

Austrian National Committee of UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB)

Call for applications 2016

Call for applications: 17 October 2016

Deadline for submission: 30 December 2016



From: World Map of Biosphere Reserves 2015 – 2016 (<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002449/244977M.pdf>): to date 669 Biosphere Reserves in 120 countries, including 16 transboundary sites

1. INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES

According to the research agenda for the Austrian MAB programme (part of the new research structure “Earth System Sciences” at the Austrian Academy of Sciences), and in response to the priorities set by the MAB International Coordinating Council, the MAB National Committee decided to benefit from UNESCO Biosphere Reserves (BRs) and other conservation oriented facilities (e.g. world heritage sites) as “living laboratories” for studying, testing out and demonstrating integrated management of land, water, and biodiversity in a sound balance with human uses. BRs in particular have the double mandate of nature conservation and sustainable 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 entail a focus on, or should at least be related to, the interaction of natural and socio-economic processes.
2. **transdisciplinarity** („mode 2 research“). MAB research takes stakeholders perspectives seriously and actively involves them in settling incongruences or even conflicts between conservation goals and human uses of the environment.
3. **international and comparative orientation**: Austrian MAB research is embedded into international research efforts, and uses parts of its resources for internationally comparative and or cooperative projects to promote learning through the systematic exchange of experiences.

Projects should finally:

- provide a knowledge-base for defining strategies towards sustainable development in BRs and similar facilities and evaluate achievements in this direction.
- be scientifically innovative, address interactions between multiple scales (including landscape and larger region) and with stakeholders, and provide advanced conceptual and/or methodological tools for wider use (such as scenario generation or integrated modelling).

Projects providing international cooperation and/or transfer of Austrian Know-How to foreign BRs are welcomed.

2. RESEARCH TOPICS

A. How can the interactions of social and natural processes in BRs be described so as to deliver operational knowledge for sustainability?

- 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 can this managed?
- How do global change impacts such as climate change, pollution, neobiota invasion and new agricultural use practices alter the natural and semi-natural environment and ecosystem services, and how can local vulnerability be reduced?

- How do BRs and similar facilities contribute to biodiversity conservation and provide models for the sustainable use of a protected area (e.g. integrating biodiversity aspects into land use practices)?
- How important are cultural ecosystem services for local people, tourists and the sustainable BR development?
- How to identify ecosystem services and how to facilitate their long-term provision, including those contributing to human health and wellbeing?
- How to implement programmes to preserve, maintain and promote species and varieties of economic and/or cultural value and that underpin the provision of ecosystem services?
- How can basic long-term monitoring (cheap, robust, simple) of protected areas be used for the systematic evaluation of goal attainment? How need monitoring tools be adjusted to render themselves better for evaluating progress?
- How to design an internationally promising process towards a core set of BRIM indicators?

B. How can the design and management of BRs (existing and proposed) be improved?

- How can research foster sustainable development in BRs?
- What are useful tools to understand the ongoing dynamics of change in BRs and similar facilities and how can they be used in an anticipatory fashion to avoid the deviation from original goals?
- How can conflict resolving procedures in BRs be designed and processed? What information basis and legal basis is required for this? Which procedures work better than others?
- How can research, practical learning and training opportunities that support the management of BRs and sustainable development in BRs be improved?
- How can local experiences be successfully transformed for international use by initiatives for MAB reserves and similar facilities?
- What can Austrian BRs learn from comparing research efforts and communication strategies (public, stakeholders, politicians) undertaken in BRs in other countries?
- How can BRs deal with the challenges of the implementation and production of alternative energy sources (e.g. hydropower, wind, solar photovoltaic, geothermal, biomass) without degrading local ecosystems?

3. CALL INFORMATION

All proposals should entail a focus on at least one of the above noted key questions within one of the two main topics. Project applications are to be drawn up in accordance with the standards for international research. Applications must include a “Letter of Endorsement” from the management(s) of the BR(s) involved.

The scope of the project must not exceed 80.000 EURO. The duration shall be a maximum of two years. The maximum sum available for applications for one year pilot projects is 50.000 EURO. In order to facilitate an international review process, the application must be submitted in English.

In order to submit an application, the application form available from the ÖAW homepage must be used. The application must include a detailed description of the scientific issue involved, the potential for innovation, the methodology and a detailed budget. Documentation demonstrating the expertise of the project team which is submitting the application (CV, list of publications) must be provided.

Please note that the project coordinator must be employed by an Austrian research institution. Collaboration with international partners is welcomed, but the project leader must be based in Austria. A total of not more than 20% of the funding can be allocated to foreign partners; allocation of funding to foreign project partners must be justified.

The MAB National Committees of Austria and Switzerland have agreed on a closer cooperation on the MAB sector. If you are planning collaboration projects between Austrian and Swiss BRs you can contact the Swiss MAB Committee, which will support you in finding Swiss co-financement up to 10.000 EURO (Contact: Carlo Ossola carlo.ossola@bafu.admin.ch; Thomas Scheurer Thomas.scheurer@scnat.ch). To be eligible for co-financing the project application must include “Letters of Endorsement” from the two National Committees and the managements of the BRs involved.”

3.1 Selection Process

All proposals will undergo external scientific review. Only the highest ranked proposals will be funded by the MAB National Committee. Reviews will be provided by international experts selected by the “Earth System Sciences Advisory Board (ESS-AB). At least two reviews will be required for each application.

The final selection of those projects which are recommended for funding will be made in a meeting of an international review board. The final decision on the award of funding will be made by the ÖAW Presiding Committee in consultation with the Federal Ministry for Science, Research and Economy (BMWFW). Applicants will be informed about the decision as soon as possible. In accordance with standard international procedures, a factual justification will be provided to support the decision. Anonymous excerpts from the reviews will be provided.

3.2 Project Support and Evaluation

The project report will be evaluated by the MAB National Committee. If the project is found not to have made sufficient progress, the board can recommend that payment of subsequent instalments be delayed until the quality has been significantly improved. The project team must submit a closing report at the end of the project. The report will be assessed by the MAB Committee. If deficiencies in quality are identified, these must be rectified within three months. Payment of the final instalment of the funding shall only be made following final approval by the MAB Committee.

In accordance with international standards, it is expected that the project leader will publish the results of the research in internationally respected journals. These journals must meet the necessary quality standards through use of a peer review system.

3.3 Time schedule

17 October 2016	Call for applications
30 December 2016	Deadline for submissions (date of e-mail)
April 2017	Decision on award of funding

Any enquiries, as well as any criticisms or suggestions for improvement should be directed to the address given below.

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[Application form](#)