rosa, Director for Natural Capital, European Commission, with Dr. Kedrick Pickering, Deputy Premier of the British Virgin Islands during a high level event at the 13th Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP-13) in December 2016, the BEST Challenge is the first interregional challenge to be promoted through GLISPA.



### BOX 4: MESSAGE FROM GUADELOUPE

The **International Conference on Biodiversity and Climate Change** held in Guadeloupe in October 2014 was co-organized by the Secretariat of the CBD, the European Commission (EC), the French Government, Guadeloupe Regional Council, the government of the British Virgin Islands (BVI), and the Association of Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTA) and IUCN and addressed 5 strategic priority - building resilience to climate change, tackling biodiversity loss, developing the green and blue economy, advancing research and facilitating access to resources. The conference concluded with the adoption of a roadmap, called **Message from Guadeloupe**<sup>31</sup>, which includes the following reference to BEST:

*Strategic orientation:*

- *Build on the BEST preparatory action by setting up a sustainable partnership dedicated to biodiversity, ecosystem services and climate change in the ORs and OCTs. This partnership shall be committed to the establishment of an inclusive and representative management structure and shall:*

*Operational actions:*

- *Secure support from various donors, financial instruments and programmes, exploring in particular the development and use of trust funds;*
- *Have a special but not exclusive focus on small entities and non-governmental organisations;*
- *Support regional collaboration;*
- *Act in an inclusive and flexible manner.*

*A group should be convened utilising the support of the political leaders of the ORs and OCTs with the mandate to set up this voluntary partnership, including representatives of ORs, OCTs, Member States, the European Commission, European Parliament, European investment and development banks and civil society.*





## 6. FURTHER INVESTMENTS

### 6.1 BEST 2.0 Programme

In 2014 the **BEST 2.0 Programme**<sup>32</sup> was launched under the B4Life framework with an initial 8 million Euro budget for a 5-year period until 2019. BEST 2.0 is following the general objective of the BEST PA (see section 3.1) with the specific objective of enabling, empowering and strengthening local authorities and civil society organisations, which are committed to local development and biodiversity conservation and sustainable use of ecosystem services in the OCTs to implement actions on the ground. The programme established a grant facility for small (up to 100,000 Euros) and medium-sized (up to 400,000 Euros) grants for biodiversity action in OCTs. Following three calls for project proposals (2015, 2016, 2017) small and medium grants, accessible to small organisations, were awarded to more than 60 projects in the five regions, in which the 25 OCTs are located. The BEST 2.0 programme is managed by IUCN and implemented with regional partners in exchange with BEST III consortium members to facilitate synergies between the programmes and capitalise on knowledge and experience.

At the end of 2015 the European Commission allocated another 2 million Euro to the BEST 2.0 programme to allow additional projects to be funded following the strong response to the calls for proposals, which reconfirmed the need, demand and readiness for small and medium grants for biodiversity activities in the EU OCTs. It also shows the added value and synergy achieved through the collaboration between BEST 2.0 Programme and the BEST III contract. **Following-up on work from BEST III (ecosystem profiles and investment strategies) and considering the global importance of the EU Overseas' biodiversity BEST 2.0 also heightened expectations that opportunities for small and medium grants will be provided in the coming years.** Like the BEST PA the BEST 2.0 programme is also highly appreciated at EU, EU Overseas and international level (see section 4) and provided the opportunity to use the knowledge gathered during the BEST PA through direct action on the ground.

### 6.2 BEST RUP Project

The 3-year project **BEST RUP**<sup>33</sup> – launched on 15 January 2017 – implements the pilot project 'inventory of species and habitats and environmentally sensitive areas in the French Outermost Regions (ORs)' adopted by the European Parliament in 2015. BEST RUP is taking advantage of any possible synergies with the work carried out under the BEST PA, which encouraged/followed a voluntary and participative approach for developing the regional ecosystem profiles and investment strategies, identifying key biodiversity areas (KBAs) and collecting information on species and habitats as part of the BEST III project.

The project will deliver lists of species and habitats of the French ORs, explore the feasibility of implementing Mapping and Assessing of Ecosystem Services (MAES)<sup>34</sup> in ORs as well as carry out and manage a call for proposals in 2017, giving swift small grants (up to 50,000 Euros) to on-the-ground projects in the 3 regions, where the French ORs are located (Amazonia – Caribbean – Indian Ocean) following the modalities of the BEST 2.0 programme. A central co-ordination team will be reinforced by a decentralised structure able to reach the local level with BEST regional officers (focal points) for promoting and implementing the open call for swift small grants in the French ORs.

BEST RUP was conceived as a further element to build a sustainable partnership to promote the conservation of biodiversity and the sustainable use of ecosystem services including ecosystem-based approaches to climate change adaptation and mitigation, and nature-based solutions in the EU's ORs and OCTs.



