



Programme for the Environment and Climate Action (LIFE)

Call for proposals

Nature & Biodiversity - Standard Action Projects (SAP)

LIFE-2026-SAP-NAT

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 CINEA.D – Natural Resources, Climate, Sustainable Blue Economy and Clean Energy
 Unit D2 - LIFE Environment (Nature & Circular Economy)

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

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0. Introduction

This is a call for proposals for EU **action grants** in the field of **Nature and Biodiversity** under the **Programme for Environment and Climate Action (LIFE)**.

The regulatory framework for this EU Funding Programme is set out in:

- Regulation 2024/2509 ([EU Financial Regulation](#))¹
- the basic act (LIFE Regulation [2021/783](#))².

The call is launched in accordance with the 2025-2027 Multiannual Work Programme³ and will be managed by the **European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency (CINEA)** ('Agency').

The call covers the following **topics**:

- **LIFE-2026-SAP-NAT-NATURE - Nature and Biodiversity**
- **LIFE-2026-SAP-NAT-GOV - Nature Governance and Information**

Each project application under the call must address only one of these topics. Applicants wishing to apply for more than one topic, must submit a separate proposal under each topic.

We invite you to read the **call documentation** carefully, and in particular this Call document, the Model Grant Agreement, the [EU Funding & Tenders Portal Online Manual](#) and the [EU Grants AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement](#).

These documents provide clarifications and answers to questions you may have when preparing your application:

- the [Call document](#) outlines the:
 - background, objectives, scope, activities that can be funded and the expected results (sections 1 and 2)
 - timetable and available budget (sections 3 and 4)
 - admissibility and eligibility conditions (including mandatory documents; sections 5 and 6)
 - criteria for financial and operational capacity and exclusion (section 7)
 - evaluation and award procedure (section 8)
 - award criteria (section 9)
 - legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements (section 10)
 - how to submit an application (section 11)

¹ Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 September 2024 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union (recast) ('EU Financial Regulation') (OJ L, 2024/2509, 26.9.2024).

² Regulation (EU) 2021/783 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2021 establishing a Programme for the Environment and Climate Action (LIFE) (OJ L 172, 17.5.2021, p. 53).

³ Commission Implementing Decision C(2025)955 of 15 April 2025 on the financing of the LIFE Programme and the adoption of the work programme for the years 2025 to 2027.

- the [Online Manual](#) outlines the:
 - procedures to register and submit proposals online via the EU Funding & Tenders Portal ('Portal')
 - recommendations for the preparation of the application
- the [AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement](#) contains:
 - detailed annotations on all the provisions in the Grant Agreement you will have to sign in order to obtain the grant (*including cost eligibility, payment schedule, accessory obligations, etc*).

You are also encouraged to visit the [LIFE database](#) to consult the list of projects funded previously. For the Clean Energy Transition sub-programme, projects funded previously (under the Horizon 2020 programme) can be found on the [CORDIS website](#).

1. Background

[What is the LIFE Programme?](#)

The LIFE Programme is the EU Programme for Environment and Climate Action.

As such, it is one of the key contributors to the European Green Deal⁴ which aims to:

- transform the EU into a fair and prosperous society, with a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy where there are no net emissions of greenhouse gases in 2050 and where economic growth is decoupled from resource use and
- protect, conserve and enhance the EU's natural capital, and protect the health and well-being of citizens from environment and climate related risks and impacts.

The LIFE Programme will contribute to these priorities through its four sub-programmes in particular by:

- boosting and integrating the implementation of the EU's policy objectives for halting and reversing loss of wildlife habitats and species across all sectors
- supporting the transition to a circular economy and protecting and improving the quality of EU's natural resources, including air, soil and water among others
- supporting implementation of the 2030 energy and climate policy framework, the EU's climate neutrality objective by 2050, and the new EU strategy on adaptation to climate change and
- building capacity, stimulating investments and supporting implementation of policies focused on energy efficiency and small-scale renewables.

The LIFE Programme is structured in two fields and four sub-programmes (described in more detail below):

Environment:

- sub-programme Nature and Biodiversity

⁴ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: The European Green Deal (COM(2019)640 final).

- sub-programme Circular Economy and Quality of Life

Climate Action:

- sub-programme Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation
- sub-programme Clean Energy Transition.

Nature and Biodiversity

In line with the specific objectives of the LIFE Programme as set out in Article 3(2) of the LIFE Regulation, the sub-programme 'Nature and Biodiversity' aims:

- to develop, demonstrate, promote and stimulate the scale up of innovative techniques, methods and approaches (including nature-based solutions and ecosystem approaches) for reaching the objectives set out under the Union legislation and policy on or related to nature and biodiversity, and to contribute to the knowledge base and to the application of best practices, including through the support of the Natura 2000 network
- to support the development, implementation, monitoring and enforcement of the relevant Union legislation and policy on or related to nature and biodiversity, including by improving governance at all levels, in particular through enhancing the capacities of public and private actors and the involvement of civil society, also taking into due consideration the possible contributions provided by citizen science⁵
- to catalyse the large-scale deployment of successful solutions/approaches for implementing relevant Union legislation and policy on nature and biodiversity, by replicating results, integrating related objectives into other policies and into public and private sector practices, mobilising investment and improving access to finance.

LIFE has been a key tool supporting the implementation of the EU Birds⁶ and Habitats⁷ Directives since 1992 and has been instrumental and, in some cases crucial, to ensure the establishment of the Natura 2000 network.

The Nature Directives' fitness check⁸, the Action plan for nature, people, and the economy⁹ as well as the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030¹⁰ underline the need to increase funding for nature and biodiversity.

The sub-programme covers two priority areas:

⁵ Scientific work undertaken by members of the general public, often in collaboration with or under the direction of professional scientists and scientific institutions.

⁶ Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds (OJ L 20, 26.1.2010, p. 7)

⁷ Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (OJ L 206, 22.7.1992, p. 7).

⁸ Commission Staff Working Document SWD(2016) 472 final of 16 December 2016 'Fitness-check of the EU Nature Legislation (Birds and Habitats Directives) Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds and Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora' (hereinafter referred to as 'the Fitness-check of the Birds and Habitats Directives').

⁹ Communication COM(2017) 198 final of 27 April 2017 from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions 'An Action Plan for nature, people and the economy'.

¹⁰ COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 Bringing nature back into our lives (COM/2020/380 final)

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52020DC0380>

- 1) EU Nature and Biodiversity
- 2) Awareness raising, compliance assurance and access to justice related to nature and biodiversity legislation.

Circular Economy and Quality of Life

The specific objectives of the sub-programme 'Circular Economy and Quality of Life' are:

- to develop, demonstrate and promote innovative techniques, methods and approaches for reaching the objectives of Union legislation and policy on environment, and to contribute to the knowledge base and, where relevant, to the application of best practices
- to support the development, implementation, monitoring and enforcement of relevant Union legislation and policy on environment, including by improving governance at all levels, in particular through enhancing capacities of public and private actors and the involvement of civil society
- to catalyse the large-scale deployment of successful technical and policy-related solutions for implementing relevant Union legislation and policy on environment, by replicating results, integrating related objectives into other policies and into public and private sector practices, mobilising investment and improving access to finance.

This sub-programme covers three priority areas:

- 1) Circular economy and waste
- 2) Zero pollution and sustainable management of natural resources
- 3) Environmental governance.

This sub-programme aims at facilitating the transition toward a sustainable, circular, energy-efficient and climate-resilient economy, a toxic-free environment and at protecting, restoring and improving the quality of the environment in line with the European Green Deal and recent policy developments.

Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation

The specific objectives of the sub-programme 'Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation' are:

- to develop, demonstrate and promote innovative techniques, methods and approaches for reaching the objectives of Union legislation and policy on climate action and to contribute to the knowledge base and to the application of best practices
- to support the development, implementation, monitoring and enforcement of relevant Union legislation and policy on climate action, including by improving governance at all levels, in particular through enhancing capacities of public and private actors and the involvement of civil society
- to catalyse the large-scale deployment of successful technical and policy-related solutions for implementing relevant Union legislation and policy on climate action by replicating results, integrating related objectives into other policies and into public and private sector practices, mobilising investment and improving access to finance.

This sub-programme will support the implementation of the European Green Deal by contributing to the objectives and targets set out in the European Climate Law¹¹: the goal for Europe's economy and society to become climate-neutral by 2050; the intermediate Union climate target to reduce net greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% compared to 1990 levels by 2030; the 2040 Union climate target that the Commission should propose within six months of the first global stock take carried out under the Paris Agreement¹²; and the obligation for Union institutions and Member States to ensure continuous progress in enhancing adaptive capacity, strengthening resilience and reducing vulnerability to climate change, in line with the new EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change¹³.

The sub-programme covers three priority areas:

1. Climate Change Mitigation
2. Climate Change Adaptation
3. Climate Change Governance and Information.

Clean Energy Transition

The specific objectives of the sub-programme 'Clean Energy Transition' are the following:

- to develop, demonstrate and promote innovative regulatory, governance and market-oriented techniques, methods and approaches for reaching the objectives of Union legislation and policy on the clean, sustainable and just energy transition by upscaling renewable energy solutions and increasing energy efficiency, and contributing to the knowledge base and to the application of best practices
- to support the development, implementation, monitoring and enforcement of relevant Union legislation and policy on the clean, sustainable, and just energy transition upscaling renewable energy solutions and increasing energy efficiency, including by improving governance at all levels, by enhancing capacities of public and private actors, by assisting and engaging citizens and the involvement of civil society, and by structuring the market to enable and foster the uptake of energy transition technologies
- to catalyse the large-scale deployment of successful technical and policy-related solutions supporting cross-European actions integrating market and regulatory approaches able to favour the implementation of relevant Union legislation and objectives on the clean, sustainable, and just energy transition upscaling renewable energy solutions and increasing energy efficiency, by replicating results and successful best practices, by mobilising investment, upscaling the use of financial instruments and improving access to finance, and by fostering cross-sectoral business cooperations, public-private partnerships and activities of EU cross-border market actors.

¹¹ Regulation (EU) 2021/1119 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 June 2021 establishing the framework for achieving climate neutrality and amending Regulations (EC) No 401/2009 and (EU) 2018/1999 ('European Climate Law'), OJ L 243, 9.7.2021, p. 1–17.

¹² On 6 February 2024, the Commission recommended reducing the EU's net greenhouse gas emissions by 90% by 2040 relative to 1990 in the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions 'Securing our future - Europe's 2040 climate target and path to climate neutrality by 2050 building a sustainable, just and prosperous society', COM/2024/63 final.

¹³ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions 'Forging a climate-resilient Europe - the new EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change', COM/2021/82 final.

This sub-programme aims at facilitating the transition toward an energy-efficient, renewable energy-based, climate-neutral and -resilient economy by funding mainly Coordination and Support Actions (CSA). These actions aim at capacity building, at dissemination of information and of knowledge, and at awareness-raising to support the transition to renewable energy and increased energy efficiency. They support breaking market barriers that hamper the socio-economic transition to sustainable energy, typically engaging multiple small and medium-size stakeholders, including but not limited to local and regional public authorities, non-profit organisations, energy services companies and utilities, project developers, net-zero technologies manufacturers, financial institutions, professional organisations, consumers associations and citizens initiatives.

The sub-programme covers five priority areas:

1. Building a national, regional and local policy framework supporting the clean energy transition
2. Accelerating technology roll-out, digitalisation, new services and business models and enhancement of the related professional skills on the market for the clean energy transition
3. Attracting private finance for sustainable energy
4. Supporting the development of local and regional investment projects
5. Involving and empowering citizens in the clean energy transition

2. Type of action — Objectives — Themes and priorities — Activities that can be funded — Expected impact

Type of action

The topics under this call for proposals concern LIFE Standard Action Projects (SAPs).

