



Programme for the Environment and Climate Action (LIFE)

Call for proposals

LIFE Preparatory Projects
Projects addressing ad hoc Legislative and Policy Priorities (PLP)

(LIFE-2024-PLP)

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CINEA.D – Natural Resources, Climate, Sustainable Blue Economy and Clean Energy
CINEA.D.2 – LIFE Environment (Nature & Circular Economy)

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

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0. Introduction

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

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

- Regulation 2018/1046 ([EU Financial Regulation](#))
- The basic act (LIFE Regulation [2021/783](#)¹).

The call is launched in accordance with the 2021-2024 Multiannual Work Programme² and will be managed by the **European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency (CINEA)** ('Agency').

The call covers the following topic:

- **LIFE-2024-PLP-NAT-ENV – Projects on Legislative and Policy Priorities in the fields of Nature & Biodiversity and Circular Economy & Quality of Life**

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)
- 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:

¹ 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).

² Commission Implementing Decision on the financing of the LIFE programme and the adoption of the work programme for 2021-2024 (COM(2021) 4997 final).

- 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*).

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 Deal³ 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:

Environment:

- sub-programme Nature and Biodiversity
- 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

The specific objectives of the sub-programme 'Nature and Biodiversity' are the following:

- to develop, demonstrate, promote and stimulate scale up of innovative techniques, methods and approaches (including nature-based solutions and ecosystem approach) for reaching the objectives of the EU legislation and policy on nature and biodiversity,

³ 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).

- and to contribute to the knowledge base and to the application of best practices, including through the support of the Natura 2000
- to support the development, implementation, monitoring and enforcement of EU legislation and policy on nature and biodiversity, including by improving governance at all levels, in particular through enhancing capacities of public and private actors and the involvement of civil society, also taking into due consideration the possible contributions provided by citizen science
 - to catalyse the large-scale deployment of successful solutions/approaches for implementing EU 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.

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 the EU 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 the EU 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 the EU 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 aims at facilitating the transition toward a sustainable, circular, toxic-free, energy-efficient and climate-resilient economy and at protecting, restoring and improving the quality of the environment.

It will contribute to the EU priorities by:

- reducing resource consumption and facilitating the transition toward a sustainable, circular, toxic-free, energy-efficient and climate-resilient economy
- developing circular systems, in line with the new Circular Economy Action Plan and reflecting its focus on sustainable products, material and energy intensive sectors and circular business models for value retention
- bringing down waste generation in line with the Waste Framework Directive [2019/1004](#)⁴ and the reduction of hazardous waste in view of the EU's commitment under the [Basel Convention](#)⁵.
- improving waste management with respect to collection and storage of waste, recovery options and end-of-life disposal, including in islands where waste management has to face specific challenges

⁴ Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2019/1004 of 7 June 2019 laying down rules for the calculation, verification and reporting of data on waste in accordance with Directive 2008/98/EC (OJ L 163, 20.6.2019, p. 66).

⁵ Basel Convention on the control of transboundary movements of hazardous wastes and their disposal

- reducing emissions of pollutants to air and ensuring clean air for EU citizens in line with the EU legislation and the objectives of the Zero Pollution Action Plan
- achieving and maintaining a good status of the EU water bodies
- ensuring clean surface water and ground-water, in sufficient quantities for human and other species, including by increasing efficiency of water use
- reducing production, use and emissions of hazardous chemicals as well as reducing the exposure of humans and the environment to those chemicals
- promoting the development, commercialisation and uptake of safe and sustainable-by-design substances, materials and products
- diminishing exposure to harmful noise levels
- protecting the quality of EU soil, preventing soil degradation through sustainable practices of soil and land management, remediating from soil pollution and enhancing the capacity to improve water quality through reduced nitrate leakage and to reduce emissions through carbon storage.

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

This call for proposals concerns LIFE Other Action Grants (OAGs) and more specifically

- **Projects addressing ad hoc Legislative and Policy Priorities (PLP)** determined following a consultation with Member States

Based on Article 11 of the LIFE Regulation [2021/783](#)⁶, the LIFE Multi Annual Work Programme 2021-2024⁷, includes the possibility to finance each year a limited number of projects designed to support specific needs for the development and implementation of Union environment policy and legislation.

