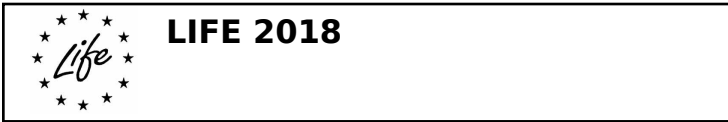




CONCEPT NOTE

LIFE Nature and Biodiversity

TECHNICAL APPLICATION FORMS



FOR ADMINISTRATION USE ONLY

LIFE18 NAT/RO/001077

LIFE Nature and Biodiversity project application

Language of the proposal:

English (en)

Project title:

Direct conservation measures for Coracias garrulus applied in Lower Danube Basin

Project acronym:

LIFE for ROLLER

The project will be implemented in the following Member State(s) and Region(s) or other countries:

Bulgaria	Severen tsentralen
Romania	Sud-Muntenia

Expected start date: 15/01/2020

Expected end date: 15/01/2024

LIST OF BENEFICIARIES

Name of the **coordinating** beneficiary: National Institute for Research and Development in Forestry "Marin Dracea"

SECTOR

Nature

Coordinating Beneficiary Profile Information

Legal Name	National Institute for Research and Development in Forestry "Marin Drăcea"		
Short Name	INCDS	Legal Status	
VAT No	RO34638446	Public body	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Legal Registration	J23/1947	Private commercial	<input type="checkbox"/>
Registration Date	11/06/2018	Private non- commercial	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pic Number			
Legal entity is SME	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Employee number			

Legal address of the Coordinating Beneficiary

Street Name and No	Bulevardul Eroilor nr. 128		
Post Code	077190	PO Box	
Town / City	Voluntari		
Member State	Romania		

Coordinating Beneficiary contact person information

Title	Mr.	Function	Project Manager
Surname	Constantin		
First Name	Costachescu		
E-mail address	office@posmediu.com		
Department /	Forestry		
Street Name and No	Bulevardul Eroilor nr. 128		
Post Code	077190	PO Box	
Town / City	Voluntari		
Member State	Romania		
Telephone No	40722203937	Fax No	40213503245

Website of the Coordinating Beneficiary

Website	http://icas.ro
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Brief description of the Coordinating Beneficiary's activities and experience in the area of the

The National Institute for Research and Development in Forestry (INCDS) "Marin Drăcea" was established in 1933 under the brand Forest Research and Experimentation Institute (ICEF), and during 1974-2015 period as Forest Research and Management Institute (ICAS). In the year 2015, based upon the Government's Decision 318/2015, ICAS was reorganized as national research and development institute under the coordination of National Authority for Scientific Research and Innovation (ANCSI) of the Ministry of Education and Scientific Research.

INCDS "Marin Drăcea" is certified as an institution part of the Research and Development System of National Importance and as a Excellence Centre at national level in the field of Forest Biology and Forest Management, by the national authority for research and development. It is licensed for forest management planning, ecological reconstruction and watershed management, forest risk assessment, forest cartography, geodesics and photogrammetry, seeds quality and conservation, pesticides testing on behalf of forest certifying purposes.

On international level, INCDS "Marin Drăcea" is member or is cooperating with prestigious international entities: e.g. International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO), European Forest Institute (EFI), International Co-operative Programme on Assessment and Monitoring of Air Pollution Effects on Forests (ICP-Forests), Long Term Ecological Research European and International Networks (LTER-Europe, ILTER), International Plant Genetic Resources Institute (IPGRI), International Seed Testing Association (ISTA), European Association of Remote Sensing Laboratories (EARSeL), Forest Technology Platform (FTP).

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT (To be completed in English)**Description Of Species / Habitats / Biodiversity Issues Targeted By The Project:**

European Roller is a bird species adapted to the anthropic or semi-anthropogenic areas which depends on people through farmland and forestry management. Therefore, the survival of this species is closely related to the way in which we, humans, know how to harmonize our activities with the needs of ecosystems. This project will draw directions/framework of a harmonious development through which we will not lose contact with the natural elements in Romania and Bulgaria, and makes the extension for the transfer of expertise through partner - Bulgarian Society for Protection of Birds/BirdLife International.