SAPs represent the 'traditional LIFE projects' aimed to:

- develop, demonstrate and promote innovative techniques, methods and approaches
 'Innovative techniques, methods and approaches' means solutions which are new when compared to the state of the art at national and sector level and which are implemented at an operational scale and under conditions that allow the achievement of the impacts set out in the award criterion 'Impact' first paragraph (*see below*).
- contribute to the knowledge base and to the application of best practice
 'Best practice' means solutions, techniques, methods and approaches which are appropriate, cost-effective and state of the art (at national and sector level), and which are implemented at an operational scale and under conditions that allow the achievement of the impacts set out in the award criterion 'Impact' first paragraph (*see below*).
- support the development, implementation, monitoring and enforcement of the EU legislation and policy, including by improving governance at all levels, in particular through enhancing capacities of public and private actors and the involvement of civil society
- catalyse the large-scale deployment of successful technical and policy related solutions for implementing the EU legislation and policy by replicating results, integrating related objectives into other policies and into public and private sector practices, mobilising investment and improving access to finance.

SAPs are a flexible tool available to entities from all sectors (public, non-governmental and private).

They can be close-to-market (i.e. aim not only at delivering improved environmental solutions, but also at making sure such solutions are widely taken up by society in general and, more particularly, by the economy through an explicit market-oriented approach). In this case, applicants will be required to highlight specific market-related information in their Application Forms (e.g. *planned production capacity, reference market, economic feasibility etc.*).

Applications for SAPs are typically expected under the sub-programme 'Circular Economy and Quality of Life', 'Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation' and 'Clean Energy Transition'.

LIFE-2026-SAP-NAT-NATURE — Nature and Biodiversity

Objectives

Under this topic, projects shall lead to a smart and outcome-based implementation of the EU nature and biodiversity legislation¹⁴ and the EU biodiversity strategy for 2030¹⁵. Only wild flora and fauna and natural and semi-natural habitats may be targeted. They shall fall under at least one of the two following areas of intervention:

– Intervention area: “Space for Nature”

Any project aimed at improving the condition of species or habitats through area-based conservation or restoration measures falls within the eligible scope of the intervention area “Space for Nature”. This may include, for example:

- projects restoring or improving natural or semi-natural habitats, or habitats of species, both within and outside existing protected areas;
- projects creating additional protected areas or improving the biodiversity focus and contribution of existing protected areas, through conservation and management measures;
- projects creating ecological corridors or developing other green infrastructure, enhancing the resilience of the Trans-European Nature Network;
- projects testing or demonstrating new site management approaches,
- projects acting on pressures, both within and outside Natura 2000, affecting EU natural or semi-natural habitats, or habitats of protected species.

– Intervention area: “Safeguarding our species”

Any project aimed at improving the condition of species (or, in the case of invasive alien species, reducing their impact) through any relevant activities other than area-based conservation or restoration measures falls within the scope of the intervention area “Safeguarding our species”. Considering the broad range of threats that may act on species in addition to the degradation of their habitats, such projects may apply a

¹⁴ [Birds Directive \(Directive 79/409/EEC\)](#), the [Habitats Directive \(Council Directive 92/43/EEC\)](#) and the [Invasive Alien Species Regulation \(Regulation \(EU\) 1143/2014\)](#).

¹⁵ [Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 Bringing nature back into our lives](#). (COM/2020/380 final).

wide range of relevant measures spanning from hard infrastructural works¹⁶ to awareness raising of stakeholders.

Scope — Activities that can be funded

Under both areas of intervention, having clearly defined specific outcome-based biodiversity-related objectives for projects and their activities is a pre-condition for an objective prioritization of the proposals.

In order to allow for effective comparison of merits of proposals, the following principles will be applied for a first level prioritisation which defines the **urgency** under the two areas of intervention¹⁷:

- For proposals targeting species covered by the EU Birds Directive¹⁸, priority is given to those that are considered as such by the Committee for Adaptation to Technical and Scientific Progress¹⁹ (Ornis Committee) set up pursuant to Article 16 of the same Directive.
- For proposals targeting species and habitats covered by the EU Habitats Directive²⁰, priority is given to:
 - those that are clearly targeting habitats or species in unfavourable and declining conservation status²¹, in particular when their status is unfavourable bad and declining (U2-) both in the EU and at national biogeographical region(s) level, where the project is taking place²²;
 - projects that strive to minimize conflicts and promote coexistence between humans and large carnivores.
- For species and habitats not covered by EU Nature legislation, priority is given to proposals clearly targeting those that are in higher extinction risk categories (in particular: endangered or worse) in the relevant most recent EU red lists of species and habitats. In cases of species and habitats not covered by the EU red lists, the most up-to date published version of the European or Global IUCN Red Lists has to be considered as priority. The latter applies both to species groups not covered by EU red lists, and to species and habitats in ORs, OCTs and associated countries to the LIFE programme.

Further prioritisation of the proposals will be based on the policy priorities below:

¹⁶ Such as infrastructures to reduce bird mortality on electric power lines, the construction of fish passes, etc.

¹⁷ Third countries associated to the LIFE Programme: the assessment of each proposal will be done in line with the provisions of the relevant association agreement.

¹⁸ [Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds.](#)

¹⁹ 2021.04.30 Updated LIFE Priority Birds List after Ornis Committee <https://circabc.europa.eu/ui/group/3f466d71-92a7-49eb-9c63-6cb0fadf29dc/library/aa421d7d-812c-4af3-ac17-af3b8efb09ab?p=1>

²⁰ [Council Directive 92/43/EEC](#)

²¹ [Webtool for the biogeographical assessments of conservation status of species and habitats under Article 17 of the Habitats Directive.](#)

²² By way of exception from the above rule, considering the quite recent EU accession of Croatia and the high number of unknown status and/or trend assessments in the first Croatian national report under Article 17 (2019), only the EU biogeographical region level assessments will be considered for the prioritization of projects targeting relevant habitats and species in that Member States.

➤ **Priorities stemming from EU nature and biodiversity legislation**

Priority is given to proposals for improving the conservation status or trends of species and habitats of EU interest ²³, notably where:

1. They are implementing objectives and measures outlined in national or regional Prioritized Action Frameworks (PAFs) under the EU Habitats Directive or national restoration plans under EU Nature Restoration Regulation²⁴ or in other plans (such as species action plans) or strategies adopted at international, national, regional or multiregional level by nature and biodiversity authorities that implement EU nature and/or biodiversity policy or legislation and that include specific and measurable actions, or targets, with a clear timeline and budget;
2. Their activities focus on the implementation of conservation objectives for existing Natura 2000 sites. In the case of territories of EU Member States and associated countries to which the Birds and Habitats Directives do not apply, activities should focus on similar networks of protected areas, notably where such conservation objectives are clearly established, improving the condition of species and habitats for which the sites are designated;
3. Their activities focus on reducing the deliberate or accidental killing of the targeted species (e.g., poisoning, illegal killing, by-catch), preventing stakeholder conflicts, improving acceptance and promoting co-existence with protected species.

In addition, for the proposals addressing invasive alien species, priority is given to the following species:

- The species included in the list of invasive alien species of Union concern pursuant to Article 4(1) of the Regulation (EU) No 1143/2014²⁵, and/or invasive alien species of Member State or regional concern pursuant to Articles 12 and 11 of the Regulation respectively; or
- other invasive alien species that negatively affect the conservation status or trends of species and habitats of EU interest, other species protected under EU legislation, or listed as threatened species in EU or global red lists (the latter for species groups and/or countries and regions not covered by EU red lists).

➤ **Priorities stemming from the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030**

Priority based on the EU biodiversity strategy for 2030 is given to proposals addressing the following objectives:

1. Establishing a coherent network of protected areas
 - a) Proposals contributing to the target of legally protecting²⁶ a minimum of 30% of the EU's land area and 30% of the EU sea area, and on integrating ecological corridors, as part of a true Trans-European Nature Network.
 - b) Proposals contributing to the target of strictly protecting at least a third of the EU's protected areas, including all remaining EU primary and old-growth forests.

²³ [Guidance document on the strict protection of animal species of Community interest under the Habitats Directive \(C/2021/7301 final\)](#).

²⁴ Regulation (EU) 2024/1991 of the European Parliament and the Council on nature restoration.

²⁵ [Regulation \(EU\) No 1143/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22](#)

²⁶ [Commission Staff Working Document "Criteria and guidance for protected areas designations" SWD\(2022\)23 final](#).

2. Implementing EU nature restoration targets for species and habitats
 - a) Proposals that are focused on implementing national commitments or pledges, for improving the status of species and habitats covered by the EU nature directives, including through trans-national or trans-boundary approaches.
 - b) Proposals that contribute to the implementation of national restoration plans (NRPs) under the EU Nature Restoration Regulation²⁷, and in particular:
 - Proposals that contribute to bringing into good condition areas of habitat types covered by the EU Nature Restoration Regulation that are currently not in good condition.
 - Proposals that help re-establish habitat types covered by the EU Nature Restoration Regulation in areas not covered by these habitat types, with the aim of reaching their favourable reference area.
3. Restoring degraded and carbon-rich ecosystems and/or prevent and reduce the impact of natural disasters
 - a) Proposals with a focus on restoring degraded carbon-rich ecosystems. For forests, this includes proposals aimed at forest restoration to primary forest structure, composition, and functioning²⁸.
 - b) Proposals with a focus on deploying Green and Blue Infrastructure in line with the EU guidance²⁹ as well as other nature-based solutions and restoration actions that would help prevent or reduce the impact of natural disasters, including river and wetland restoration projects³⁰. Also, proposals for restoring areas affected by desertification, that aim to improve land and water management through ecosystem-based approaches, preventing the impacts of flash floods in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas, and therefore increasing ecosystem resilience to both floods and droughts.
4. Improving the health and resilience of managed forests
 - a) Proposals demonstrating “closer to nature forestry” practices³¹, meaning practices that try to achieve management objectives with necessary human intervention to preserve biodiversity, prevent wildfires and combine conservation with productivity objectives.
 - b) Proposals ensuring reinforced sustainable forest management for climate adaptation and forest resilience. This includes financial incentives for forest owners and managers for improving the quantity and quality of EU forest.
5. Reversing the decline of pollinators
 - a) Proposals to support implementation of Priority II “*Improving pollinator conservation and tackling the causes of their decline*” of the revised EU

²⁷ [Regulation \(EU\) 2024/1991 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2024 on nature restoration and amending Regulation \(EU\) 2022/869..](#)

²⁸ [Guidelines for Defining, Mapping, Monitoring and Strictly Protecting EU Primary and Old-Growth Forests \(europa.eu\).](#)

²⁹ [EU Guidance document on a strategic framework for further supporting the deployment of EU-level green and blue infrastructure SWD\(2019\) 193 final.](#)

³⁰ See below par. 2.2.2 of the sub-programme Circular Economy and Quality of Life for further priorities.

³¹ [Guidelines on Biodiversity-Friendly Afforestation, Reforestation and Tree Planting \(europa.eu\).](#)

Pollinators Initiative, and in particular the implementation of the three Action Plans for the most threatened pollinator species³².

- b) Proposals for the restoration of habitats important for the wild pollinators' lifecycle; such proposals need to outline how the improvement of their associated pollinator communities is taken into account by the project activities.
- c) Proposals that, even if they do not directly address pollinators, measure the project's success against, among others, the improvement of pollinator communities³³.