Point 4.1.4 of the Multi Annual Work Programme indicates that under “Other Actions”, additional projects responding to the Union legislative and policy priorities could be determined on annual basis, following a consultation with Member States.

Once a year the Commission makes an inventory of the specific needs regarding the development and implementation of Union environmental or climate policy and legislation that need to be addressed during the following years and identifies among them the needs that could be addressed by specific projects.

Before launching this annual call for proposals, the Member States receive a draft list of the identified specific needs that could be addressed by those projects and are asked to comment. Based on these comments, a final list of project areas to be covered was established.

Under this call, proposals may be submitted only to address the specific needs described in the section below.

⁶ 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).

⁷ Commission Implementing Decision on the financing of the LIFE programme and the adoption of the work programme for 2021-2024 (COM(2021) 4997 final).

LIFE-2024-PLP-NAT-ENV - Projects on Legislative and Policy Priorities in the fields of Nature & Biodiversity and Circular Economy & Quality of Life

Objectives

The proposed projects under the topic LIFE-2024-PLP-ENV-NAT shall aim to address the following specific needs identified by the Member States in the sub-programme Circular Economy and Quality of Life and in the sub-programme Nature and Biodiversity.

Specific priorities

The contracting authority expects to award only 1 grant per specific priority.

1) Support for mapping, condition assessment and restoration of marine habitats

Sub-Programme: Nature & Biodiversity

Specific priority objectives:

The objective of the project is to support EU Member States to advance their implementation of the Birds and Habitats Directives (BHD) in the marine environment and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD), and under the perspective of the development of a EU approach to overarching restoration objective for the long-term recovery of nature⁸ the project will help to support Member States by providing them the best knowledge on methods and steps to: 1) map the location of marine habitats within their marine areas, 2) assess the condition of these marine habitats 3) implement suitable measures to restore and/or re-establish these marine habitats.

Specific needs addressed:

Healthy marine habitats provide crucial ecosystem services that contribute to safeguarding marine biodiversity, securing food supply and climate regulation. For example, seagrasses and macroalgal forests are important nurseries for many fish species and serve as natural carbon sinks. The intensive exploitation of European seas over the past decades has resulted in the loss and degradation of many of these important marine habitats, resulting in the deterioration of larger marine ecosystems they sustain as well as decreasing their capacity to adapt to and mitigate consequences of climate change. The current biodiversity and climate crisis requires that marine ecosystems are not only protected through a larger network of marine protected areas, but that their critical condition is improved through large scale restoration. At present, the knowledge on the status of marine ecosystems in the EU is still limited despite existing obligations from the BHD and MSFD. Comprehensive marine habitat maps are needed to effectively protect and restore marine ecosystems as part of

⁸ The Nature Restoration Law is currently in the EU co-decision process. See the [texts adopted by the European Parliament on Tuesday, 27 February 2024 \(europa.eu\)](https://european-council.europa.eu/media/en/press-communications/infographic/infographic_nature_restoration_law_en.pdf).

the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030. They are essential basis to develop monitoring programmes to assess condition of marine habitats, to identify and plan new networks of marine protected areas as well as restoration measures.

For many marine habitats mapping and knowledge about their condition is still lacking. Restoration activities were so far mainly small-scale and focused only on some habitats. Knowledge gap represents the biggest challenge for restoring marine ecosystems and it is important to support the Member States to acquire and make use of the necessary knowledge is therefore essential.

Potential applicants may include:

- organisations implementing restoration actions or gathering experts in the field of marine restoration and
- Member States' authorities in charge of marine restoration and implementation of BHD and MSFD.

Activities that can be funded:

The project shall draft a comprehensive manual on the necessary steps and methods for 1) mapping relevant⁹ habitats 2) assessing condition and setting favorable reference area for relevant habitats and assessing quality, quantity and connectivity of habitats of relevant species and 3) restoration measures for habitats and habitats of relevant species¹⁰, building on available experience and knowledge. It would be of added value to also include in the manual cost estimations for mapping, assessing conditions and restoration measures, wherever possible, based on available information.

