

Calls for proposals

Austrian MAB- Committee at the
Austrian Academy of Sciences
Chair: Univ.Prof.Mag.Dr. Georg Grabherr

Austrian MAB-Research : Work programme 2004/2005

Call for proposals

Introduction and objectives

According to the new research agenda for the Austrian MAB-programme (www.biosphaerenparks.at), and in response to the priorities set by the International MAB Council, the National MAB-Committee decided to focus future research predominantly on the needs of the biosphere reserves in Austria, but also to benefit from biosphere reserves as “living laboratories” for studying, testing out and demonstrating integrated management of land, water, and biodiversity. Biosphere reserves have the double mandate of nature conservation and development and rely on integrated monitoring and sustainability assessments to be developed. Both science driven and stakeholder (problem) driven research approaches are required. This was acknowledged by the Austrian MaB Committee in deciding upon the following principles for research:

1. **interdisciplinarity** across the „great divide“ of natural and social sciences. All research questions should entail a focus on the interaction of natural and socio-economic processes.
2. **transdisciplinarity** („mode 2 research“). MAB research should take stakeholders perspectives seriously and communicate its research results to them. Stakeholders should have a fair chance to invoke research to help in solving their problems.
3. **international orientation**: Austrian MAB research should be embedded into international research efforts, and use at least part of its resources for internationally comparative and or cooperative projects.

Projects should finally:

- provide a knowledge-base for defining strategies towards sustainable development in biosphere reserves
- fit particularly to the opportunities and needs of Austrian biosphere reserves

2. Approaches and research tasks:

The call distinguishes between two basic research types:

“Small and medium scale projects” which are comparatively short term projects (1-2 years) with a focussed research question;

Medium and long term “Integrated projects” (2-3years) which are strictly interdisciplinary;

3. Research topics

A. Projects for establishing basic monitoring systems (BRIM- environmental as well as social monitoring) in line with international standards

Research questions could include:

- What is the interplay of socio-demographic dynamics and resource use?
- How do local economies (e.g. tourism, agriculture, forestry etc.) in BRs and their dynamics impact upon the environment and how could this be managed?
- How to design an internationally promising process towards a core set of BRIM indicators?

B. Projects for supporting design and management of BRs

Research questions could include:

- How can conflict resolving procedures in BRs be designed and processed? What information basis is required for this?
- How can the legal practice of Austrian BR's be improved?
- How can the Austrian pre-Sevilla type BRs be transformed to fulfil the Sevilla mandate?
- How can stakeholders involvement and ownership of the BR vision be improved?

C. Major perspectives and development options for BRs (cross-cutting)

Research questions could include:

- What historical transformations can be observed in BRs and how do they impact upon contemporary development options?
- Can BRs play a role in testing sustainability scenarios, such as renewable energy provision and use, or ecotourism?

4. Call information

Submissions can be made for small to medium size projects (maximum 2 years, <30K€) with a full proposal according to the official form (www.oeaw), or for integrated projects (2-3 years, <150k€). Proposals for integrated projects should be submitted in a 2 stage process. The pre-proposal should contain no more than 4-5 pages, but give a clear outline of the project idea, the main questions, who (project coordinator, institutions) and where; involvement of at least one biosphere reserve is essential.

Procedures for small and medium size projects

Submission of the full proposal by 21.9.2004

Proposals will be peer-reviewed by two international reviewers

Decision: Begin of December

Successful proposals will be commissioned by mid of December 2004

Procedures for integrated projects

submission of the pre-proposal: 21.9.2004

pre-proposals will be screened and pre-selected by the MaB committee and promising pre-proposals will be invited for a hearing (Begin of December)

An eventual full proposal will be peer-reviewed by three international reviewers

Successful proposals will be commissioned by March 2005

Evaluation of the Research Proposal

A. Formal requirements			
1. Requirements according to the program call		achieved	not achieved
B. Contents/Objectives			
Presentation of the research problem			
1. Has the problem been described sufficiently/adequately?		yes	no
2. Has the relevance of the problem been presented in a convincing manner?		yes	no
3. Does the problem require the involvement of both social and natural science approaches?		yes	no
Objectives and questions			
4. Does it become sufficiently clear what the contribution towards resolving the problem is to be?		yes	no
5. Do the objectives of the project correspond with the objectives of the research program?		yes	no
6. Are the project objectives realistic/attainable?		yes	no
Originality			
7. Is the approach taken innovative/creative? If so, in what way? If no, why not?		yes	no
Transdisciplinarity			
8. Were users involved in the wording of the objectives and questions?	n.a.	yes	no
9. Do the objectives and questions justify the participation of external participants?	n.a.	yes	no
10. Has the contribution to be made by external participants been presented with sufficient clarity?	n.a.	yes	no
11. Do users/participants contribute to the project resources	n.a.	yes	no
Results/Products			
12. Have the expected results been presented clearly?		yes	no
13. Do the expected results appear to be achievable?		yes	no
14. What ideas are there on how products should be developed, and are they realistic?		yes	no

C. Integration/Synthesis			
1. Have the methods intended for consensus building and integration been presented clearly?		yes	no
2. Do the methods intended for consensus building and integration appear to be suitable to achieve the intended results and products?		yes	no
D. Scientific quality			
1. Are the objectives of the project based upon the current state of knowledge?		yes	no
2. Does the research activity have internal logic? Does each step follow from the preceding one?		yes	no
E. Transfer of knowledge and technology (concept of implementation)			
1. Has it been made sufficiently clear how the practical implementation of the results and products shall be assured?		yes	no
2. Has it been made sufficiently clear how the results shall be disseminated?		yes	no
F. Project organisation/Project management			
Internal organisation			
1. Are the tasks and competencies clearly distributed (organisation chart, task specifications)?		yes	no
2. Does the schedule appear to be realistic?		yes	no
3. Can the planned activities be realised with the available resources?		yes	no
4. Is the team balanced with regard to disciplines?		yes	no
5. Is the team balanced with regard to gender?		yes	no
External organisation			
6. Does the manner in which external participants are planned to participate appear to be appropriate to the objectives of the project?		yes	no
7. Is the procedure for establishing missing contacts clear?		yes	no
Costs/Benefits			
8. What is the relation between input, expected results and products?	good	fair	poor
9. Have the means applied for been sufficiently justified?		yes	no
10. Do the means applied for appear to be sufficient?		yes	no
11. Does the relation of means applied for – own means and means from third parties – appear to be adequate?		yes	no

G. Overall assessment			
1. What is the relevance of the project?	high	medium	low
2. What is the quality of the project?	high	medium	low
3. What is the success probability of the project?	high	medium	low