6. Bringing nature back to agricultural land

Project proposals that demonstrate innovative approaches to restoring high-biodiversity landscape features in agroecosystems that also bring benefits for farmers and communities (such as preventing soil erosion and depletion, land degradation and desertification, filtering air and water, and supporting climate adaptation) and communicate such approaches.

7. Recreating functional ecosystems and bringing nature back in urban and peri-urban areas

Project proposals for the restoration of healthy and biodiverse ecosystems in urban green areas and peri-urban areas, as well as for the development of green infrastructure and nature-based solutions that bring about significant benefits for biodiversity while providing solutions to urban challenges and increasing access to nature, especially if they implement biodiversity objectives and measures included in urban greening plans and/or in urban biodiversity strategies and plans and/or in green infrastructures strategies.

8. Restoring the good environmental status of marine and freshwater ecosystems

Proposals addressing the restoration of marine and freshwater ecosystems and improving their conservation status, including proposals for restoring free-flowing rivers, removal of obsolete barriers and floodplains restoration.

Expected impact

Applicants are expected to define, calculate, explain and achieve the expected impacts as described in the Award criterion 'Impacts' (see section 9) in terms of conservation benefit.

Considering the limited LIFE budget availability, projects requesting high EU contributions (e.g. above 5 M EUR) have to present, in particular, exceptionally clear and convincing evidence of the EU added value of their proposals in terms of impact and value for money. The requested contribution has to be clearly justified by an exceptional impact benefitting urgent conservation needs/priorities. While projects with higher budgets benefit from economies of scale, the applicants need to demonstrate the cost efficiency of their projects and provide detailed cost breakdown in the 'detailed budget table' mandatory annex. All LIFE proposals will have to report on their expected outputs and impacts taking into account the LIFE Project Indicators (LPIs). These LPIs will contribute to evaluating the impact of the LIFE proposal on an environmental but also socio-economic level (e.g. via actions impacting the local economy and population). All the indicators measured should be coherent with the conservation or biodiversity problem addressed and the type of activities planned.

³² <https://wikis.ec.europa.eu/display/EUPKH/Action+Plans>.

³³ Indicators for improvement could be based, for example, on measuring changes in the diversity or abundance of Apoidea, Syrphidae, Lepidoptera or any other relevant taxonomic groups.

Applicants should review relevant indicators in Part C of the eGrant application and complete them with the estimated impact of the project. Part C data should be coherent with the description of impacts of section 2 of Part B of the Application Form.

In case Part C does not include impact indicators that are important for the specific project, applicants should make use of the indicator “Other project specific KPIs” in Part C and provide a relevant description of such indicators in section 2 of Part B of the Application Form.

If relevant, projects must upload a Geographic Information System (GIS) file and associated data of the specific geographical area where the intervention took place as a deliverable in their final report. This map should enable to spatially visualise the impact already reported in the Life Project Indicators database. The specific format and technical requirements of the GIS files will be provided to the supported projects during their implementation. In addition, LIFE projects are encouraged to make use of Copernicus and/or Galileo/EGNOS for satellites-based earth observation, positioning, navigation and/or related timing data and services.

More detailed information will be requested during project implementation.

Funding rate

Maximum 60% funding rate or higher for certain types of projects (*see section 10*).

In case the species targeted is subject to two assessments (e.g. EU/national-level biogeographical region assessments and European species Red List assessment), the most recent assessment will be considered when evaluating the compliance with the conditions for higher funding rate.

Additional conditions

Sustainability

When designing their project, applicants need to take into account an obligation to maintain ecological effect of the project activities for at least 20 years after the project end.

Applicants need to ensure that any LIFE-related investments into the management or restoration of natural or semi-natural habitats and habitats for species will lead to improvements that can be sustained in the long term. This often requires that such actions are taking place on areas that do already benefit from legal protection (as Natura 2000 sites or nationally protected areas), or that an adequate level of legal protection can be given to such areas during the lifetime of the project.

Where the actions involve land acquisition and habitat restoration, the area in question should receive the most appropriate legal protection (nationally protected area, Natura 2000 etc.) with the view to contribute to the establishment of the Trans European Nature Network (TEN-N). For other investments that involve reducing pressures and threats (e.g. blocking of ditches or reducing nitrogen run off from agricultural land) on land which does not in itself have high natural value to justify designation but acts as a buffer zone around Natura 2000 sites and/or protected areas, a long-term contractual agreement to ensure that the pressures and threats are irreversibly alleviated is required.

A contractual agreement is considered “long term” when it covers at least 20 years. If less, a shorter-term agreement should be convincingly justified and evidence provided that project results will be sustained in the long term.

When a contractual agreement is not possible, the applicant should provide evidence that the investment made is backed by an appropriate land use planning at the most relevant administrative level. Private land conservation initiatives can also be supported in this context.

Natura 2000 site designation, update of Standard Data Forms, strategic documents adoption

To ensure the long-term sustainability of the conservation activities, projects requiring Natura 2000 site designation or boundaries modifications, the update of Standard Data Forms, and/or the drafting and adoption of management plans or other strategic national/regional documents, must:

- submit a formal letter from the MS competent authority committing to the designation/formal update/adoption before the end of the project;
- include corresponding milestones in the work-plan and proper follow up;
- ensure that sufficient time is built in the project planning ensuring that the designation/update/adoption is realistically achievable before the end of the project.

If such activities are not achieved before the project end, all related costs could be considered ineligible.

Activities inside Natura 2000

Actions targeting bird species listed in Annex I of the Birds Directive or occurring migratory species should take place within the respective SPAs, actions targeting habitats or species of the Habitat Directives should take place within the respective pSCIs/SCIs/SACs.

Activities can only target species and habitats listed in the site's official Natura 2000 Standard Data Form (SDF). Applicants are advised to check this carefully. These SDFs can be viewed at the EU Natura 2000 Public Viewer - <http://natura2000.eea.europa.eu/> (note: this public database is updated generally with a couple of months delay from the time the Commission receives the data from the Member States, therefore the applicant should also check the national public SDF database). Where the species/habitats are in fact present in the site but are not in the SDF published in the EU Natura 2000 Public Viewer, activities targeting these species/habitats can only be accepted if the proposal contains a letter of commitment from the competent authority to update the data sheet before the end of the project or, if this update has already been sent to the Commission, a declaration from the competent authority should be provided.

Activities outside Natura 2000

Activities that are area-based (intervention area "Space for Nature") and that target habitat types / species listed in Annexes I or II of the Habitats Directive or bird species listed in Annex I of the Birds Directive, are allowed outside Natura 2000 only for the improvement of the ecological coherence/connectivity of the Natura 2000 network to build a coherent Trans-European Nature Network. Each of the following conditions should be met:

- (i) Evidence is provided that the investments foreseen contribute to an "improvement of the ecological coherence of the Natura 2000 network" in terms of preventing genetic isolation, allowing for species migration, and maintaining and enhancing healthy ecosystems;

- (ii) A guarantee is provided for the long-term continuation of these investments, in the form of a commitment for giving these sites the most appropriate legal protection status or long-term contractual agreement before the end of the project. Where the actions involve land acquisition and habitat restoration, the area in question should receive the most appropriate legal protection (nationally protected area, Natura 2000 etc.) with the view to contribute to the establishment of the Trans European Nature Network. In the proposal the applicant must provide detailed information on the proposed protection status and explain why it is considered as being sufficient for securing the long-term sustainability of the investments. For other investments that involve reducing pressures and threats (e.g. blocking of ditches or reducing nitrogen run off from agricultural land) on land which does not in itself have high natural value to justify designation but acts as a buffer zone around Natura 2000 sites and/or protected areas, a long-term contractual agreement to ensure that the pressures and threats are irreversibly alleviated is required.

Exceptionally, and for demonstration purposes only, projects may include actions for improving the habitats of species listed in Annex II and Annex III of the Birds Directive. However, a guarantee must be provided for the sustainability of any such investments, in the form of commitment for a long-term agreement with the land owner/land manager or for giving these sites the most appropriate legal protection status before the end of the project. When submitting the proposal, the applicant must provide detailed information on the identified mechanism to ensure the long-term sustainability of the investment and explain why it is considered as being sufficient. Land purchase is not possible in this context. For such projects, a plan for dissemination, replication and scaling up of the results should also be provided.

When legal protection/long term contractual agreements are not possible for any of the above cases, the applicant should provide a thorough justification and clear evidence that the investment to be made is backed by an appropriate land use planning at the most relevant administrative level. Private land conservation initiatives can also be supported in this context.

Species re-introduction and other conservation introductions/translocations within natural range

Activities to reintroduce or introduce/translocate species within their natural range can only be considered eligible for funding, when the project proposals meet all conditions listed below. The applicant must address each of these conditions in his proposal, explaining how each condition is met.

- (i) the actions are justified, expected to yield quantitative conservation benefits based on a cost/benefit analysis, and have a high chance of success based on a thorough risk and feasibility analysis;
- (ii) the reintroduced or introduced/translocated organisms are likely to be able to cope with new pathogen and stresses encountered at the destination site and the risk of reintroducing new pathogens in the destination area are minimised;
- (iii) alternatives to reintroduction or introduction/translocation have been assessed as less effective or infeasible as a means to reach the specific and clearly defined conservation objectives of the reintroduction or introduction/translocation;
- (iv) the actions target areas where the causes of extinction of the species have been eliminated;
- (v) the removal of individuals from their present habitat for re-introduction or introduction/translocation is only considered if it does not endanger the captive

or wild source populations;

- (vi) the actions target areas whose habitats and climate meet, in the foreseeable future, the conditions necessary for the survival of a viable population of the species;
- (vii) a prior agreement between all parties involved (e.g. between the competent authority for the donor population and the manager of the area of reintroduction or introduction/translocation) has been concluded and documented;
- (viii) the actions target only areas where the attitude of the local population towards the planned reintroduction or introduction/translocation is favourable or where there is a reasonable expectation that local acceptance can be achieved during the project;
- (ix) either
 - organisms are only reintroduced in areas where they previously occurred
 - or
 - organisms are deliberately introduced/translocated outside their indigenous ranges in order to
 - o prevent the extinction of populations of the focal species where protection from current or likely future threats in its current range is deemed less feasible than at alternative sites or
 - o re-establish an ecological function lost through extinction through introduction/translocation of organisms which are a close relative of the extinct species, within the same genus, and which belong to the closest and most similar population available (in terms of genetics, ecology, etc.).

In case of such conservation introduction/translocation, it must be possible to reliably assess that they present low risks, also in relation to their potential to become invasive.

- (x) the proposal must include a preparatory phase, a re-introduction or introduction/translocation phase and a follow-up phase, as well as an exit strategy, in case the reintroduction or introduction/translocation does not proceed according to plan;
- (xi) sustainability of the re-introduction or introduction/translocation needs to be guaranteed.

Re-introduction and other conservation introduction/translocation actions outside existing Natura 2000 sites or protected areas are only eligible if the proposal meets each of the following additional conditions:

- (i) it includes a commitment from the competent authority to designate the core reproductive and feeding areas of the (re)introduced/translocated population as Natura 2000 sites (in case of species listed in Annex II of the Habitats Directive and bird species listed in Annex I of the Birds Directive or regularly occurring migratory species) or as protected areas, before the end of the project (provided the reintroduction or introduction/translocation has been successful);
- (ii) it ensures that the Member State's competent authority is a participant of the project (coordinator or partner). A specific action, implemented by the

competent authority for the designation, must be included in the proposal.