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## 7. LESSONS LEARNT

### 7.1 Response to the open calls for proposals

The first open call for proposals BEST-2011 promoted partnerships and followed the principle of flexibility with inclusive rules. Duration and budget were not specified in the call. All ORs and OCTs were eligible. The demand far exceeded the available budget and the strong response to the call demonstrated the need for biodiversity action and the interest and readiness of biodiversity actors. More than half of the proposals, and hence the majority of the funded projects under BEST-2011, targeted the French ORs and OCTs<sup>35</sup>. This experience showed that open calls for proposals covering all ORs and OCTs may not be ideal to reach all ORs and OCTs due to the different capacities. Several proposals passing the evaluation of BEST 2011 could not be funded due to budget constraints. The second open call for proposals BEST-2012 largely followed the modalities and rules of the previous BEST-2011 call in order to facilitate and encourage resubmissions. With proposals from entities of all 6 EU Overseas Member States (FR, UK, ES, PT, NL and DK) the reply to BEST-2012 demonstrated a more balanced uptake. Four of the 7 funded projects under BEST 2012 were resubmissions, which had taken into account the recommendations of the previous evaluation, leading to improved proposals.

#### Recommendations:

- Target small and local organisations to unlock the local potential through more accessible small grants (e.g. using lump sums);
- Organise regional calls to mitigate potentially unbalanced competition between regions and between ORs and OCTs with different capacities and situations;
- Invest in capacity building is a key element to enable, empower and strengthen local authorities and (particularly small) civil society organisations in their competences to develop and deliver relevant and effective projects;
- Clearly define rules for eligibility, duration and maximal budget and selection criteria.

These recommendations were taken into account and implemented under the BEST 2.0 Programme, where

- ✓ individual calls target specific regions rather than all regions;
- ✓ feedback is given to the applicants on their proposals and support to improve/strengthen the conception and implementation of projects;
- ✓ different sized grants are tailored to the needs and capacities in the regions.

### 7.2 Grant execution

Nearly all BEST grants supported through the BEST PA had one or even several amendments, mostly due to requests for prolongation of the grant agreement. For many beneficiaries the BEST grant was the first experience with EU funding. While the technical reporting was handled overall without major difficulties, the financial reporting turned out very complicated for many beneficiaries.

The amendments and financial reporting challenges created significant administrative burden for both the beneficiaries and the European Commission Services. This shows that the levels of needed support and advice as part of the capacity building are significant and require sufficient resources to ensure the effectiveness and success of a grant mechanism aiming at enabling local actors to access EU funds.

Several (mostly larger – ‘medium size project’) grants did not completely use their available budget. Overall 6% of the budget of the BEST PA had to be de-committed. It is noteworthy that hardly any budget de-commitment had to be made for the ‘small size projects’ implemented by small organisations.

Some projects that aim to provide policy tools deviated to some extent from their initial proposals, due to circumstances beyond the control of the beneficiaries. Practical projects e.g. designation and management of protected areas, tackling invasive species led by local organisations had less difficulties to deliver.

#### Recommendations:

- Invest in capacity building for preparing, managing and reporting on projects and provide sufficient resources for capacity-building for both potential applicants as well as for beneficiaries;
- Provide readily understandable/accessible and comprehensive information; from project application to final reporting for potential beneficiaries;
- Ensure that the feasibility of the project timelines is properly assessed during the evaluation of proposals and provide an opportunity prior to the signature of the grant agreements for timelines to be extended if required;
- Further simplify the financial reporting; explore the possibility of lump sums and results based payments;
- Make provisions that unused budget can be used for next calls for proposals to fund additional biodiversity action and projects in the ORs and OCTs
- Make sure that projects with a policy focus have the necessary support for project conception and are implemented with tangible activities on the ground and in partnership with local actors.

These recommendations have been taken into account and implemented under the BEST 2.0 Programme, which

- ✓ provides support to local actors for both preparing the project proposal and reporting through guidelines and templates available on its online portal as well as on demand in person (calls, meetings, emails);
- ✓ focuses on tangible activities on the ground and practical outcomes of the project during proposal analysis and assessment.

## 8. CONCLUSION

The BEST Initiative has increased awareness of the global importance of the EU Overseas biodiversity. Through the activities funded by the BEST PA – and the additional funding through the BEST 2.0 and BEST RUP projects – the foundations for establishing a sustainable grant scheme for small and medium sized biodiversity actions in the ORs and OCTs have been laid. The need for this funding and readiness of local actors has been convincingly demonstrated by the response to the calls for proposals launched to date.