The species is characteristic of dry areas, warm areas, represented by arid plains and rare meadow forests situated near the grasslands. The length of the body is 29 - 32 cm and weighs 127 - 160 g. The wingspan is about 52 - 57 cm. Adults have a similar flush. Peach is astounding, it is of azure blue that covers the head, neck and chest and the back is brownish. It feeds on small rodents, frogs, lizards, snakes and insects in particular. Longevity is known about 9 years. All 12 species belonging to the family Roller Coraciidae, are nesting in hollows or galleries by other species of birds. Thus, they do not create their own cavities for nesting, but they occupy natural or abandoned hollows by species of birds, such as woodpeckers. Particularly, in the spreading area located at south of the Danube, sometimes it nests in galleries dug in loose or loess shores, but the population of the Carpathian Basin nests especially in the scrub of old trees. Some of these are natural cavities, but most of the European Rollers nests in the abandoned hollows by the Green Woodpecker (*Picus viridis*) and Black Woodpecker (*Dryocopus martius*) (Cramp 1985). It adapts successfully to artificial nests.

Population

The European population is relatively small and contained somewhere around 90,000 pairs. In the middle of the last century, livestock species in Europe have been reduced drastically, even disappearing as breeding species from countries like Germany, Switzerland, Denmark, Sweden, Finland and the Czech Republic (Snow & Perrins 1998). Nowadays, 50-74% of the global population breeds in Europe but still shows a gradual decrease trend (Kovács et al., 2008).

By applying direct conservation actions and measures, Hungary, among all European countries, amid a declining European trend, succeeded successfully in the years 1990-2000, the stagnation of the decline followed by the effective population growth from 1700 to 3700 pairs in the next 10 years.

In Romania, the roller numbers reported by the most important ornithological organizations, Romanian Ornithological Society / BirdLife Romania and the Association for the Protection of Birds and Nature - Milvus Group, reports through direct monitoring and mathematical modeling in their estimations around 3,900 pairs to nesting.

Specific Behavior

Arrives from African wintering grounds, depending on climatic conditions, in the second part of April. Normally, the female typically lays 3-6 eggs in the second part of May. Incubation lasts for about 17 to 19 days and is mostly insured by the female. The chickens are naked and blind after hatching, but they grow quickly and end up flying after 25-30 days. They are being cared for by parents about three to four weeks.

Project objectives:

The project includes the whole area of South and South East of Romania (with a sector transiting the northern area of Bulgaria), proposes a new way of implementation in the steppe and continental ecoregion

The project objective is to strengthen the European Roller population in Lower Danube Basin (RO-BG sector) through direct conservation measures and provide favourable long-term development of this species by making artificial habitats of poplar and providing direct support to farmers for applying good agricultural practices in the species areal.

Placing artificial nests as a proposed conservation measure respond directly and immediately to the threats of species in the South of Romania (counties MH, DJ, OT, TR, GR, CL, IL, BR, GL, TL and CT) and in Northern Bulgaria (Region Ruse – Veliko Târnovo) with concrete results that can be recorded during the period of project implementation.

Decrease the mortality of the targeted population by promoting the bird friendly electric pylon designs, insulating the most relevant pylons.

Identify endangered migratory and roosting sites; make the first steps for their conservation through networking.

Create nesting opportunities for Roller.

Improve nesting and feeding habitats on the three characteristic Roller habitat types on three project sites. Demonstrate the new management methods to owners and managers of key Roller habitats to promote their use.

The project aims primarily at ecological reconstruction of forest curtains and monitoring of all trees that represent favorable habitats for roller in ROSPA sites in the South of the Romanian Plain: ROSPA0011, ROSPA0013, ROSPA0010, ROSPA0023, ROSPA0135, ROSPA0024, ROSPA0106, ROSPA0102, ROSPA0108, ROSPA0022, ROSPA0136, ROSPA0051, ROSPA0001, ROSPA0166, ROSPA0012, ROSPA0190, ROSPA0005 (25.794ha), ROSPA0070, ROSPA0071, but also in private pastures from outside the sites.

Following the application of the direct conservation measures, the areal of species will expand in the Lower Danube Basin and the population of Coracias garrulous will register after the implementation of the project a contribution of approximately 900 -1000 pairs.