Further guidelines on re-introduction and conservation introductions/translocations can be found in the following document:

<https://iucn-ctsg.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/new-rsg-reintro-guidelines-2013.pdf>

Ex situ conservation actions

These concern actions such as captive breeding, seed banks, etc., and may include sustainable investments in infrastructure / equipment. In order to be eligible, ex situ conservation must be linked to a reintroduction during the project. Exceptionally, these investments will be considered eligible in the absence of a planned reintroduction if clear justification is given to prove that ex situ conservation is the only possible/useful type of conservation action at present for that/those species.

Land purchase

When land is purchased during the project, a deliverable referring to the completion of the Land Purchase Database³⁴ due at the end of the project is compulsory.

The eligibility of any cost for land purchase is subject to the conditions listed below. The applicant must address each of these conditions in the proposal, explaining how each condition is met or will be met during the project. In addition, proof that the price per hectare is not above the average for the types of land and locations concerned, must be provided with the proposal (e.g. letter from a competent authority/registered notary/certified real estate agency).

- (i) The land purchase must be clearly related to the objectives of the project.
- (ii) The land purchased must contribute to improving, maintaining or restoring the integrity of the Natura 2000 network.
- (iii) The purchase is the only or most cost-effective way of achieving the desired conservation outcome.
- (iv) The purchased land is reserved in the long-term for uses consistent with the objectives set out in Article 3 of the LIFE Regulation, through the most appropriate form of legal protection.
- (v) The beneficiaries must ensure that the sales contract / notary act and/or entry in the land register includes a guarantee that the land is assigned definitively (without time limitation) to nature conservation purposes. Where both possibilities exist (sales contract and land registry entry), the beneficiaries must use the option that offers the strongest long-term protection. Note that at the latest with the final report, the beneficiaries will have to submit a copy of the sales contract and/or entry in the land register including the above-mentioned guarantee. Should they fail to provide such documents, the corresponding land purchase costs and associated costs will be considered ineligible. For countries where it would be illegal to include such a guarantee in both the land register and in the sale contract, the granting authority may accept an equivalent guarantee, provided it offers the same legal level of protection in the long term.
- (vi) The land must be purchased by one of the project beneficiaries who is either a well-established private organisation (e.g. nature conservation NGO or other)

³⁴ <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/life/lpd/public/homepage.xhtml>

or a public body with nature conservation responsibility and must remain in its ownership after the end of the project.

- (vii) The proposal must demonstrate that each beneficiary that will carry out land purchase has the necessary competence and experience in land purchase for nature conservation, and that the planned target is realistic within the time framework of the project.
- (viii) If the purchasing body is a private organisation, its statutes must include a provision that, in case of dissolution, the land will be transferred to another legal body primarily active in the field of nature conservation (e.g. another conservation NGO or appropriate public body).
- (ix) Evidence (e.g. letter from a competent authority/registered notary/certified real estate agency) must be provided in the proposal confirming that the price per hectare is consistent with the current market prices for the type of land and the region concerned.
- (x) Evidence must be provided that the land purchased was not owned by a public authority in the 24 months prior to the project application date.
- (xi) The purchased land must be the subject, during the project, of specific restoration and/or active management or restrictions of use that go beyond legal obligations and existing restrictions that could not be imposed without purchasing the land. The purchase of land that is in excellent conservation status (i.e. that requires no restoration or specific management or restrictions of use) is only eligible if strategic to the objectives of the project.

Long-term land lease, purchase of rights and one-off compensation payments

The same conditions for land purchase listed above apply here, as and where appropriate, to these types of payments. The applicant must address each of these conditions in the proposal, explaining how each condition is met or will be met during the project. The duration of a lease must be sufficient to guarantee the durability of the conservation investment (e.g. 20 years or longer). See also the General Conditions of the Model LIFE Grant Agreement.

Short term land lease or temporary compensation payments

Land lease or compensation payments with a limited duration, within the project period, will only be eligible insofar as they are necessary for the demonstration of pilot actions favourable to the conservation status of the species, habitats or ecosystem targeted. Note that appropriate justification for the cost-effectiveness of short-term lease payments (consistency with current market prices for the type of land and the region concerned) will have to be provided with the project's final report.

Ineligible costs concerning land purchase, one-off compensation payments and lease payments

Any land purchase payments, one-off compensation payments or lease payments to public bodies are not eligible, with the exception of compensation or short-term lease payments to local authorities (i.e. municipalities or similar).

For the exception to be valid, it must be explicitly foreseen in the project and beneficiaries must demonstrate that it is the only cost-effective solution to reach the objectives of the project. Moreover, it is recommended that local authorities re-invest the income from such payments into conservation or public awareness-raising measures for Natura 2000 network or for achieving the targets of the EU Biodiversity

Strategy to 2030. Those proposals which include a commitment from the local authorities in question to do so will be considered for a higher scoring on EU added value in the project evaluation process and may therefore have a higher chance of being selected for co-funding.

Ongoing management of habitats and recurring activities

Annual or otherwise recurring habitat management actions that were already ongoing before the start of the project are not eligible. Where additional or new recurring management actions are established during the project (for example to kick-start the long-term management of an area restored through project actions), applicants need to explain and justify in their proposal why these actions should be financed through the LIFE Programme and how their continuation will be financed after the end of the project.

Where actions to be undertaken in the project are significantly different from previous or ongoing activities in terms of frequency or intensity, they are not considered ongoing. The applicant must provide adequate information in the proposal that allows to assess this aspect.

At the time of the final payment, the Agency will verify that the recurring actions are still being undertaken at the required periodicity, that they are indeed indispensable for the management of the habitat, and that all administrative and budgetary conditions are fulfilled to ensure their continuation after the end of the project. If there is no clear assurance that the recurrent action will be continued after the end of the project, all related costs will be ineligible.

Infrastructure

The entity that directly owns or will own the infrastructure assets should be part of the project partnership. This also applies to infrastructure costs that are related to refurbishment or renovation of an existing infrastructure. An exception can be made if the owner of the infrastructure cannot be included in the partnership, provided that the budget for this investment is limited. In this case the owner should sign a long-term commitment (for no less than 20 years), such as a convention or a land stewardship agreement, to dedicate the infrastructure to nature and biodiversity conservation purposes (i.e. to serve as nesting site for a protected species).

Normally, the infrastructure should be located inside Natura2000. In case it is outside Natura 2000, the long-term sustainability of the infrastructure should be guaranteed in the most appropriate way (e.g. land use planning, contractual agreements) and one of the following conditions for its eligibility should be met:

- (i) The infrastructure is necessary for achieving the conservation objectives of the targeted Natura 2000 sites;
- (ii) The infrastructure acts as a migration corridor (e.g. eco-ducts, fish passes) and evidence is provided that is indispensable to ensure connectivity and movement of species;
- (iii) The infrastructure is necessary for ex situ conservation of species (e.g. captive breeding, etc.) and the reintroduction/restocking of species must take place during the project implementation. Exceptionally, infrastructure will be considered eligible in the absence of a planned reintroduction if clear justification is given to prove that ex situ conservation is the only possible/useful type of conservation action at present for that/those species (e.g. seed banks).

Visitor infrastructures are a priori not eligible. However, in exceptional cases the creation of small-scale visitor infrastructures might be eligible, but only if all of the following criteria are fulfilled:

- (i) The need for such infrastructure must be well justified towards achieving project objectives and clearly related to a threats/pressure addressed in the project.
- (ii) The investment in the infrastructure is limited in comparison to the overall project budget and it is cost effective.
- (iii) The investment cannot be financed by other funding instruments at regional, national or EU level. The applicant should justify in the proposal why other sources of funding cannot be used to finance this investment.

Green Infrastructure

Independently from the focus of the project, if the project targeting sites inside and/or outside Natura 2000 is conceived as part of a green/blue infrastructure, the following cumulative criteria³⁵ should also be met:

- (i) Make a clear contribution towards the conservation and/or enhancement of multiple ecosystem services at a significant scale;
- (ii) Contribute to improving the conservation status of species or habitat types covered by EU nature legislation and the condition of the corresponding ecosystems;
- (iii) Be implemented at a scale that is significant in the sense that it transcends administrative boundaries; or involve a minimum of two Member States (or a Member State and a neighbouring country); or implement a national GI strategy or a national restoration prioritisation framework.

Compensatory measures

Costs related to activities that are considered compensatory measures may not be accepted based on the polluter-pays principle. The entity causing environmental damage is liable for it and therefore must take the necessary preventive or remedial actions and bear all the related costs. This principle is enshrined in the Treaty and also in Directive 2004/35/EC on environmental liability. The directive also covers the damage to protected species and natural habitats that adversely affects their conservation status as defined in the Directive 2009/147/EC, on the conservation of wild birds, and Directive 92/43/EEC, the Habitats Directive.

Proposals following on previous LIFE projects and coordination requirements for multiple proposals aimed at the same/similar issue

If applicants propose a continuation of a previous LIFE project, they should clearly explain why a further project phase is needed and how this will complement the results achieved with the previous project. The applicant should also explain when discussing sustainability, how a further continuation would be ensured with resources other than the LIFE programme.

Applicants should also show that they have taken into consideration other financed LIFE projects that addressed a similar issue. They will need to explain how their

³⁵ [EU Guidance document on a strategic framework for further supporting the deployment of EU-level green and blue infrastructure SWD\(2019\) 193 final.](#)

proposal builds upon or differs from the others and how it will coordinate with them if those projects are still on-going.

During the evaluation process these aspects will be carefully checked. Failure to provide full details on these aspects will have a negative impact on the final score.

Evidence shows that an increasing number of proposals aimed at the same or at a similar issue are submitted, often in the same Member State and without a clear rational and coordination mechanism. To avoid such situations applicants are strongly encouraged to consult with the LIFE National Contact Points to check whether the topic they are addressing is being addressed also by other applicants. If this is the case, applicants are encouraged to seek cooperation to avoid possible overlaps and to increase synergies.

Special requirements for Associated Countries to the LIFE Programme and for Overseas Countries and Territories to the EU (OCTs) where Habitats and Birds Directives do not apply

In non-EU Member States (Associated countries) or in OCTs, where the Natura 2000 network does not exist, area-based activities will be considered eligible if they are implemented in sites that are already legally protected or part of the Emerald Network.

When applicable, all the references to the Natura 2000 network under this section (Additional conditions) should be substituted by the Emerald Network. In case the sites are not yet officially part of this network, the proposal shall include a formal commitment to designate them before the end of the project. For this purpose, a signed commitment by the responsible authority shall be provided.

Land purchase is not allowed for countries outside of the EU.

Applicants should always keep in mind that LIFE-related investments must lead to improvements to habitats and species and must be sustainable in the long term. This normally requires that conservation activities take place on areas that already benefit from legal protection (as Natura 2000 sites, Emerald Network or nationally protected areas), or that an adequate level of legal protection to such areas is ensured before the end of the project.

Annexes to the Application Form

The applicant is highly encouraged to submit the following annexes, when relevant, to complete/complement Part B of the application form. A specific template is already available in most cases.

- Maps (template available in the Submission System)

Provide one map per project site (sub-area) indicating where main conservation activities will take place and the boundaries of the relevant Natura 2000 sites (if appropriate) and a map of the location of the project area(s) within a region or country.

In case Natura 2000 sites are targeted, applicants should ensure that the boundaries on their maps correspond to those on the EU Natura 2000 Public viewer (<http://natura2000.eea.europa.eu>).

- Description of sites (template available in the Submission System)

Describe the areas and / or site(s) targeted by your project and their importance for biodiversity.

- Description of species and habitats (template available in the Submission System)

List and provide a description of the main species and / or main habitats directly targeted by the project.

- Letters of support or commitment (no specific template available). Such letter(s) should be used to indicate any support to the project by important administrative bodies, stakeholders or individuals that may be concerned by the project. The submission of such letter(s) is encouraged in all cases where the feasibility or the success of the project implementation is dependent on agreements from any third parties, for example in case of activities on land falling partly or completely under the authority of a third party.