The grant scheme should undoubtedly respect the principles of effectiveness, efficiency and good governance. It is desirable to allow a smooth transition and avoid a time gap between the current BEST 2.0 Programme and any successor. Furthermore, efficiency pleads for making best use of previous results and existing networks.

The scheme shall provide opportunities for collaboration and cross OCT & OR working and the development of regional initiatives, which pool resources and expertise to address issues such as the impacts of climate change and invasive alien species. Given the urgent need for global action on climate change,

sustainability and social development, solutions emerging from EU Overseas can be bright spots to show how to more rapidly achieve both global sustainable development and conservation goals in Europe and around the world. This will contribute to achieving the CBD's Strategic Plan and its Aichi Targets, as well as the United Nation's (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Agreement on climate. In addition, the scheme can assist the ORs and OCTs in implementing the biodiversity components of the Environmental Charters, Ramsar and World Heritage Convention.

The European Commission is working together with the EU's Outermost Regions, the Overseas Countries and Territories, the Member States and relevant stakeholders to transform BEST into a sustainable partnership as called for in the Message from Guadeloupe (see BOX 4).

### BOX 5: PRINCIPLES FOR A SUSTAINABLE PARTNERSHIP

The principles below should be taken into account in the governance, programming and operations of a grant facility. They are derived from the draft BEST Business case, a deliverable of the BEST Facilitation Project (see section 3.2.2).

Principles for a sustainable partnership include:

- Purpose and strategy: the facility and its work should be mission- and strategy-driven, they should avoid dispersion and focus on the expected outcomes;
- Diversity and complexity: OCTs and ORs constitute a mosaic of territories with rich ecological, cultural and political diversity, a diversity that must be understood and embraced, with an acceptance of the resulting complexity;
- Flexibility: because of this complexity and diversity, the facility needs to be flexible in its approach, it should avoid rigid, "one-size-fits-all" systems, procedures and arrangements, and it should take the specificities of the various OCTs and ORs into account;
- Subsidiarity: while the facility should necessarily have systems and procedures at a central level, it should ensure that decisions are made and brought as close as possible to the beneficiaries and affected territories and institutions;
- Ownership: all stakeholders, especially the actors in the ORs and the OCTs, should be and feel engaged and thus committed to the agenda of the facility;
- Consultation and participation: these stakeholders should therefore be involved, as much as possible, in strategy formulation and programming;
- Integrity, transparency and accountability: the

respect of these principles would require, inter alia, the avoidance of conflicts of interest, and fairness, as well as a perception of fairness, in the allocation of support;

- Clarity in roles and responsibilities: because of the large number of stakeholders and the multiple levels of intervention, the facility should ensure that there is no confusion in the distribution of roles (especially if there is a decentralised arrangement and if there are multiple levels of decision making);
- Effectiveness and efficiency: the facility must be structured and must operate in ways that bring optimum benefits while avoiding and managing significant risks, with this principle also applied to its procedures and operations, making them accessible to partners and beneficiaries. Effectiveness also implies that the facility should avoid duplicating the efforts and investments of other actors;
- Sustainability: the conservation priorities in and of ORs and OCTs could not be met and the opportunities could not be taken advantage of without a long-term vision and a sustained approach to investment and action;
- Long-term financing: in light of the foregoing, it is important to approach the creation of a dedicated mechanism to ensure programmatic in addition to project-driven implementation. The financing mechanism should become an opportunity to establish and carry out long-term strategies grounded in consensus building on the collective need to conserve biodiversity and achieve sustainable development.





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## ENDNOTES

1. Outcome of the Conference "European Union and its Overseas Entities: Strategies to counter Climate Change and Biodiversity Loss" held under the French Presidency in 2008.

2. <http://ec.europa.eu/best>

3. BEST 2.0 funding facility for OCTs. More information in section 6.1 and on the BEST 2.0 web portal: <https://portals.iucn.org/best/>

4. BEST RUP pilot project for French ORs (Régions UltraPériphériques françaises). More information in section 6.2 and on the BEST RUP web portal: <http://bestrup.org/>

5. <http://www.glispa.org/11-commitments/199-best-challenge>

6. Biodiversity hotspots for conservation priorities are biogeographic regions with significant levels of endemic biodiversity threatened by exceptional habitat loss.

7. Petit, J. and Prudent, G. (2008). Climate Change and Biodiversity in the European Union Overseas Entities. IUCN. 192 pp.

8. EBSAs - special places in the world's oceans as identified by 7 scientific criteria, adopted by the CBD COP (Convention of Biological Diversity Conference of the Parties)

9. PSSAs - Areas in need of special protection through action by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) due to their significance for recognized ecological or socio-economic or scientific reasons and which may be vulnerable to damage by international maritime activities.

10. Hope Spots – special places critical to the health of the world's oceans, recognized by Mission Blue

11. LMEs - 66 large regions of the world's oceans (often >200,000 km<sup>2</sup>), identified by NOAA for conservation purposes.