In Bulgaria, the extension of the project in the South of the Danube involves the ecological forest reconstruction and the placement of artificial nests for the protected species European Roller in the following Natura 2000 sites: BGSPA0002048 Suha Reka, BGSPA0002025 Lomovete, BGSPA0002083 Blenska nizina, BGSPABG0002074 Nikolsko Plato.

Actions and means involved:

Threats and direct conservation measures

The degradation of habitats and the reduction of nesting places, illegal hunting in the Mediterranean countries (especially concrete situation from Syria and Oman), changes of the land use category and the widespread use of pesticides in agriculture are the main dangers to the target species. Here is derived automatically, the necessity of involving farmers in protecting this species through the development of agro-environment measures and placing artificial nests in the quiet corners of the pastures, immediate measures which are priority for the conservation of the species.

Direct conservation actions in this project

-Reconstruction on the public/private domain of some artificial habitats and the execution of forest works for maintenance of these plantations in Romania and Bulgaria

-Restoring the wooded pastures in the proximity of Natura 2000 sites

-Restoration of wetlands from Natura 2000 sites in terms of the elimination of invasive species according to the methodological norms elaborated under the auspices of the Global Invasive Species Program (G.I.S.P.) in accordance with the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (I.U.C.N) (validation of sampling techniques for major taxonomic groups)

-Application of forest management and conservation measures in riparian forests in Natura 2000 sites involved in project

-Creating new nesting conditions by placing artificial nests in species-friendly areas (areas with hollows deficiency) in some Natura 2000 sites from Romania si Bulgaria

-Reduction of accidental mortality

-Mounting of warning markers on electrical networks and isolation of dangerous pillars

-Patrolling actions to prevent illegal tree cutting, both solitary and forest curtains

-The involvement of farmers in the project area in the development of new favorable habitats on their private pastures like forest curtains

-The application of new farming techniques that take account of the species' ecological needs

-The development of a package of agro-environmental measures for the conservation of *Coracias garrulus* species (identified with the BirdLife International report, 2015. *Coracias garrulus*, The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species 2015: e.T22682860A59983238, Downloaded on 24 May 2018.)

POST- IMPLEMENTATION ACTIVITIES: (AFTER-LIFE ACTIVITIES)

Maintenance of newly established plantations by forest works for the maintenance of the plain stands.

Monitoring of habitats in southern Romania located in the Lower Danube Basin.

Monitoring of the target species throughout the Danube area covered by the project, in order to ring the young birds and to capture mature birds for the purpose of equipping electronic mapping behavior.

Capture new-born birds for ringing and their monitoring.

Administration of the IT application for the National Migration Monitoring Program for specimens of *Coracias garrulus* from Romania, integration of annual migration maps and direct monitoring in an Integrated GIS system for each of the next 5 years, by carrying out the activities undertaken in the post-implementation.

Identification and capture of mature specimens for ringing and monitoring.

Hosting the application and managing the scientific results.

Is at least 25% of the eligible project costs dedicated to concrete conservation

Yes No

• Has this proposal been submitted before?

Yes No

No

Expected results (outputs and quantified achievements):

Expected results and impact of the project

Reconstruction of 150 demonstrative habitats in order to ensure a trophic offer of conditions for breeding and feeding necessary to strengthen the species in the Lower Danube Basin on Romania and Bulgaria

Placing 4000 artificial nests for target species, Roller, steppen / continental ecoregion both in the habitats newly created also in the area of proximity which could thus provide new conditions for strengthening the population + repopulate the species in those areas of the Danube which was banished now 60 years due to anthropogenic pressure of agricultural expansion and implementing policies unfavorable regime form agricultural and forestry

point of view.

Placement of 120 informative and educational trails boards

Promoting some agricultural schemes and measures, beneficial for target species *Coracias garrulous*, but also for other threatened bird species of conservation interest, within a concrete program of support for farmers.

Providing 30 pcs of satellite transmitters and 200 pcs of the geo-locators for mapping the migration routes and wintering neighborhood of the target species (during 3 years).

Concrete and direct information of people at all social levels on these direct measures of conservation by local public meetings in all project villages (60 administrative territorial units + 11 city along Danube) and awareness of local communities on the importance of protecting the species *Coracias garrulus* mainly and all species of conservation interest that can be found frequently in the project area.

Reduce accidental mortality among this species.

Sustainability of the Project Results:

We have tried to tackle with competence, earnestness and well common sense the efficient of spending community funds.