Applicants should NOT upload key information under 'Other Annexes' section of the Submission System, e.g. additional details on costs or on the work plan and activities. Any additional information generating a competitive advantage will be disregarded.

LIFE-2026-SAP-NAT-GOV — Nature Governance and Information

Objectives

Under this topic, projects shall lead to a smart and outcome-based implementation of the EU nature and biodiversity legislation³⁶. Projects should cover one or more of the following general sub-topics:

- Behavioural change and awareness-raising initiatives;
- Compliance assurance, as well as public participation and access to justice (Aarhus Convention);
- Enabling actions for the replication and upscaling of proven solutions.

Proposals that focus on behavioural change and awareness-raising initiatives should:

- promote awareness raising on nature and biodiversity conservation matters, including generating public and stakeholder support of Union policy-making; and/or
- support communication, management, and dissemination of information in the field of the nature and biodiversity conservation, and to facilitate knowledge sharing on successful solutions and practice, including by developing cooperation platforms among stakeholders and training; and/or
- promote better environmental governance in the field of nature and biodiversity conservation by broadening stakeholder involvement, including NGOs, in consultation on and implementation of policy.

Priority is given to proposals improving awareness of the benefits of nature conservation, and in particular on the Natura 2000 network of protected sites established under the EU Birds and Habitats Directives.

³⁶ [Birds Directive \(Directive 79/409/EEC\)](#), [Habitats Directive \(Council Directive 92/43/EEC\)](#), [Invasive Alien Species Regulation \(Regulation \(EU\) 1143/2014\)](#) and [Restoration law \(Regulation \(EU\) 2024/1991\)](#).

Proposals that focus on compliance assurance, as well as public participation and access to justice (Aarhus Convention), must support the implementation of the governance aspects of the EU nature and biodiversity legislation by:

- promoting effective public participation and access to justice in nature and biodiversity policy and legislation-related matters amongst the public, NGOs, lawyers, the judiciary, public administrations; and/or
- establishing new or, where in place, enhancing existing cross-border, national or regional networks of compliance assurance practitioners or experts; and/or
- establishing or, where in place, improving professional qualifications and training to improve public participation, access to justice and compliance with binding EU legal instruments on nature and biodiversity, through promoting, checking and enforcing compliance; and/or
- developing and implementing strategies and policies and/or developing and using innovative tools and actions to promote, monitor and enforce compliance with binding EU instruments on nature and biodiversity, including use of administrative law, criminal law and environmental liability; and/or
- improving relevant information systems operated by public authorities; and/or
- engaging with citizens and others to promote and monitor compliance, and ensure application of environmental liability in relation to EU nature and biodiversity legislation.

Proposals that focus on enabling actions for the replication and upscaling of proven solutions should prepare the wider deployment, transfer or replication of solutions already demonstrated under the LIFE Programme or other Union-funded initiatives³⁷, provided these solutions contribute to the objectives of the Nature and Biodiversity sub-programme. Applicants must clearly explain why replication or upscaling could not be achieved in the previous projects or funding initiatives.

These actions shall focus exclusively on enabling conditions for large-scale uptake and shall not include the implementation of the replication itself. In other words, actions shall create the conditions for the wider deployment, transfer or replication of the solutions.

Scope — Activities that can be funded

1) Raising awareness on nature and conservation issues, EU nature policies, tools and/or legislation among the relevant target audiences, aiming to change their perceptions and fostering the adoption of supporting behaviours and practices, and/or direct citizen's engagement. Applicants need to provide substantial evidence that a change of awareness levels³⁸ in the field addressed by the project is a crucial factor supporting correct implementation and/or future development of EU nature and biodiversity conservation policies tools and/or legislation. The awareness-raising activities should have the widest coverage relevant for the specific issue targeted³⁹.

³⁷ The preceding project should have ended and submitted their Final Report before the closing of this call, and clear evidence of the successful validation of the solution and the lessons learned should be provided in the proposal. In addition, one of the previous project beneficiaries must be the coordinator of the proposed project. In well-justified cases, they may alternatively participate as another beneficiary within the consortium.

³⁸ Awareness level is defined here as the proportion of target audience who knows of the idea/term/product/concept/environmental challenge/etc. that is the subject of the proposed LIFE project's work.

³⁹ As a general principle, these proposals should therefore, e.g. fully target a Member State, several Member States or the entire EU.

2) Promoting good practices, supporting implementation, organising trainings, educational, academic programmes, etc. to ensure effective compliance assurance, as well as public participation and access to justice in nature and biodiversity policy and legislation-related matters amongst the public (including youth and future professionals), NGOs, lawyers, the judiciary, public administrations or other stakeholders with a view to improving knowledge, understanding and application of effective means of public participation and/or access to justice, with a particular focus on protecting nature and biodiversity via the nature, biodiversity, water and environmental liability instruments.

With regard to professional qualifications and training, projects should ensure academic credentials (or certificates) and maximise the potential of information technology through means such as webinars and massive open online courses (MOOCs) to allow distance learning to reach as many practitioners as cost-effectively as possible. Promotion systems and techniques could involve the use of guidance, advisory services, awareness-raising campaigns, partnership agreements, or self-monitoring systems that assist duty-holders to comply with environmental obligations.

Environmental compliance assurance practitioners can include those working for authorities and bodies with compliance assurance responsibilities such as local, regional, police and customs authorities, agencies and inspectorates, supreme public audit bodies, public prosecutors' offices and the judiciary. They can also include non-governmental organisations, and academics and researchers specialised in one or more aspects of environmental compliance assurance.

Strategies and policies on compliance assurance in general and combating environmental crime in particular are aimed at high-level organization of activities and interventions, especially risk-based ones. Innovative tools could relate to different compliance monitoring systems and techniques, including site inspections, surveillance (including through use of satellites and drones), spot checks, intelligence-gathering, industry analysis, police investigation, data analysis and environmental audits. Follow-up and enforcement techniques can have a similarly wide coverage. Electronic complaint-handling systems, hot lines, citizen observatories and other citizen science platforms can all facilitate citizen engagement. Citizen science platforms may, amongst other things, allow competent national, regional and local authorities to engage citizens in state-of-the-environment and other forms of monitoring, while also generating more harmonized and useable data.

Strategies and policies on compliance assurance could aim at promoting good practices, preparing guidance documents, and organising trainings to ensure using an appropriate mix of administrative law, criminal law and environmental liability for a more effective implementation and enforcement of EU nature and biodiversity legislation.

Projects should enhance public participation and access to justice in biodiversity-related matters, drawing on existing Commission modules, the Commission Notice on access to justice in environmental matters, and other related materials.

3) Enabling actions for the replication and upscaling of proven solutions should be new, complementary and/or additional to the original project and must demonstrate a clear contribution to accelerating the uptake of validated solutions across administrations, territories or sectors.

In particular, projects should address actions that aim at removing administrative, regulatory, financial or organisational barriers that prevent the uptake or upscaling of solutions already validated through EU-funded actions at local, regional or national level.

Expected impact

Applicants are expected to define, calculate, explain and achieve the expected impacts as described in the Award criterion 'Impacts' (see section 9) in terms of conservation benefit.

All LIFE proposals will have to report on their expected outputs and impacts taking into account the LIFE Project indicators (LPIs). These LPIs will contribute to evaluating the impact of the LIFE proposal on an environmental but also socio-economic level (e.g. via actions impacting the local economy and population). All the indicators measured should be coherent with the conservation or biodiversity problem addressed and the type of activities planned.

Applicants should review relevant indicators in Part C of the eGrant application and complete them with the estimated impact of the project. Part C data should be coherent with the description of impacts of section 2 of Part B of the Application Form.

In case Part C does not include impact indicators that are important for the specific project, applicants should make use of the indicator "Other project specific KPIs" in Part C and provide a relevant description of such indicators in section 2 of Part B of the Application Form.

If relevant, projects must upload a Geographic Information System (GIS) file and associated data of the specific geographical area where the intervention took place as a deliverable in their final report. This map should enable to spatially visualise the impact already reported in the Life Project Indicators database. The specific format and technical requirements of the GIS files will be provided to the supported projects during their implementation. In addition, LIFE projects are encouraged to make use of Copernicus and/or Galileo/EGNOS for satellites-based earth observation, positioning, navigation and/or related timing data and services.

More detailed information will be requested during project implementation.

Funding rate

Maximum 60% funding rate.

Additional conditions

The same considerations listed for the Nature and Biodiversity topic apply (see above).

3. Available budget

The estimated available call budget is **EUR 173 500 000**.

Specific budget information per topic can be found in the table below:

Topic	Topic budget	Indicative range of project budgets	Estimated number of projects to be funded
1 — LIFE-2026-SAP-NAT-NATURE - Nature and Biodiversity	EUR 166 000 000	EUR 2-13 Mln	30 projects
2 — LIFE-2026-SAP-NAT-GOV - Nature Governance and Information	EUR 7 500 000	EUR 1-2 Mln	5 projects

We reserve the right not to award all available funds or to redistribute them between the call priorities, depending on the proposals received and the results of the evaluation.

4. Timetable and deadlines

Timetable and deadlines(indicative)	
Call opening:	21 April 2026
<u>Deadline for submission:</u>	<u>22 September 2026 – 17:00:00 CET</u> (Brussels)
Information on evaluation results:	February/March 2027
GA signature:	May/June 2027

5. Admissibility and documents

Proposals must be submitted before the **call deadline** (see *timetable section 4*).

Proposals must be submitted **electronically** via the Funding & Tenders Portal Electronic Submission System (accessible via the Topic page in the [Calls for proposals](#) section). Paper submissions are NOT possible.

Proposals (including annexes and supporting documents) must be submitted using the forms provided *inside* the Submission System (⚠ NOT the documents available on the Topic page — they are only for information).

⚠ Please note that not using the correct template or not complying with the instructions therein (e.g font size limit, deletion of instructions, etc) may lead to the inadmissibility of your proposal. Furthermore, to ensure a proper evaluation of your project the appropriate sections of the template must be filled in depending on whether the call has one or two submission stages. For stage 1 (concept note), some sections are not applicable (noted as n/a); for stage 2 (full proposal), all sections must be completed.

Project acronym — Your project acronym must include the word LIFE.

Proposals must be **complete** and contain all the requested information and all required annexes and supporting documents:

- Application Form Part A — contains administrative information about the participants (future coordinator, beneficiaries and affiliated entities) and the summarised budget for the project (*to be filled in directly online*)

⚠ In order to ensure a proper evaluation of your project, please click on the “?” sign appearing in each screen and carefully check the instructions to correctly fill the different sections.

- Application Form Part B — contains the technical description of the project (*template to be downloaded from the Portal Submission System, completed, assembled and re-uploaded*)
- Part C — contains additional project data and the project's contribution to EU programme key performance indicators (*to be filled in directly online*)
- **mandatory annexes and supporting documents** (*templates to be downloaded from the Portal Submission System, completed, assembled and re-uploaded*):
 - detailed budget table
 - participant information (including previous projects, if any).
- **Non mandatory annexes (but crucial to complement Application Form Part B when applicable)**
 - maps (*template available in the Submission System*)
 - description of sites (*template available in the Submission System*)
 - description of species and habitats (*template available in the Submission System*)
 - letters of support (no specific template available)
 - Annual activity report – N/A
 - Other annexes – N/A

Please note that the amounts entered into the summarised budget table (filled in directly online) must correspond to the amounts calculated in the detailed budget table. In case of discrepancies, the amounts in the online summarised budget table will prevail.