Throughout the project, the applicants are required to cooperate with the European Environment Agency, European Commission's Joint Research Center and where necessary engage with other relevant organisations and projects (e.g. under Horizon Europe), to benefit from their ongoing work and activities that might be complementary to this project.

It is expected, at the beginning of the project implementation, to organise one workshop with marine restoration experts from Member States and relevant organisations to investigate their needs and collect their views and experiences. Alternatively, workshops can be organised for each EU regional sea or they can be combined with other events that cover the same topic or involve same experts (for example, Natura 2000 biogeographical seminars in case these will

⁹ As relevant habitats, reference is to Annex II of the NRL proposal (See the [texts adopted by the European Parliament on Tuesday, 27 February 2024 \(europa.eu\)](#))

¹⁰ As relevant species, reference is to the proposal for Nature Restoration Law

take place during the project). In particular, it is expected that the project should build on knowledge acquired by the research community as well as through the implementation of relevant environmental legislation¹¹.

Finally, it is required to organizing workshop(s) with Member States' authorities to present the final results and provide guidance on how to apply and implement the manual on the ground.

Expected impacts:

The project will contribute to the EU restoration plan under the EU Biodiversity strategy and assist Member States in fulfilling their existing obligations under the BHD and MSFD, as well as prepare for the implementation of Article 5 of the proposed NRL. It will provide:

- support and concrete guidance on necessary steps and methods for mapping, assessment of condition and restoration of all marine habitats listed in Annex II of the proposed NRL in EU seas and similar support for habitats of species;
- an overview of best available and validated scientific methodologies with a focus on those which can provide the necessary information in a cost-effective and coherent way;
- identify possible gaps in knowledge as well as best ways to deal with them, including by identifying short and medium-term research priorities.

Throughout the project, Member States authorities and relevant organisations gathering marine restoration experts should be involved to ensure that the results, in the form of a comprehensive manual, will be relevant and applicable for implementation of legal obligations. Finally, the outcome should be presented and disseminated to Member States to facilitate its use and uptake on the ground.

Specific consortium requirements (if any)	To be eligible, the consortium shall include at least one organisation actively working on marine restoration.
Expected project duration:	36 months
Maximum Funding rate and maximum EU contribution	Maximum funding rate: 90% - Maximum EU contribution: EUR 1.30 million

2) Extended Producers Responsibility (EPR)

¹¹ [Water Framework Directive](#), [EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive](#) and [Birds and Habitats Directive](#).

Sub-Programme: Circular Economy and Quality of LIFE

Specific priority objectives:

Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) is one of the instruments that can significantly contribute to progress towards the objective of ensuring sound waste management in line with the waste hierarchy, at the end of a product's life cycle. In particular, making producers responsible for the management at the end of life of their products can encourage the development, production and marketing of products that are suitable for multiple/prolonged use, that contain recycled materials, that are durable and easily repairable and that are, after having become waste, suitable for preparing for re-use and recycling in order to facilitate proper implementation of the waste hierarchy. EPR can therefore contribute substantially to reducing waste generation and decoupling resource use from economic growth.

EPR schemes have been set up both in EU legislation and by the Member States. The Member States have the sole responsibility in ensuring compliance with the rules of the EPR schemes set up on their territories, regardless of whether the scheme is based on EU rules or national rules. Stakeholders/producers often raise that the EPR landscape is diverse and therefore needs harmonizing to ensure a smooth functioning of the internal market. At present a complete picture on EPR schemes that are set up in the Member States is not available and there is also not a full understanding of the aspects that could be further streamlined, without disrupting the functioning of the national schemes, the respective administrative structures of EPR schemes and their governance. The overall objective of this specific priority is to fill this gap.