12. see <http://www.reunion2008.eu/>

13. «voluntary» means that it is an open partnership to other donors than the EC.

14. COM(2011)244

15. [https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/council-decision-overseas-association-2013-755\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/council-decision-overseas-association-2013-755_en.pdf) Article 16 matches the objectives of the BEST PA

16. [http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/sources/docoffic/official/communication2012/rup\\_com2012287\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/official/communication2012/rup_com2012287_en.pdf)

17. [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/biodiversity/comm2006/pdf/EP\\_resolution\\_april2012.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/biodiversity/comm2006/pdf/EP_resolution_april2012.pdf)

18. [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/biodiversity/comm2006/pdf/2020/1\\_EN\\_ACT\\_part1\\_v7\[1\].pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/biodiversity/comm2006/pdf/2020/1_EN_ACT_part1_v7[1].pdf)

19. <http://octassociation.org/political-dialogue-eu-oct-ms>

20. Memorandum available (FR/ES/PT) on the website of the 4th Forum of the Outermost Regions: [http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/conferences/rup2017/](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/conferences/rup2017/)

21. CBD decision to adopt a Programme of Work on Island Biodiversity: UNEP/CBD/COP/DEC/VIII/1 (June 2016)

22. Decision adopted by the 11th CBD COP <https://www.cbd.int/decisions/cop/?m=cop-11> (UNEP/CBD/COP/DEC/XI/15)

23. The EU's voluntary commitment on "Fostering biodiversity action in the outermost regions and overseas countries and territories of EU Member States (BEST)" at the UN Ocean's Conference: <https://oceanconference.un.org/commitments/?id=17534>

24. <http://ebcd.org/promoting-partnerships-in-the-european-overseas>

25. [http://old.ebcd.org/en/EP\\_Intergroup\\_CCBSD/Islands\\_and\\_overseas\\_Entities/The\\_EU\\_s\\_BEST\\_Initiative\\_Voluntary\\_scheme\\_for\\_Biodiversity\\_and\\_Ecosystem\\_Services\\_in\\_Territories\\_of\\_the\\_EU\\_Outmost\\_Regions\\_and\\_Overseas\\_Countries\\_and\\_Territories.html](http://old.ebcd.org/en/EP_Intergroup_CCBSD/Islands_and_overseas_Entities/The_EU_s_BEST_Initiative_Voluntary_scheme_for_Biodiversity_and_Ecosystem_Services_in_Territories_of_the_EU_Outmost_Regions_and_Overseas_Countries_and_Territories.html)

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27. [http://old.ebcd.org/en/EP\\_Intergroup\\_CCBSD/Islands\\_and\\_overseas\\_Entities/Intergroup\\_Meeting\\_on\\_the\\_European\\_Islands\\_Challenges.html](http://old.ebcd.org/en/EP_Intergroup_CCBSD/Islands_and_overseas_Entities/Intergroup_Meeting_on_the_European_Islands_Challenges.html)

28. [http://old.ebcd.org/en/EP\\_Intergroup\\_CCBSD/Islands\\_and\\_overseas\\_Entities/Marine\\_biodiversity\\_conservation\\_in\\_EU\\_Outmost\\_Regions\\_and\\_Overseas\\_Countries\\_and\\_Territories.html](http://old.ebcd.org/en/EP_Intergroup_CCBSD/Islands_and_overseas_Entities/Marine_biodiversity_conservation_in_EU_Outmost_Regions_and_Overseas_Countries_and_Territories.html)

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30. [http://old.ebcd.org/en/EP\\_Intergroup\\_CCBSD/Islands\\_and\\_overseas\\_Entities/Support\\_for\\_European\\_Overseas\\_through\\_the\\_BEST\\_scheme.html](http://old.ebcd.org/en/EP_Intergroup_CCBSD/Islands_and_overseas_Entities/Support_for_European_Overseas_through_the_BEST_scheme.html)

31. [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/biodiversity/best/pdf/message\\_from\\_guadeloupe\\_en\\_2\\_.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/biodiversity/best/pdf/message_from_guadeloupe_en_2_.pdf)

32. <https://portals.iucn.org/best/>

33. RUP – Régions Ultrapériphériques françaises (French Outermost Regions), <http://www.bestrup.org/>

34. <http://biodiversityeuropa.eu/maes>

35. Out of 42 submitted proposals more than half targeted French OR/OCT, 3 were for UK OCT, 2 for NL OCT, 6 for ES OR and 2 PT OR and 1 for DK (Greenland)

BEST LOGO Design: Imre Sebestyén jr. / UNITgraphics.com



Publications Office

ISBN 978-92-79-73432-8