

PROGRAM “ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE AND LOW CARBON ECONOMY”

Call # 3 - Projects to promote sustainable development models in Portuguese Biosphere Reserves

Total allocation available: € 2.200.000

Minimum amount of financing for each project: € 500.000

Maximum amount of financing for each project: € 2.200.000

Legal Framework:

Aid for research and development projects, pursuant to Article 25.º of Commission Regulation (EU) No. 651/2014, of 16 June (GBER), declaring certain categories of aid compatible with the internal market, in application of Articles 107.º and 108.º of the Treaty.

Context and objectives:

The World Biosphere Reserve Network, associated to UNESCO's Man and Biosphere (MaB) Program, currently has 701 Biosphere Reserves located in 124 countries. Of these, 11 are in national territory. The Biosphere Reserves appear as the territories where initiatives for promoting and sustainable use of endogenous resources are being tested in cooperation with populations and local development actors to find innovative operating models that can be replicated in other areas. For this reason, they are often called pilot areas or living sustainability laboratories. Portugal has a national commitment to fulfil the objectives of the MaB Program Strategy 2015-2025 translated into actions in the Lima Action Plan 2016-2025, and, in turn, adapted to the national reality through the Portugal Action Plan 2018-2025 , approved in November 2018.

MaB is a UNESCO scientific program created in 1971 with a view to promoting a balance between human societies and natural ecosystems. The Program, initially largely focused on nature conservation, has adapted to new global challenges and currently aims to conserve biodiversity and cultural heritage, promote sustainable economic development and improve the quality of life of the population. It combines the application of the exact and natural sciences

with the social sciences. The main objectives of this Program are embodied in the field through the designation of Biosphere Reserves, territories where there is a mosaic of important and representative ecosystems of a certain biogeographic region that function as living laboratories, where initiatives for conservation, management, research, awareness, dissemination, promotion and sustainable use of indigenous resources in cooperation with populations and local development actors. The Biosphere Reserves, as pilot areas and sustainability laboratories where innovative initiatives are promoted and the transfer of knowledge to other territories, are also spaces to support the development of practices and implementation of strategies in the areas of Sustainable Development (green economy, circular economy) and Climate Change.

Priority areas envisaged by the Call:

The candidate project must find the most appropriate answer within the 3 Priority Areas indicated below.

A. Knowledge

This Priority Area has two components:

A1. Develop local plans or strategies for sustainable development based on endogenous resources and the mapping and valuation of ecosystem services, including the implementation and evaluation of pilot management measures

Taking into account the natural capital, the natural resources present in each of the Biosphere Reserves, the aim is to proceed to the identification, the assessment of the condition / state, the mapping, the quantification and the valuation of the ecosystem services, identifying their relationship with the different economic sectors existing or to be promoted. Based on this information, on current activities and others that could potentially be developed, enhancing the endogenous resources present in the territory, the intention is to draw up a sustainable development plan for each of the 11 territories classified using the same methodology of participatory planning. Initiatives in the green, blue, circular and low carbon economy should be explored. It includes the development and subsequent evaluation of a concrete action / measure (pilot) in each of the 11 Biosphere reserves.

A2. Develop monitoring guidelines and a system of sustainable development indicators in Portuguese Biosphere Reserves.

The aim is to create a system of sustainable development indicators and the respective monitoring plan for the Portuguese Biosphere Reserve Network. The system of indicators for sustainable development of Biosphere Reserves must be structured in order to: (1) provide an instrument to support the decision and management of the territory; (2) respond to requests for information from national and international bodies, in particular with regard to the Sustainable Development Goals; (3) transmitting perceived information to the general public; (4) assess the integration of sustainability in the different sectors of environmental, economic and social activity; (5) actively involve different stakeholders in sustainability assessment and reporting; (6) take into account and compare with the indicators provided for in the Portugal Action Plan (2018-2025) for Biosphere Reserves; (7) assess the effect of UNESCO classification on the territory; (8) be easy to fill and use. Its elaboration must be based on a participatory method, so that the different sectors (environmental, economic, social, cultural and institutional) and

entities (public and private) involved feel the importance and usefulness of its filling (evaluation and reporting) and also, so that these indicators contribute to improving the quality of decisions in the management and sustainability of these territories, promoting closer relations between the results of their monitoring and decision making. **This component should contribute to the improvement of the management of environmental, economic, social and institutional performance, as well as to make the processes of systematization and exchange of information between the territories classified as Biosphere Reserves more efficient.**

B. Capacity building

This Priority Area has two components:

B1. Knowledge transfer and capacity building of partner entities and managers of Biosphere Reserves.