Specific needs addressed:

Article 8a of the Waste Framework Directive (WFD) requires Member States to adopt general minimum requirements for EPR measures at national level. Several EU legislations are addressing EPR for specific waste streams¹²

Nevertheless, where national EPR schemes are considered, there are broad disparities, such as on the products in their scope and the extent of the responsibility of producers as well as on governance

¹² EU regulations where EPR are considered (non-exhaustive):

- Regulation (EU) 2023/1542 concerning batteries and waste batteries
- Proposal for a Regulation on Packaging and Packaging Waste
- Proposal for a Regulation on circularity requirements for vehicle design and on management of end-of-life vehicles
- Proposal for a Directive amending Directive 2008/98/EC on waste (textiles)
- End-of-Life Vehicles Directive 2000/53/EC: Article 5(4) Under revision
- WEEE Directive 2012/19/EC: Article 12 and 13
- Regulation (EU) 2023/1542 concerning batteries and waste batteries Articles 56-58
- Single-use Plastics Directive (EU) 2019/904: Article 8

models.

The objective of this specific priority is to support policymaking through the acquisition of a clearer picture on the state of play of the EPR set up in the Member States, aiming of enhancing the effectiveness, cost efficiency and governance of those schemes, their governance and the waste management measures which apply to the concerned products. In particular the project is expected to address the following specific needs:

- collecting and analysing the information on the EPR schemes established at national level, including governance structures applicable to the producers active on the concerned Member State territories, best practice, guidelines on implementing EPR, and modulation of EPR fees in national schemes,
- assessing the feasibility and effectiveness of an EU-wide harmonized register of producers /products subject to EPR obligations, raising awareness of producers and civil society on EPR schemes and how they work and can contribute to reducing the environmental impacts of products when they become waste.

It is expected that the project will entail consulting national or regional competent authorities in charge of EPR and that the project's actions will take into consideration the interests of a wide range of stakeholders.

Potential applicants may include technological universities and research bodies, civil society organisations, businesses under EPR requirements, consultancies, associations representing businesses (on national or EU level), public/private bodies overseeing EPR implementation and Producer Responsibility Organisations.

Activities that can be funded:

The project should carry out activities to address the above-identified specific needs. These activities can include, and are not limited to, desk and field research, IT development, events organization.

Expected impacts:

The project should:

- 1. Elaborate a report on the state of play in EPR schemes across EU Member States, assessing main achievements, barriers, and opportunities for their implementation, highlighting data gap, best practices, guidelines.**

The report should also include an overview and assessment of EPR fees modulation implemented in EPRs.

This would allow policymakers to have a clear overview of the state of play of the implementation and enforcement of EPR measures across the EU, and to better assess the outcome of

the policies adopted, or in the process of being adopted. The overview should also propose possible innovative solutions to the main challenges of the sector, such as establishing a methodology for EPR fee rates that is transparent, functional and reflects end of life costs in a comprehensive way, or clearly allocating producer responsibility in a context of limited data availability. Finally, the report should focus on long-term impact and aim at future-proofing the findings and proposals presented, for example by considering the foreseeable technological advances of Artificial Intelligence, with the threats and opportunities connected.

2. Developing an online pilot for an EU wide EPR register to demonstrate its feasibility, including governance, technical and economic sustainability.

In order to ensure appropriate monitoring and compliance with the obligations of producers, the WFD establishes a producer register to be set by each Member State.

The setting up of an EU-wide EPR register offers opportunities for synergies and cost reduction for the administrations.

On this basis, the project should take the necessary steps to put in place a pilot EU-wide EPR register, that should not be limited to a specific waste stream and should contain the information generally required for national EPR systems. A particular attention to the reproducibility of the proposed model is key to enable future development in particular for waste streams complex to govern such as packaging or vehicles. The online pilot EU-wide EPR register should contain links and references to national waste management authorities' websites to strengthen coherence.

The project should propose options for the governance of the proposed EU-wide EPR register and assess its technical and economic sustainability.

3. Raise awareness among producers, citizens, groups of consumers, on the EPR and involvement in circular use of resources.