The relevance of this project is to demonstrate the realization of new natural habitats through ecological reconstruction in the Danube areas where serious ecosystem disturbances have occurred in the last 50 years. In the project's budget were included amounts related to post-implementation activities.

The technical and financial capacity, ecosystem expertise of all members of the consortium is unanimously recognized internally and internationally (European Commission, Romanian Academy, Ministry of Research and Innovation, Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Waters and Forests, Ministry of Agriculture, etc.). By the specifics of the two main partners INCDS and "Dunarea de Jos" University, there will be carried out consistent studies, outdated research (4), impact studies (2), research topics (7), masters (3) and doctorates (2) in the behavior of newly introduced species and habitats, research to assess climate change and the ecosystem (1), especially in the Romanian areas where have been registered in the recent years the desertification phenomenon (Ciuperceni, Dabuleni, Poiana Mare, Corabia). There will be pilot components that will generate planting activities on sand dunes (ecological reconstruction with compost brought from the outside, at plantation time) new agro-environment measures, behavioral studies of newly introduced domestic species, which will prove the obtained results and some financing future from the structural funds.

The project, will stop the decline of *Coracias garrulous* species, will create conditions for species strengthening and even from project year 3 it will be possible to quantify concrete results in increasing the number of nesting pairs (about 700-800) and the positive impact created by the forest curtains planted in south area of Romania and northern Bulgaria. IN THE IMPACT TERMS, WILL BE CREATED THE PREMISES FOR THE USE IN ROMANIA AND BULGARIA of ALL THESE LONG TERM SOLUTIONS.

The results will be introduced in the mission of the Environmental Protection Agency of Romania and Bulgaria, ANANP, Ministry of Environment of Romania and Bulgaria.

BUDGETARY EXPENSES ARE REASONABLE TO THE COMPLEMENTARY ACTIVITY SUPPORT LEVEL, BECAUSE OF THE LOGISTIC SUPPORT / SUPPORT IN SCIENTIFIC EQUIPMENT / MACHINERY AND TOOLS, as well as the other endowments obtained through European funding in the last 10 years by INCDS, "Dunarea de jos" University, SOR, assures VALUE and predictability of results, credibility of the consortium and guarantees the successful and timely achievement of all project objectives.

The direct involvement of some professional associations on a dimension of 11 counties with measurable results starting year 3 of the project.

The proposal addresses the following project topic(s):

- Projects aimed at improving the conservation status of habitat types or species of Community Interest, provided, their status is not 'favourable/secure and not declining' or 'unknown' according to the most recent overall assessments that Member States have provided at the relevant geographic level according to Article 17 of the Habitats Directive or to the most recent assessments according to Article 12 Birds Directive and EU-level bird assessments.

Reasons why the proposal falls under the selected project topic(s):

The project is aiming to increase social awareness via actions focused on raising awareness of key stakeholders (land users, hunters, decision makers) as well as wide public, i.e. meetings, excursions, providing consultations, dissemination of educational materials, presenting the information on info boards. Foreseen effects of the project, concerning the socio-economic impact are:

- Increasing awareness of local people and key stakeholders concerning the local Natura 2000 sites and its importance for *Coracias garrulus*.
- Developing positive attitude to Roller and the Natura 2000 site itself
- Reducing negative perceptions, human disturbance and illegal activities
- Using services of local companies and thus providing short-term employment opportunities for local people during the project duration. Local companies will be used to provide services such as land management, tree planting. Cooperation between stakeholders and local companies will be improved.

Project Partnership

The Consortium for this project is composed from:

- 1. National Institute for Research and Development in Forestry (INCDS) "Marin Drăcea" - Coordinating Beneficiary** - is the Institution from Romania holding updated scientific data on the actual size of Danube habitats, technical forestry expertise, owns the exact scan and evaluation of all the land in the Danube Meadow which shows in their proximity, facilities for the AREAL expansion of the species, and activities in post-implementation (for 5 years) comes as a "glove" for the future objectives of the institute.
- 2. "Dunarea de Jos" University from Galati - Associated Beneficiary** - is the most important institution of higher education in the South-East of Romania. "Dunarea de Jos" University functions according to the university charter, whose provisions are in agreement with the national legislation and with the principles of the European Space and Higher Education, being recognised by all members of the university community. Together with National Museum of Natural History from Galati has a dedicated team of specialists which knows in details natural areas of ROSCI and ROSPA from Danube Basin, holds the scientific data regarding the current situation on the field of the species *Coracias Garrulus*, motivation and the ability to execute the project monitoring, with the support in didactic activities of a post-implementation period.
- 3. Natural Sciences Museum Complex from Galati - Associated Beneficiary** - The museum's objectives are: scientific research and conservation of the biodiversity of natural ecosystems, the enrichment of scientific patrimony, as well as the ecological education for nature conservation through modern educational and expository projects held at the Natural History Museum, Aquarium, Planetarium and Astronomical Observatory, Botanical Garden and Zoological Garden.
- 4. Romanian Ornithological Society (SOR) - Associated Beneficiary** - is a non-governmental organization (NGO), with its mission to study and act to protect birds, habitats & nature. SOR was set up in 1990, has its headquarter in Bucharest and has a national coverage through its 21 branches. Since 1997 SOR is partner of BirdLife International - a global network of 105 organizations established for bird & nature protection. SOR mission is to study and act for conservation and protection of birds and their habitats, to reduce the impact of human society upon the environment, save rare species and their habitats, also to cooperate with Romanian authorities for a better environment for all.
- 5. Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds (BSPB) - Associated Beneficiary** - is one of the few Bulgarian non-governmental organizations founded in 1922, works for the conservation of wild birds, the areas important for them and their habitats, together with the conservation of biodiversity as a whole, thus contributing for the sustainable use of natural resources and the well-being of mankind too.

Expected Constraints and Risks Related to the Project Implementation and Mitigation Strategy

Risk management involves assessing the two major risk categories identified through the consortium's experience:

Risks associated with legislative changes in Romania, which could jeopardize the timely implementation of the project, if it fails to adapt quickly to new regulations. Due to the short term of implementation of the contracted activities in this field, in the period following the financing the occurrence of this risk is minimal. The recommendations of the experts involved in this project provide the necessary expertise to carry out all actions and arrangements under legal conditions, from reconstruction sites and actions to the involvement of governmental factors and stakeholders, which will lead to the urgent preparation of the documentation for endorsement and submission to authorities for legislative compliance.

Risks related to the implementation / communication / collaboration between the project team and the Central Authorities (Ministry of Waters and Forests, Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Agriculture) / Local Public Authorities / Agricultural Associations / Farmers / Partners, which could cause dysfunctions in project management and resource planning activities.

Risks complementary to field activities:

- bad weather that can make planting work harder**
- dry weather that will entail higher costs for watering, at least during critical periods**
- possible fluctuations of target species caused by climate changes**
- significant climatic aspects at the Eastern European scale**
- interference with other danger (natural disasters, destruction of nesting and feeding traditional places from the migration route, etc.) which can lead to lower nesting nests in those periods**

Even in this case, the project will produce its long-term effects through ecological reconstruction and the improvement of nesting conditions that entails greater breeding success.

The constraints are only managerial, because the project will cover a very large area, meaning interference with local public bodies and authorities but the value of the experts and the authority of the consortium institutions as well as the socio-economic and ecosystemic fundamental value generated in the Romania by partners, cancel these constraints.

Best Practice/Demonstration Character/Pilot Aspects: of the Project

This project will demonstrate the usefulness of concrete implementation of direct conservation actions, through the creation of new forest habitats that can be further developed through other RO-funded projects. It is now necessary, more than ever before, to apply direct actions to this effect by creating artificial habitats such as the terrestrial residual trees (with minimum investment in the impact area) but which can then be successfully converted by PP into the forest curtains which will have a predominant role in the reconstruction of degraded habitats and especially in the extension of the areas that can enter the forest regime for direct conservation measures. It is a unique opportunity in this area where local authorities and farmers will give their voluntary consent, without expropriation amounts and obligations, for a project in which they can be convinced by the mayor or stakeholder of its benefits.

The major objective of the project "Direct conservation measures of *Coracias garrulus* in the Lower Danube Basin" is the reconstruction of favorable habitats for *Coracias garrulus* as a long-term conservation measure, with the demonstrative purpose of certifying the adaptability of the species to artificial nests and new food conditions introduced through these habitats in Southern Romania, exactly in the area where this species is in decline. The project also promotes agro-environmental practices and methods that are essential for the long-term rescue of roller habitats. Until the actual restoration of new habitats, for the preservation of these European populations, it is extremely important to stabilize and maintain the basic population for *Coracias garrulus*, with the existing livestock in the Danube Basin.