It is intended to promote the transfer of knowledge and the training of public entities and managers around the great challenges of Biosphere Reserves and to promote greater training for conflict resolution and participatory management, an intersectoral view of the territory, the emergence of partnerships, as well as new sustainable companies / activities. In this sense, in this component the key economic, cultural and social development actors of each Biosphere Reserve will be identified and different types of training actions will be developed (local dynamics, workshops, etc.) for different target audiences (managers of the Biosphere Reserves, public sector and economic, social and cultural actors present in these territories) that address, among others, the following aspects • relationship of the activity developed with the existence of a Biosphere Reserve; • common benefits and how to use and communicate them; • business / entrepreneurship opportunities; • tools for the management of a Biosphere Reserve; • techniques for conflict / interest management; • adaptation and mitigation measures to climate change; • seeking national and international financing; • measures to make the territory of a Biosphere Reserve more accessible and inclusive.

B2. Promote the sharing of experiences through bilateral cooperation and networking between national and international Biosphere Reserves.

The aim is to promote working in partnership (networking), which is one of the key parts of the UNESCO MaB Program, according to which sharing and cooperation are essential to achieve sustainable development models, to create tools for mitigation and adaptation to climate change, strengthen and promote scientific research, increase training and collaborations in the area of education, among many others.

In this component, contacts and visits will be promoted with the countries associated with the Financial Mechanism of the European Economic Area - EEA Grants, which, so far, have no classified Biosphere Reserve, but who are developing projects in this direction and want to take advantage of the pool of knowledge that Portugal has in these processes. Partnership work between Portuguese Biosphere Reserves will also be promoted, with the possibility of welcoming, for 2 or 3 days, people from other Biosphere Reserves, providing direct contact with other territorial realities and ways of working and managing this specific type of territories

C. Communication

This Priority Area has two components:

C1. To prepare a Communication Plan for Portuguese Biosphere Reserves.

Develop a Communication Plan for Portuguese Biosphere Reserves, which supports its managers to communicate and give visibility to these territories, at local, national and international levels, and which integrates a marketing strategy for them and the creation of a common identity, allowing a wide diffusion and visibility of these territories and the promotion of the respective visitation. As such, this component intends to identify the best forms of communication to adopt in the dissemination of the “value” of each UNESCO Biosphere Reserve and in the promotion of its different initiatives and activities, identifying the target audience, the means to be mobilized and the skills to be taken in this communication, either externally with the different interface entities, or internally in the communication between partners.

In addition, it is intended to achieve greater awareness and appreciation of local populations for the natural (and cultural) values that led to the classification and distinction of each territory and its international integration in the Man & the Biosphere Program and in the World Reserve Network of the UNESCO Biosphere. In order to implement the Communication Plan and the marketing strategy, promotional materials should be produced, in Portuguese, English and Spanish (for different target audiences - children, local and tourism), specific to each Biosphere Reserve, as well as others of general support for the dissemination of the UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve Network

C2. Raising awareness among local populations and local development actors to the importance of Portuguese Biosphere Reserves.

To raise awareness among local populations and local development actors about the importance of Portuguese Biosphere Reserves, as a way to increase their perception and knowledge about these territories.

Legal Assessment:

To verify the existence of State Aid, it is necessary to verify the following conditions

- Support is provided by the State or comes from state resources;
- The intervention is liable to affect trade between MS (affects tradable goods or services);
- The intervention confers an advantage on the beneficiary (the support to be granted constitutes an economic advantage for those who receive state aid compared to other competitors, that is, it could not be obtained on the market);
- It was assigned on a selective basis (ie it is a discretionary act unlike general measures);
- Competition has been or is likely to be distorted, which presupposes that there is a competitive market.

In the case under analysis, it appears that the support comes from state resources; the intervention focuses on tradable goods or services; the support to be granted constitutes an economic advantage for those who receive state aid over other competitors, that is, it could not be obtained on the market; was allocated on a selective basis; competition is likely to be distorted in the context of a competitive market.

The aspects of the aided project fall into the following categories, provided for in points a) and c) of paragraph 2 of article 25 of the Regulation concerned:

- **Fundamental research;**
- **Experimental development.**

In fact, the priority areas that guide the projects object of this Call refer to **fundamental research** work, since they involve experimental or theoretical work carried out mainly with the objective of acquiring new knowledge on the underlying foundations of observable phenomena and facts, without having in view a direct commercial application or use;

On the other hand, it is also verified that there is an **experimental development** component, since the aim is to acquire, combine, configure and use relevant knowledge and skills, of a scientific, technological, commercial and other nature, with the objective of developing new or improved processes or services.