The project should disseminate the results and lessons learned through communication and awareness-raising campaigns. The project could include training packages on EPR and generally on the polluter pays principle, not only aimed at civil society, e.g. citizens, consumers group, but specifically at producers, since making them aware of the waste their product can produce is the first step to make them responsible.

The project should aim at creating an EU wide community where waste experts can exchange views on innovative waste management practices and technological advances, in the form of workshops, training sessions, seminars and dedicated events to be held periodically, whether hybrid or physical. This would contribute to providing policymakers with the input needed to elaborate up-to-date, efficient and future-proof legislation and policy.

The expected impacts of the project will contribute to:

- Enhanced clarity on the state of play of the implementation of EPR provisions across Member States; on the number and types of products or waste streams covered by EPR schemes in different Member States;
- Increased awareness on EPR and polluter pays principle, and communication materials available potentially to all EU citizens by the end of the project;
- Set up an academia-driven community where experts from different fields and sectors can exchange views on sustainable development, environmental and climate protection, and provide continuous feedback to policy on EPR and circularity.
- Enhanced harmonisation among different pieces of EU waste legislation, including product legislation (e.g. ESPR), leading to better policymaking.

Specific consortium requirements (if any)	Not applicable
Expected project duration:	24 months
Maximum Funding rate and maximum EU contribution	Maximum funding rate: 90% - Maximum EU contribution: EUR 1 million

3) Capacity building and training of private sector stakeholders in implementing the EU Regulation on Deforestation-free products

Sub-Programme:	Circular Economy and Quality of LIFE
Specific priority objectives:	The new Regulation (EU) 2023/1115 on deforestation-free products ¹³ (EUDR) entered into force on 29 June 2023. A main driver of deforestation is the expansion of agricultural land that

¹³ [EUR-Lex - 32023R1115 - EN - EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](#)

including in English.

Specific needs addressed:

The new regulation establishes due diligence and traceability requirements for market participants (both natural and legal entities) that place relevant commodities (cattle, cocoa, coffee, oil palm, rubber, soya and wood) or derived products on the European market or export them. Operators and traders, particularly SMEs, including microenterprises, need to understand the impacts of the new requirement on their business and will have to set up new due diligence systems (including access to required information, risk assessments and mitigation) to ensure compliance.

Capacity building and training activities targeting operators and traders, particularly SMEs, including microenterprises, are needed to develop adequate strategies and roadmaps to take action based on solid due diligence exercise, in particular to identify partners and leverage technologies to ensure traceability as well as to define and implement risk assessment and risk mitigation measures according to the requirements set out by the Regulation.

The proposed project should not include development of user manuals or training activities on the use of the Deforestation Information System and on how to submit a due diligence statement as the European Commission will provide such training materials and “train-the-trainers” sessions to all interested companies in 2024, in coordination with Member States’ authorities. The Commission will also make available user manuals and other relevant self-learning materials.

The proposed project should be complimentary and not duplicate the objectives and work of the [Multi-stakeholder Platform on Protecting and Restoring the World’s Forests](#). The Multi-stakeholder Platform has the tasks to:

- a. Foster exchange on best practices across stakeholders/operators and EU Member States to increase ownership and awareness raising (exchanging views, building alliances, identifying problems in implementation and possible actions to address them; making available to public and private organisations the existing practical tools and approaches, guidelines and criteria; offering the opportunity to frontrunners to share their experience, including on key issues such as transparency and traceability; contributing to the development of guidance for the implementation of the EU regulations;
 - b. Track progress, risks and opportunities for the Regulation implementation, regularly taking stock of progress and reflecting on possible adjustments or additional measures to strengthen implementation.
 - c. Discuss Propose the best ways to implement the various actions included in the EU Communication on Stepping up EU Action to Protect and Restore the World’s Forests".
-

Activities that can be funded:

Activities include:

- Activities aimed at increasing awareness, knowledge and know-how;
- Development of training modules and guidance materials;
- Trainings activities tailored to the specificities of the sectors targeted;
- Train-the-trainer activities;
- Dissemination of relevant information / documentation / training materials in EU languages;
- Promotion of collaborative approaches among companies (eg: large and small companies operating in the same value chain, or on cooperation among companies in proximity);
- Facilitation of peer-to-peer learning and exchanges of best practices.

