**In support of sustainable management action in the Baltic Sea region:**

**Celebrating the first year of implementation of the joint Baltic Sea research and the selection of the first BONUS projects: EUR 27 million for research on viable ecosystem of the Baltic Sea**

**26 November 2013, Brussels.** In a high profile event held in the European Parliament today, BONUS, the joint Baltic Sea research and development programme, announced the first seven projects selected from the BONUS call 2012 for research on viable ecosystem of the Baltic Sea.

BONUS is the result of a collaboration between all Baltic Sea states and the EU and aims to ensure a cleaner, sustainable and more prosperous Baltic Sea. This EUR 100 million programme is funded by the national research funding institutions in the eight Baltic Sea EU states and the 7th Framework Programme of the EU. Russia also participates in BONUS through bilateral agreements.

“Today’s announcement marks the beginning of the research projects to be supported by BONUS. Further calls for research proposals will be announced in 2014 and I encourage the Baltic Sea researchers to participate." says Kaisa Kononen, Executive Director of BONUS. “We certainly look forward to seeing the benefits from these projects towards the Baltic Sea region and the sustainable development and protection of the wider European community and European seas.”

The welcome address in Brussels was, on behalf of the current Presidency of the European Council, given by the Lithuanian Minister of Education and Science, Mr. Dainius Pavalkis. Marking the first year of implementation of the BONUS programme, Members of the European Parliament and Directors from the European Commission’s Directorate Generals Research & Innovation, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Regional Policy and Environment reflected the value added from different EU level perspectives on the knowledge-based governance of the Baltic and other regional seas. The research of BONUS will contribute substantially to the EU regional, environmental, research and marine policies.

"The action of BONUS is quite unique: it is creating an ecosystem among all Baltic Sea states, including Russia, and their researchers, innovators and businesses in order to have an integrated ecosystems-based approach to tackling significant challenges such as the Baltic Sea's eutrophication. BONUS is cutting across scientific disciplines, economic sectors, policy agendas and national borders to keep the Baltic Sea alive," says Kurt Vandenberghe, Director of the Environment Directorate in DG Research & Innovation at the European Commission.

“By close link between research and policy we can find efficient ways to reduce the flow of nutrients to the Baltic Sea. We have already begun to improve the waste water treatment in the catchment area, now one of the biggest challenges is to develop smarter agriculture in the Baltic Sea area.  Here we will continue to need EU co-operation and concrete  programmes such as BONUS," says Ms. Satu Hassi, Member of the European Parliament, The Greens/European Free Alliance.

Key policies that the policy driven BONUS research programme supports include the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan and the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive and other coastal and marine environmental policies and plans.

“BONUS has come a long way from its first science plan focusing on the sea only, and is now considering the Baltic Sea, its coasts and catchment as a continuum. We are proud to announce today in this highly prestigious company these seven champions of an extremely competitive selection process. All seven projects represent multidisciplinary and holistic research approach and aim at producing the best knowledge base for the decision makers”, concludes Kaisa Kononen.

The selected BONUS projects comprise a total of 67 participating organisations representing all Baltic Sea EU states as well as two partners from Russia and one from the Netherlands. The Danish (3), Estonian (1), German (1) and Swedish (2) institutions will steer the research projects running until the end of 2017 with financial support between EUR 3.5 and 4 million.

The BONUS call 2012: Innovation projects will be announced in the coming weeks. The next BONUS call will open in the first quarter of 2014.

NOTES TO EDITORS

**The seven BONUS projects announced today:**

**BAMBI** (**Sweden,** Estonia, Finland, Germany)

**Ba**lticSea **m**arine **bi**odiversity– *addressing* the potential of adaptation to climate change

**BIO-C3** (**Germany**, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Lithuania, Poland, Sweden)

**Bio**diversity changes – *investigating* causes, consequences and management implications

**BLUEPRINT** (**Denmark**, Estonia, Finland, Sweden)

**B**iological **l**enses **u**sing g**e**ne **print**s – *developing* a genetic tool for environmental monitoring in the Baltic Sea

**CHANGE** (**Sweden**, Denmark, Finland, Germany)

***Chang****ing* antifouling practices for leisure boats in the Baltic Sea

**COCOA** (**Denmark**, Finland, Germany, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland, Russia, Sweden)

Nutrient **co**cktail in **coa**stalzones of the Baltic Sea – *improving* understanding of the transformation and retention of nutrients and organic matter in the coastal zone

**INSPIRE** (**Estonia**, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Poland, Sweden)

***In****tegrating* **sp**at**i**al p**r**ocesses into **e**cosystem models for sustainable utilisation of fish resources

**SOILS2SEA** (**Denmark**, Germany, Poland, Russia, Sweden)

*Reducing* nutrient loadings from agricultural **soils to** the Baltic **Sea** via groundwater and streams

**More information about the BONUS call 2012: Viable Ecosystem projects at** [**www.bonusportal.org/VE**](http://www.bonusportal.org/VE)**projects**

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**BONUS**[**www.bonusportal.org**](http://www.bonusportal.org)

BONUS is a joint research and development programme producing knowledge to support

development and implementation of regulations, policies and management practices specifically tailored for the Baltic Sea region. It issues calls for competitive proposals and funds projects of high excellence and relevance based on its strategic research agenda.