Examples of fundamental research activity in the following priorities of the Call (text in bold and italics):

A. Knowledge

A1. Develop local plans or strategies for sustainable development based on endogenous resources and the mapping and valuation of ecosystem services, including the implementation and evaluation of pilot management measures.

Based on natural capital and the natural resources present in each of the Biosphere Reserves, proceed to the identification, assessment of condition / state, mapping, quantification and valuation of present ecosystem services, identifying their relationship with the different economic sectors existing or to be promoted. Based on this information, on the ongoing activities and other activities that could potentially be developed by leveraging the endogenous resources present in the territory, develop a sustainable development plan for each of the 11 territories classified using the same participatory planning methodology.

Initiatives in the green, blue, circular and low carbon economy should be explored. It includes the development and subsequent evaluation of a concrete action / measure (pilot) in each of the 11 Biosphere reserves.

A2. Develop monitoring guidelines and a system of sustainable development indicators in Portuguese Biosphere Reserves.

Create a system of sustainable development indicators and the respective monitoring plan for the Portuguese Biosphere Reserve Network. *The system of indicators for sustainable development of Biosphere Reserves must be structured in order to: (1) provide an instrument to support the decision and management of the territory; (2) respond to requests for information from national and international bodies, in particular with regard to the Sustainable Development Goals; (3) transmitting perceived information to the general public; (4) assess the integration of sustainability in the different sectors of environmental, economic and social activity; (5) actively involve different stakeholders in sustainability assessment and reporting; (6) take into account and compare with the indicators provided for in the Portugal Action Plan (2018-2025) for Biosphere Reserves; (7) assess the effect of UNESCO classification on the territory;*

B. Capacity building

B2. Promote the sharing of experiences through bilateral cooperation and networking between national and international Biosphere Reserves.

Promoting partnership work (networking) is one of the key parts of the UNESCO MaB Program, according to which *sharing and cooperation are essential to achieve sustainable development models, to create tools for mitigation and adaptation to climate change, to strengthen and promote scientific research, increased training and collaborations in the area of education, among many others.*

Examples of experimental development activities in the following priorities of the Call (text in bold and italics):

A1. Develop local plans or strategies for sustainable development based on endogenous resources and the mapping and valuation of ecosystem services, including the implementation and evaluation of pilot management measures.

Based on natural capital, the natural resources present in each of the Biosphere Reserves, *proceed to the identification, assessment of condition / state, mapping, quantification and valuation of ecosystem services present, identifying their relationship with the different economic sectors existing or to be promoted. Initiatives in the green, blue, circular and low carbon economy should be explored. It includes the development and subsequent evaluation of a concrete action / measure (pilot) in each of the 11 Biosphere reserves.*

B1. Knowledge transfer and capacity building of partner entities and managers of Biosphere Reserves.

*Promote the transfer of knowledge and the training of public entities and managers around the great challenges of Biosphere Reserves and promote greater training for conflict resolution and participatory management, an intersectoral view of the territory, the emergence of partnerships, as well as new sustainable companies / activities. In this component the key economic, cultural and social development actors of each Biosphere Reserve **will be identified and different types of training actions will be developed (local dynamics, workshops, etc.) for different target audiences** (managers of the Biosphere Reserves, most involved public sector and economic, social and cultural actors present in these territories*

Therefore, and as it is an aid falling under **points a) and c) of paragraph 2 of article 25 of Regulation (EU) No. 651/2014 of 16 June (GBER)**, paragraph 1 applies, which determines that aid for research and development projects is compatible with the internal market, within the meaning of Article 107 (3) of the Treaty, and should be exempted from the notification obligation imposed by the Article 108 (3) of the Treaty, provided that they fulfil the conditions set out in this Article and Chapter I.

The notification thresholds that apply are those provided for in sub-paragraph i) of paragraph 1 of article 4.

Compliance monitoring

However, and despite the fact that this aid constitutes an exception to the principle of incompatibility of State aid, and is exempt from the obligation of prior notification to the European Commission under the terms already explained above, falling within the scope of the GBER, it is subject to the reporting obligation to the European Commission.

Thus, and in accordance with Article 11 and Annex II of the GBER, the Member State must provide the Commission with information on the measures within 20 working days after the application of the measure together with a link to access the full text of the measure. assistance, including its changes, which is communicated through the SANI 2 electronic notification system.