At proposal submission, you will have to confirm that you have the **mandate to act** for all applicants. Moreover, you will have to confirm that the information in the application is correct and complete and that all participants comply with the conditions for receiving EU funding (*especially eligibility, financial and operational capacity, exclusion, etc*). Before signing the grant, each beneficiary and affiliated entity will have to confirm this again by signing a declaration of honour (DoH). Proposals without full support will be rejected.

Your application must be **readable, accessible and printable** (please check carefully the layout of the documents uploaded).

Proposals are limited to maximum **120 pages** (Part B). Evaluators will not consider any additional pages.

You may be asked at a later stage for further documents (*for legal entity validation, financial capacity check, bank account validation, etc*).

 For more information about the submission process (including IT aspects), consult the [Online Manual](#).

 Please be aware that some proposal information may be shared with the LIFE programme committee established under Regulation No [182/2011](#)⁴⁰, i.e. name and country of all applicants (coordinating organisation and partners), project title, total eligible costs, LIFE funding requested, result of the assessment of the admissibility and eligibility of the proposal, and scores by criterion for eligible proposals.

6. Eligibility

Eligible participants (eligible countries)

In order to be eligible, the applicants (beneficiaries and affiliated entities) must:

- be legal entities (public or private bodies)
- be established in one of the eligible countries, i.e.:
 - EU Member States (including overseas countries and territories (OCTs))
 - non-EU countries:
 - listed EEA countries and countries associated to the LIFE Programme ([list of participating countries](#))⁴¹
- the coordinator must be established in an eligible country

Beneficiaries and affiliated entities must register in the [Participant Register](#) — before submitting the proposal — and will have to be validated by the Central Validation Service (REA Validation). For the validation, they will be requested to upload documents showing legal status and origin.

Other entities may participate in other consortium roles, such as associated partners, subcontractors, third parties giving in-kind contributions, etc (*see section 13*).

Specific cases and definitions

Exceptional funding — Entities from other countries (not listed above) are exceptionally eligible, if the granting authority considers their participation essential for the implementation of the action (*see work programme*).

Natural persons — Natural persons are NOT eligible (with the exception of self-employed persons, i.e. sole traders, where the company does not have legal personality separate from that of the natural person).

International organisations — International organisations are eligible. The rules on eligible countries do not apply to them.

Entities without legal personality — Entities which do not have legal personality under their national law may exceptionally participate, provided that their representatives have the capacity to undertake legal obligations on their behalf, and offer guarantees for the protection of the EU financial interests equivalent to that offered by legal persons⁴².

EU bodies — EU bodies (with the exception of the European Commission Joint Research Centre) can NOT be part of the consortium.

⁴⁰ Regulation (EU) No 182/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 February 2011 laying down the rules and general principles concerning mechanisms for control by Member States of the Commission's exercise of implementing powers (OJ L 55, 28.2.2011, p. 13).

⁴¹ Applicants from countries which have requested to be associated to the LIFE Programme may participate in this call for proposals. However, no grant agreement will be signed if the association agreement is not entered into force by the end of the selection procedure.

⁴² See Article 200(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation [2024/2509](#).

Associations and interest groupings — Entities composed of members may participate as ‘sole beneficiaries’ or ‘beneficiaries without legal personality’⁴³. ⚠️ Please note that if the action will be implemented by the members, they should also participate (either as beneficiaries or as affiliated entities, otherwise their costs will NOT be eligible).

Countries currently negotiating association agreements — Beneficiaries from countries with ongoing negotiations for participating in the programme (*see list of participating countries above*) may participate in the call and can sign grants if the negotiations are concluded before grant signature and if the association covers the call (i.e. is retroactive and covers both the part of the programme and the year when the call was launched).

EU restrictive measures — Special rules apply for entities subject to [EU restrictive measures](#) under Article 29 of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU) and Article 215 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU)⁴⁴. Such entities are not eligible to participate in any capacity, including as beneficiaries, affiliated entities, associated partners, subcontractors or recipients of financial support to third parties (if any).

EU conditionality measures — Special rules apply for entities subject to measures adopted on the basis of EU Regulation 2020/2092⁴⁵. Such entities are not eligible to participate in any funded role (beneficiaries, affiliated entities, subcontractors, recipients of financial support to third parties, etc). Currently such measures are in place for Hungarian public interest trusts established under the Hungarian Act IX of 2021 or any entity they maintain (see [Council Implementing Decision \(EU\) 2022/2506](#), as of 16 December 2022).

 For more information, see [Rules for Legal Entity Validation, LEAR Appointment and Financial Capacity Assessment](#).

Consortium composition

N/A

Eligible activities

Applications will only be considered eligible if their content corresponds wholly (or at least in part) to the topic description for which they are submitted.

Eligible activities are the ones set out in section 2 above.

Projects must comply with EU policy interests and priorities (*such as environment, social, security, industrial and trade policy, etc*). Projects must also respect EU values and European Commission policy regarding reputational matters (*e.g. activities involving capacity building, policy support, awareness raising, communication, dissemination, etc*)⁴⁶.

Financial support to third parties is not allowed.

⁴³ For the definitions, see Articles 190(2) and 200(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation [2024/2509](#).

⁴⁴ Please note that the EU Official Journal contains the official list and, in case of conflict, its content prevails over that of the [EU Sanctions Map](#).

⁴⁵ Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2020/2092 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 December 2020 on a general regime of conditionality for the protection of the Union budget (OJ L 325, 20.12.2022, p. 94).

⁴⁶ See, for instance, [Guidance on funding for activities related to the development, implementation, monitoring and enforcement of Union legislation and policy](#).

Geographic location (target countries)

Proposals must relate to activities taking place in the eligible countries (*see above*). Activities outside the eligible countries must be necessary to achieve the EU environmental and climate objectives and ensure the effectiveness of interventions carried within the eligible countries (e.g. actions aimed at the conservation of migratory birds in wintering areas, actions implemented on a trans boundary river, or projects aimed to address environmental problems that cannot be solved successfully or efficiently unless actions are carried out also in non-eligible countries).

7. Financial and operational capacity and exclusion

Financial capacity

Applicants must have **stable and sufficient resources** to successfully implement the projects and contribute their share. Organisations participating in several projects must have sufficient capacity to implement all projects.

The financial capacity check will be carried out on the basis of the documents you will be requested to upload in the [Participant Register](#) during grant preparation (*e.g. profit and loss account and balance sheet, business plan, audit report produced by an approved external auditor, certifying the accounts for the last closed financial year, etc.*). The analysis will be based on neutral financial indicators, but will also take into account other aspects, such as dependency on EU funding and deficit and revenue in previous years.

The check will normally be done for coordinators, except:

- public bodies (entities established as public body under national law, including local, regional or national authorities) or international organisations
- if the project requested grant amount is not more than EUR 60 000.

If needed, it may also be done for affiliated entities.

If we consider that your financial capacity is not satisfactory, we may require:

- further information
 - an enhanced financial responsibility regime, i.e. joint and several responsibility for all beneficiaries or joint and several liability of affiliated entities (*see below, section 10*)
 - prefinancing paid in instalments
 - (one or more) prefinancing guarantees (*see below, section 10*)
- or
- propose no prefinancing
 - request that you are replaced or, if needed, reject the entire proposal.

 For more information, see [Rules for Legal Entity Validation, LEAR Appointment and Financial Capacity Assessment](#).

Operational capacity

Applicants must have the **know-how, qualifications and resources** to successfully implement the projects and contribute their share (including sufficient experience in projects of comparable size and nature).

This capacity will be assessed together with the 'Resources' award criterion, on the basis of the competence and experience of the applicants and their project teams, including operational resources (human, technical and other) or, exceptionally, the measures proposed to obtain it by the time the task implementation starts.

If the evaluation of the award criterion is positive, the applicants are considered to have sufficient operational capacity.

Applicants will have to show their capacity via the following:

- general profiles (qualifications and experiences) of the staff responsible for managing and implementing the project
- description of the consortium participants (and previous projects, if any).

Additional supporting documents may be requested, if needed to confirm the operational capacity of any applicant.

Exclusion

Applicants which are subject to an **EU exclusion decision** or in one of the following **exclusion situations** that bar them from receiving EU funding can NOT participate⁴⁷:

- bankruptcy, winding up, affairs administered by the courts, arrangement with creditors, suspended business activities or other similar procedures (including procedures for persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts)
- in breach of social security or tax obligations (including if done by persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts)
- guilty of grave professional misconduct⁴⁸ (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- committed fraud, corruption, links to a criminal organisation, money laundering, terrorism-related crimes (including terrorism financing), child labour or human trafficking (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- shown significant deficiencies in complying with main obligations under an EU procurement contract, grant agreement, prize, expert contract, or similar (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- guilty of irregularities within the meaning of Article 1(2) of EU Regulation [2988/95](#) (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- created under a different jurisdiction with the intent to circumvent fiscal, social or other legal obligations in the country of origin or created another entity with

⁴⁷ See Articles 138 and 143 of EU Financial Regulation [2024/2509](#).

⁴⁸ 'Professional misconduct' includes, in particular, the following: violation of ethical standards of the profession; wrongful conduct with impact on professional credibility; breach of generally accepted professional ethical standards; false declarations/misrepresentation of information; participation in a cartel or other agreement distorting competition; violation of IPR; attempting to influence decision-making processes by taking advantage, through misrepresentation, of a conflict of interests, or to obtain confidential information from public authorities to gain an advantage; incitement to discrimination, hatred or violence or similar activities contrary to the EU values where negatively affecting or risking to affect the performance of a legal commitment.

this purpose (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)

- intentionally and without proper justification resisted⁴⁹ an investigation, check or audit carried out by an EU authorising officer (or their representative or auditor), OLAF, the EPPO, or the European Court of Auditors.

Applicants will also be rejected if it turns out that⁵⁰:

- during the award procedure they misrepresented information required as a condition for participating or failed to supply that information
- they were previously involved in the preparation of the call and this entails a distortion of competition that cannot be remedied otherwise (conflict of interest).

8. Evaluation and award procedure


The proposals will have to follow the **standard submission and evaluation procedure** (one-stage submission + one-step evaluation).

An **evaluation committee** (assisted by independent outside experts) will assess all applications. Proposals will first be checked for formal requirements (admissibility, and eligibility, *see sections 5 and 6*). Proposals found admissible and eligible will be evaluated (for each topic) against the operational capacity and award criteria (*see sections 7 and 9*) and then ranked according to their scores.

For proposals with the same score (within a topic or budget envelope) a **priority order** will be determined according to the following approach:

Successively for every group of *ex aequo* proposals, starting with the highest scored group, and continuing in descending order, the *ex aequo* proposals will be prioritised according to the scores they have been awarded for the award criterion 'Impact'. If these scores are equal, priority will be based on their scores for the criterion 'Relevance', then 'Quality', then 'Resources'.

All proposals will be informed about the evaluation result (**evaluation result letter**). Successful proposals will be invited for grant preparation; the other ones will be put on the reserve list or rejected. Proposals that are below the budget threshold (i.e. passed, but not ranked high enough to receive funding) will be awarded a [Seal of Excellence](#).

 No commitment for funding — Invitation to grant preparation does NOT constitute a formal commitment for funding. We will still need to make various legal checks before grant award: *legal entity validation, financial capacity, exclusion check, etc.*

Grant preparation will involve a dialogue in order to fine-tune technical or financial aspects of the project and may require extra information from your side. It may also include adjustments to the proposal to address recommendations of the evaluation committee or other concerns. Full compliance will be a pre-condition for signing the grant.