Assuring nesting places for rollers can be achieved in the easiest and most efficient way by placing artificial nests in areas most frequented by the target species when returning from migration, where the poplar and willow trees have disappeared in the last 60 years (from the sad period of communism when the meadow areas were exterminated for the extension of the agricultural land of Romania).

The first step in placement of artificial nests is to identify the right locations on the field. Roller's food is composed of insects, especially locusts, bugs and large insects (Cramp et al., 1993), thus most suitable feeding habitats are pastures, wastelands or even extensive unused agricultural land (Kiss et al. 2012). Roller is an ambush bird, looking for food standing on a more prominent point, thus requiring near the nest the presence of trees, alignments of trees, electricity poles or artificial structures placed as high points that dominate the area.

Based on previous unanimous experiences, the roller shows a high fidelity to breeding sites. The dispersion span of the second year birds is approximately 40 km, and in adult birds is around 5 km (Kiss & Tokody 2014). Thus, the neighboring nests, located at small distances between them, will be occupied with greater chances in the coming years. Roller exhibits a specific territorial behavior during the nesting period, so a minimum distance between the nests must be maintained. Requirements for area size vary depending on the type and quality of the habitat. Based on previous knowledge, it is advisable to maintain a minimum distance of 800 m between two nests (Molnár 1998)

EU Added Value of the Project and its Actions

This project treats a priority species for conservation with a limited distribution in Europe that is dependent on human management. Also, the implementation area of a project is a poorly studied area with a very limited absorption of conservation funds, but from the distribution area of the target species. These considerations contribute to the importance of the project and implicitly to the benefits it will generate to both biodiversity and local communities

The main reasons for reducing the number of European Rollers in the past 70 years are:

- The disappearance of feeding areas and the loss of nesting places. In many places, problems are created by the invasive species of shrubs that gradually stifle the soft-tree species or the desertification phenomenon in the southern area of Romania. All these aspects reduce the chance of installing softwood trees that will produce hollows to maturity - a direct aspect that demonstrates a reduction in the number of natural cavities

favorable to the nesting species in Romania - indispensable for the conservation of European Roller

The species's dependence on agricultural and forestry management, which requires the involvement of local authorities / farmers / stakeholders to ensure the long-term conservation of the species. This should be directly brought to their attention through local public meetings funded by the project (at least 22 in Romania - 2 per counties in year 1 and 2, and at least 4 in Bulgaria).

The disappearance of singular trees from pasture and alignments of trees near roads or rivers increasingly limits the nesting habits of the European Roller (Bird Life International 2004). In the 1960s it was considered a common species in the meadow areas of the Romania, but following the monitoring and reports reached at C.M.N. from the Romanian Academy (President PhD. Dan Victor Munteanu, contributors PhD Paul Stănescu, PhD. Catalin Rang), it was found that due to the anthropogenic pressures and the change of the direct practices in ecosilvic forest management and the agricultural land from the point of view of the agro-environment, the species has more and more restrained its area or even completely disappeared from some nesting areas of the Romanian Plain - South and South-East Romania.

Budget breakdown cost categories	Total cost in €	Eligible Cost in €	% of total eligible costs
1. Personnel	1,013,600	1,013,600	25.93%
2. Travel and subsistence	186,500	186,500	4.77%
3. External assistance	1,165,096	1,165,096	29.80%
4. Durable goods			
Infrastructure	62,000	62,000	1.58%
Equipment	631,570	631,570	16.15%
Prototype	0	0	0.00%
5. Land	0	0	0.00%
6. Consumables	781,250	781,250	19.98%
7. Other costs	68,520	68,520	1.75%
8. Overheads	0	0	0.00%
Total	3,908,536	3,908,536	100.00%

Contribution breakdown	In €	% of total	% of total eligible costs
EU contribution requested	2,931,402	75.00%	75.00%
Coordinating Beneficiary's contribution	488,567	12.50%	
Associated Beneficiaries' contribution	488,567	12.50%	
Co-financers contribution	0	0.00%	
Total	3,908,536	100.00%	