⁴⁹ 'Resisting an investigation, check or audit' means carrying out actions with the goal or effect of preventing, hindering or delaying the conduct of any of the activities needed to perform the investigation, check or audit, such as refusing to grant the necessary access to its premises or any other areas used for business purposes, concealing or refusing to disclose information or providing false information.

⁵⁰ See Article 143 EU Financial Regulation [2024/2509](#).

If you believe that the evaluation procedure was flawed, you can submit a **complaint** (following the deadlines and procedures set out in the evaluation result letter). Please note that notifications which have not been opened within 10 days after sending will be considered to have been accessed and that deadlines will be counted from opening/access (see also [Funding & Tenders Portal Terms and Conditions](#)). Please also be aware that for complaints submitted electronically, there may be character limitations.

9. Award criteria

The **award criteria** for this call are as follows:

1. Relevance (0-20 points)

- Relevance to the objectives of the targeted LIFE sub-programme and to the specific priorities of the call for proposals and, when relevant, topic description.
- Concept and methodology: soundness of the overall intervention logic.
- Extent to which the proposal offers co-benefits and promotes synergies with other policy areas relevant for achieving environment and climate policy objectives.

2. Impact (0-20 points)

- Ambition and credibility of impacts expected during and/or after the project due to the activities, including ensuring that no substantial harm is done to the other specific objectives of the LIFE Programme.
- Sustainability of the project results after the end of the project and quality of the measures for the exploitation of project results.
- Potential for the project results to be replicated in the same or other sectors or places, or to be up-scaled by public or private actors or through mobilising larger investments or financial resources (catalytic potential).

3. Quality (0-20 points)

- Clarity, relevance and feasibility of the work plan. Appropriate geographic focus of the activities.
- Identification and mobilisation of the relevant stakeholders.
- Quality of the plan to monitor and report impacts.
- Appropriateness and quality of the measures to communicate and disseminate the project and its results to different target groups.

4. Resources (0-20 points)

- Composition of the project team - in terms of expertise, skills and responsibilities and appropriateness of the management structure.
- Appropriateness of the budget and resources and their consistency with the work plan.
- Transparency of the budget, i.e. the cost items should be sufficiently described.
- Extent to which the project environmental impact is considered and mitigated, including through the use of green procurement. The use of recognised methods for the calculation of the project environmental footprint (e.g. Project Environmental Footprint (PEF) or Organizational

Environmental Footprint (*OEF methods or similar ones*⁵¹) or environmental management systems (*e.g. Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS)*) would be an asset.

- Value for money of the proposal.

Bonus points:

- **Bonus 1:** The proposal offers exceptional synergies and promotes significant co-benefits between LIFE sub-programmes. (2 points)
- **Bonus 2:** The proposal is primarily implemented in the Outermost Regions. Where specific regional features are relevant to the needs addressed in the call for proposals, *e.g. islands for waste, coal-intensive regions for clean energy, etc.*, the bonus could be extended to other geographical areas with specific needs and vulnerabilities. (2 points)
- **Bonus 3:** The proposal substantially builds on or up-scales the results of other EU funded projects. (2 points)
- **Bonus 4:** The proposal offers an exceptional catalytic potential. (2 points)
- **Bonus 5:** The proposal envisages a transnational cooperation among eligible countries essential to guarantee the achievement of the project objectives. (2 points)

Award criteria	Minimum pass score	Maximum score	Weighting
Relevance	10	20	1
Impact	10	20	1.5
Quality	10	20	1
Resources	10	20	1
Overall weighted (pass) scores (without bonus)	55	90	N/A
Bonus 1	n/a	2	1
Bonus 2	n/a	2	1
Bonus 3	n/a	2	1
Bonus 4	n/a	2	1
Bonus 5	n/a	2	1
Overall weighted (pass) scores (with bonus)	55	90 to 100	N/A

Maximum points (full proposals): 90 to 100 points.

Individual thresholds per criterion (full proposals): 10/20, 10/20, 10/20 and 10/20 points (before weighting).

Overall threshold (full proposals): 55 points (after weighting).

⁵¹ See list on https://ec.europa.eu/environment/eussd/smgp/PEFCR_OEFSR_en.htm.

Proposals that pass the individual thresholds AND the overall threshold will be considered for funding — within the limits of the available call budget. Other proposals will be rejected.

10. Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements

If you pass evaluation, your project will be invited for grant preparation, where you will be asked to prepare the Grant Agreement together with the EU Project Officer.

This Grant Agreement will set the framework for your grant and its terms and conditions, in particular concerning deliverables, reporting and payments.

The Model Grant Agreement that will be used (and all other relevant templates and guidance documents) can be found on [Portal Reference Documents](#).

Starting date and project duration

The project starting date and duration will be fixed in the Grant Agreement (*Data Sheet, point 1*). Normally the starting date will be after grant signature. A retroactive starting date can be granted exceptionally for duly justified reasons — but never earlier than the proposal submission date.

Project duration: maximum 120 months.

Extensions are possible, if duly justified and through an amendment.

Milestones and deliverables

The milestones and deliverables for each project will be managed through the Portal Grant Management System and will be reflected in Annex 1 of the Grant Agreement.

Form of grant, funding rate and maximum grant amount

The grant parameters (*maximum grant amount, funding rate, total eligible costs, etc*) will be fixed in the Grant Agreement (*Data Sheet, point 3 and art 5*).

Project budget (requested grant amount): *see section 3 above*.

The grant awarded may be lower than the amount requested.


The grant will be a budget-based mixed actual cost grant (actual costs, with unit cost and flat-rate elements). This means that it will reimburse ONLY certain types of costs (eligible costs) and costs that were *actually* incurred for your project (NOT the *budgeted* costs). For unit costs and flat-rates, you can charge the amounts calculated as explained in the Grant Agreement (*see art 6 and Annex 2 and 2a*).

The costs will be reimbursed at the funding rate fixed in the Grant Agreement (maximum **60%**).

You can apply for a higher project funding rate if your project is a 'project targeting exclusively priority habitats/species' (**75%**), i.e. targets exclusively:

- a priority habitat or species for the implementation of the EU Habitats Directive [92/43](#), as listed in the relevant annexes of this Directive

- a bird species considered as “priority for funding” by the Committee for Adaptation to Technical and Scientific Progress set up pursuant to Article 16 of the EU Birds Directive [2009/147](#)⁵²
- a habitat type or species listed in the annexes of the Habitats Directive 92/43, the conservation status of which has been assessed as unfavorable-bad and with a declining trend (U2-) in the most recent available EU- and national-level biogeographical region assessments
- a habitat type or species (other than bird species) the EU-level threat status of which has been assessed as “endangered” or worse in the most up-to-date published version of a European [species red list](#) or [habitats red list](#), including in territories not covered by these lists
- any other habitat or species in territories not covered by the European species or habitats red lists, the threat status of which has been assessed as “endangered” or worse in the most up-to date published version of global International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) red lists of species or habitats
- in exceptional cases and subject to peer reviewed scientific evidence, any newly described species that should be considered as threatened but has not yet been the subject of an IUCN red list assessment at EU or global level.

 Applicants must demonstrate in their proposal that all activities are clearly tailored towards benefiting habitats or species that qualify for the higher 75% co-funding rate.


Grants may NOT produce a profit (i.e. surplus of revenues + EU grant over costs). For-profit organisations must declare their revenues and, if there is a profit, we will deduct it from the final grant amount (*see art 22.3*).

Please note that the maximum grant amount for each beneficiary will be fixed in the Grant Agreement. The beneficiaries can however decide to distribute the grant money differently in accordance with what they have agreed in the consortium agreement (*see also section 13*).

Moreover, please be aware that the final grant amount may be reduced in case of non-compliance with the Grant Agreement (*e.g. improper implementation, breach of obligations, etc*).

Budget categories and cost eligibility rules

The budget categories and cost eligibility rules are fixed in the Grant Agreement (*Data Sheet, point 3, art 6 and Annex 2*).

 When filling in the summarised budget table (directly online in Application Form Part A), please click on the “?” sign appearing in each screen and carefully check the instructions to correctly fill the different sections.

Budget categories for this call:

- A. Personnel costs
 - A.1 Employees, A.2 Natural persons under direct contract, A.3 Seconded persons

⁵² Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds (OJ L 20, 26.1.2010, p. 7).

- A.4 SME owners and natural person beneficiaries
- A.5 Volunteers
- B. Subcontracting costs
- C. Purchase costs
 - C.1 Travel and subsistence
 - C.2 Equipment
 - C.3 Other goods, works and services
- D. Other cost categories
 - D.2 Land purchase
- E. Indirect costs

Specific cost eligibility conditions for this call:


- personnel costs:
 - SME owner/natural person unit cost⁵³: Yes
 - volunteers unit cost⁵⁴: Yes (without indirect costs)
- travel and subsistence unit cost⁵⁵: No (only actual costs)
- equipment costs: full cost + depreciation for listed equipment (*— under the special conditions set out in the Grant Agreement (art 6.2.C.2) and linked to special durability clause (use and maintain for 5 years after end of action; annex 5)*)
- other cost categories:
 - costs for financial support to third parties: not allowed.
 - land purchase costs: subject to the conditions specified in Art. 6.2 - D.2 Eligible and ineligible costs and contributions of the LIFE General Model Grant Agreement. The applicant must address each of these conditions in his proposal, explaining how each one is met or will be met during the project. Such conditions refer, for example, to the contribution to the integrity of the Natura 2000 network, to the guarantee that in the long term the land will be used consistently with the specific objectives of the LIFE Programme, to the fact that land purchase is the only or most cost-effective way of achieving the desired conservation outcome etc.
- indirect cost flat-rate: 7% of the eligible direct costs (categories A-D, except volunteers costs and exempted specific cost categories (land purchase), if any)
- VAT: non-deductible VAT is eligible (but please note that since 2013 VAT paid by beneficiaries that are public bodies acting as public authority is NOT eligible)
- other:

⁵³ Commission [Decision](#) of 20 October 2020 authorising the use of unit costs for the personnel costs of the owners of small and medium-sized enterprises and beneficiaries that are natural persons not receiving a salary for the work carried out by themselves under an action or work programme (C(2020)7115).

⁵⁴ Commission [Decision](#) of 10 April 2019 authorising the use of unit costs for declaring personnel costs for the work carried out by volunteers under an action or a work programme (C(2019)2646).

⁵⁵ Commission [Decision](#) of 12 January 2021 authorising the use of unit costs for travel, accommodation and subsistence costs under an action or work programme under the 2021-2027 multi-annual financial framework (C(2021)35).

- in-kind contributions for free are allowed, but cost-neutral, i.e. they cannot be declared as cost
- kick-off meeting: costs for kick-off meeting organised by the granting authority are eligible (travel costs for maximum 2 persons, return ticket to Brussels and accommodation for one night) only if the meeting takes place after the project starting date set out in the Grant Agreement; the starting date can be changed through an amendment, if needed
- project websites: communication costs for presenting the project on the participants' websites or social media accounts are eligible; costs for *separate* project websites are not eligible unless duly justified by the project objectives
- common information and dissemination activities: foresee resources to increase synergies between, and the visibility of LIFE and EU supported actions
- other ineligible costs: No

 **Volunteers costs** — Volunteers costs are not a classic cost category. There are no costs because volunteers work for free, but they may nonetheless be added to the budget in the form of a prefixed unit cost (per volunteer) and thus allow you to benefit from the volunteers' work for the grant (by increasing the amount of reimbursement up to 100% of the normal costs, i.e. cost categories other than volunteers). More information is available in the [AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement, art 6.2.A.5](#).

Reporting and payment arrangements

The reporting and payment arrangements are fixed in the Grant Agreement (*Data Sheet, point 4 and art 21 and 22*).


After grant signature, you will normally receive a **prefinancing** to start working on the project (float of normally **30%** of the maximum grant amount; exceptionally less or no prefinancing). The prefinancing will be paid 30 days from entry into force/financial guarantee (if required)— whichever is the latest.

There will be one or more **additional prefinancing payments** linked to a prefinancing report.

In addition, for longer or more complex projects, you may be expected to submit one or more progress reports not linked to payments.

Payment of the balance: At the end of the project, we will calculate your final grant amount. If the total of earlier payments is higher than the final grant amount, we will ask you (your coordinator) to pay back the difference (recovery).

All payments will be made to the coordinator.

 Please be aware that payments will be automatically lowered if you or one of your consortium members has outstanding debts towards the EU (granting authority or other EU bodies). Such debts will be offset by us — in line with the conditions set out in the Grant Agreement (*see art 22*).

Please also note that you are responsible for **keeping records** on all the work done and the costs declared.

Prefinancing guarantees

If a prefinancing guarantee is required, it will be fixed in the Grant Agreement (*Data Sheet, point 4*). The amount will be set during grant preparation and it will normally be equal or lower than the prefinancing for your grant.

The guarantee should be in euro and issued by an approved bank/financial institution established in an EU Member State. If you are established in a non-EU country and would like to provide a guarantee from a bank/financial institution in your country, please contact us (this may be exceptionally accepted, if it offers equivalent security).

Amounts blocked in bank accounts will NOT be accepted as financial guarantees.

Prefinancing guarantees are normally requested from the coordinator, for the consortium. They must be provided during grant preparation, in time to make the prefinancing (scanned copy via Portal AND original by post).

If agreed with us, the bank guarantee may be replaced by a guarantee from a third party.

The guarantee will be released at the end of the grant, in accordance with the conditions laid down in the Grant Agreement (*art 23*).

Certificates

Depending on the type of action, size of grant amount and type of beneficiaries, you may be requested to submit different certificates. The types, schedules and thresholds for each certificate are fixed in the Grant Agreement (*Data Sheet, point 4 and art 24*).

Liability regime for recoveries

The liability regime for recoveries will be fixed in the Grant Agreement (*Data Sheet, point 4.4 and art 22*).

For beneficiaries, it is one of the following:

- limited joint and several liability with individual ceilings — *each beneficiary up to their maximum grant amount*
 - unconditional joint and several liability — *each beneficiary up to the maximum grant amount for the action*
- or
- individual financial responsibility — *each beneficiary only for their own debts.*

In addition, the granting authority may require joint and several liability of affiliated entities (with their beneficiary).

Provisions concerning the project implementation

IPR rules: *see Model Grant Agreement (art 16 and Annex 5)*:

- rights of use on results: Yes

Communication, dissemination and visibility of funding: *see Model Grant Agreement (art 17 and Annex 5)*:

- communication and dissemination plan: Yes
- additional communication and dissemination activities: Yes

- special logos: Yes

Specific rules for carrying out the action: *see Model Grant Agreement (art 18 and Annex 5)*:

- durability: Yes
- specific rules for blending operations: No

Other specificities

Consortium agreement: Yes

Non-compliance and breach of contract

The Grant Agreement (chapter 5) provides for the measures we may take in case of breach of contract (and other non-compliance issues).

 For more information, see [AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement](#).

11. How to submit an application

All proposals must be submitted directly online via the Funding & Tenders Portal Electronic Submission System. Paper applications are NOT accepted.

Submission is a **2-step process**:

a) create a user account and register your organisation

To use the Submission System (the only way to apply), all participants need to [create an EU Login user account](#).

Once you have an EU Login account, you can [register your organisation](#) in the Participant Register. When your registration is finalised, you will receive a 9-digit participant identification code (PIC).

b) submit the proposal

Access the Electronic Submission System via the Topic page in the [Calls for proposals](#) section (or, for calls sent by invitation to submit a proposal, through the link provided in the invitation letter).

Submit your proposal in 4 parts, as follows:

- Part A includes administrative information about the applicant organisations (future coordinator, beneficiaries, affiliated entities and associated partners) and the summarised budget for the proposal. Fill it in directly online
- Part B (description of the action) covers the technical content of the proposal. Download the mandatory word template from the Submission System, fill it in and upload it as a PDF file
- Part C containing additional project data. To be filled in directly online.
- Annexes (*see section 5*). Upload them as PDF file (single or multiple depending on the slots). Excel upload is sometimes possible, depending on the file type.

The proposal must keep to the **page limits** (*see section 5*); excess pages will be disregarded.

Documents must be uploaded to the **right category** in the Submission System, otherwise the proposal may be considered incomplete and thus inadmissible.

The proposal must be submitted **before the call deadline** (see section 4). After this deadline, the system is closed and proposals can no longer be submitted.

Once the proposal is submitted, you will receive a **confirmation e-mail** (with date and time of your application). If you do not receive this confirmation e-mail, it means your proposal has NOT been submitted. If you believe this is due to a fault in the Submission System, you should immediately file a complaint via the [IT Helpdesk webform](#), explaining the circumstances and attaching a copy of the proposal (and, if possible, screenshots to show what happened).

Details on processes and procedures are described in the [Online Manual](#). The Online Manual also contains the links to FAQs and detailed instructions regarding the Portal Electronic Exchange System.

12. Help

As far as possible, ***please try to find the answers you need yourself***, in this and the other documentation (we have limited resources for handling direct enquiries):


- [Online Manual](#)
- [Portal FAQ](#) (for general questions)
- [LIFE website FAQs](#)
- [LIFE Info Days](#)

Please also consult the Topic page regularly, since we will use it to publish call updates. (For invitations, we will contact you directly in case of a call update).

Contact

Only in case you did not find an answer in the above links, you may contact:

- for individual questions on the Portal Submission System: [IT Helpdesk](#)
- for non-IT related questions: CINEA-LIFE-ENQUIRIES@ec.europa.eu.

 Please send your questions at the latest 7 days before the submission deadline (see section 4) AND indicate clearly the reference of the call and topic to which your question relates (see cover page).

13. Important



IMPORTANT

- **Don't wait until the end** — Complete your application sufficiently in advance of the deadline to avoid any last minute **technical problems**. Problems due to last minute submissions (*e.g. congestion, etc.*) will be entirely at your risk. Call deadlines can NOT be extended.
- **Consult** the Portal Topic page regularly. We will use it to publish updates and additional information on the call (call and topic updates).
- **Funding & Tenders Portal Electronic Exchange System** — By submitting the application, all participants **accept** to use the electronic exchange system in accordance with the [Portal Terms & Conditions](#).
- **Registration** — Before submitting the application, all beneficiaries, affiliated entities and associated partners must be registered in the [Participant Register](#). The participant identification code (PIC) (one per participant) is mandatory for the Application Form.
- **Consortium roles** — When setting up your consortium, you should think of organisations that help you reach objectives and solve problems.

The roles should be attributed according to the level of participation in the project. Main participants should participate as **beneficiaries** or **affiliated entities**; other entities can participate as associated partners, subcontractors, third parties giving in-kind contributions. **Associated partners** and third parties giving in-kind contributions should bear their own costs (they will not become formal recipients of EU funding). **Subcontracting** should normally constitute a limited part and must be performed by third parties (not by one of the beneficiaries/affiliated entities). Subcontracting going beyond 30% of the total eligible costs must be justified in the application.

- **Coordinator** — In multi-beneficiary grants, the beneficiaries participate as consortium (group of beneficiaries). They will have to choose a coordinator, who will take care of the project management and coordination and will represent the consortium towards the granting authority. In mono-beneficiary grants, the single beneficiary will automatically be coordinator.
- **Affiliated entities** — Applicants may participate with affiliated entities (i.e. entities linked to a beneficiary which participate in the action with similar rights and obligations as the beneficiaries, but do not sign the grant and therefore do not become beneficiaries themselves). They will get a part of the grant money and must therefore comply with all the call conditions and be validated (just like beneficiaries); but they do not count towards the minimum eligibility criteria for consortium composition (if any). If affiliated entities participate in your project, please do not forget to provide documents demonstrating their affiliation link to your organisation as part of your application.
- **Associated partners** — Applicants may participate with associated partners (i.e. partner organisations which participate in the action but without the right to get grant money). They participate without funding and therefore do not need to be validated.
- **Consortium agreement** — For practical and legal reasons it is recommended to set up internal arrangements that allow you to deal with exceptional or unforeseen circumstances (in all cases, even if not mandatory under the Grant Agreement). The consortium agreement also gives you the possibility to redistribute the grant money according to your own consortium-internal principles and parameters (for instance, one beneficiary can reattribute its grant money to another beneficiary). The consortium agreement thus allows you to customise the EU grant to the needs inside your consortium and can also help to protect you in case of disputes.

- **Balanced project budget** — Grant applications must ensure a balanced project budget and sufficient other resources to implement the project successfully (*e.g. own contributions, income generated by the action, financial contributions from third parties, etc*). You may be requested to lower your estimated costs, if they are ineligible (including excessive).
- **Completed/ongoing projects** — Proposals for projects that have already been completed will be rejected; proposals for projects that have already started will be assessed on a case-by-case basis (in this case, no costs can be reimbursed for activities that took place before the project starting date/proposal submission).
- **No-profit rule** — Grants may NOT give a profit (i.e. surplus of revenues + EU grant over costs). This will be checked by us at the end of the project.
- **No cumulation of funding/no double funding** — It is strictly prohibited to cumulate funding from the EU budget (except under 'EU Synergies actions'). Outside such Synergies actions, any given action may receive only ONE grant from the EU budget and cost items may under NO circumstances be declared under two EU grants; projects must be designed as different actions, clearly delineated and separated for each grant (without overlaps).
- **Combination with EU operating grants** — Combination with EU operating grants is possible, if the project remains outside the operating grant work programme and you make sure that cost items are clearly separated in your accounting and NOT declared twice (*see [AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement, art 6.2.E](#)*).
- **Multiple proposals** — Applicants may submit more than one proposal for *different* projects under the same call (and be awarded funding for them).
Organisations may participate in several proposals.
BUT: if there are several proposals for *very similar* projects, only one application will be accepted and evaluated; the applicants will be asked to withdraw the others (or they will be rejected).
- **Resubmission** — Proposals may be changed and re-submitted until the deadline for submission.
- **Rejection** — By submitting the application, all applicants accept the call conditions set out in this this Call document (and the documents it refers to). Proposals that do not comply with all the call conditions will be rejected. This applies also to applicants: All applicants need to fulfil the criteria; if any one of them doesn't, they must be replaced or the entire proposal will be rejected.
- **Cancellation** — There may be circumstances which may require the cancellation of the call. In this case, you will be informed via a call or topic update. Please note that cancellations are without entitlement to compensation.
- **Language** — You can submit your proposal in any official EU language (project abstract/summary should however always be in English). For reasons of efficiency, we strongly advise you to use English for the entire application.

- **Transparency** — In accordance with Article 38 of the [EU Financial Regulation](#), information about EU grants awarded is published each year on the [Europa website](#).

This includes:

- beneficiary names
- beneficiary addresses
- the purpose for which the grant was awarded
- the maximum amount awarded.

The publication can exceptionally be waived (on reasoned and duly substantiated request), if there is a risk that the disclosure could jeopardise your rights and freedoms under the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights or harm your commercial interests.

- **Data protection** — The submission of a proposal under this call involves the collection, use and processing of personal data. This data will be processed in accordance with the applicable legal framework. It will be processed solely for the purpose of evaluating your proposal, subsequent management of your grant and, if needed, programme monitoring, evaluation and communication. Details are explained in the [Funding & Tenders Portal Privacy Statement](#).