The approaches proposed should build on experiences and lessons learned from other relevant projects and programmes.

The proposed approaches should demonstrate a high degree of replicability.

Expected impacts:

The proposal should include a clear intervention logic and description of the chain of change that is expected to generate the results of the project; as well the proposal should indicate a first estimate of baseline and expected results. Proposals submitted under this priority should demonstrate how they will contribute to:

- Increased awareness amongst EU operators and traders, and more particularly SMEs including microenterprises, about the EUDR and its requirements;
 - Providing capacity, skills and appropriate advice to companies, and more particularly SMEs including microenterprises, for implementing the EUDR requirements;
 - Use of appropriate tools and methods to support the implementation of the EUDR by the EU operators and traders, and more particularly SMEs including microenterprises;
 - Develop, implement and roll-out compliance tools and approaches for use by the relevant sectors;
-

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposals should propose indicators which are specific to the proposed activities. The results and impacts should be quantified for the end of the project and for 5 years after the end of the project.
Specific consortium requirements (if any)	Not applicable
Expected project duration:	36 months
Maximum Funding rate and maximum EU contribution	Maximum funding rate: 90% - Maximum EU contribution: EUR 1 million

4) Holistic orientations towards environmental new infrastructures in Ukrainian cities - Debris

Sub-Programme:	Circular Economy and Quality of LIFE
Specific priority objectives:	The project aims to contribute to the green reconstruction of Ukraine by designing customised solutions to improve the management of removal of construction debris in Ukraine.
Specific needs addressed:	<p>The current war situation in Ukraine has an important impact on building, in particular destroying a large number of private and public buildings and producing a mass of debris.</p> <p>Management of construction debris imply challenges to health and should incorporate sustainability concerns. Removed materials need to be sorted, processed and screened for contaminants. When safe, the debris may be reused for quick repairs and reconstruction leading to cutting costs and reducing the strain on natural resources. The process can help to build back the Ukrainian cities better and greener than before.</p> <p>There is the need to identify and test a methodology and related process that can be used for facilitating the debris removal, taking into account the work already done by the different donors.</p>
Activities that can be funded:	<p>Potential applicants should include both Ukrainian and European union partners. See below the minimum requirement on the consortium.</p> <p>The project shall include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The analysis of what has been already done in Ukraine and/or similar contexts in the area of debris removal, including best practices from guidance on disasters' debris removal such as the UNDP guidance, and the EU Construction and Demolition Waste Protocol and Guidelines; Factual-based design of customised solution(s) to improve the

	<p>construction debris removal in Ukraine with a focus on particular waste streams like asbestos and their testing in real conditions, ideally in a couple of locations;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Based on the results of the customised solution(s), develop a methodology and step-by-step processes to be used by the relevant end users i.e. staff of the municipalities and donor community. The proposed approaches should demonstrate a high degree of replicability. ▪ Build capacity and the disseminate of the results in the relevant networks. <p>The project should actively involve national or regional competent authorities, research bodies and relevant stakeholder groups as well as support the development of proposals of further actions (content, planning and budget) to be implemented under other EU and national programmes or public private partnerships.</p>
Expected impacts:	<p>The project shall contribute to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the development of a methodology and a step by step process for ensuring a safe and circular removal/re-use of construction debris in the specific Ukrainian context; ▪ the definition, identification and testing of appropriate and customised solutions to address the challenge of a safe and effective management of the construction in Ukraine; ▪ support the municipalities with information and relevant knowledge for implementing of the most appropriate solution in their context. <p>In addition, it is expected that the project improves the coordination among the donors community.</p> <p>Proposals should include indicators which are specific to the proposed activities. The results and impacts should be quantified for the end of the project and for 5 years after the end of the project.</p>
Specific consortium requirements (if any)	To be eligible, the consortium shall include one or more Ukrainian small or medium-sized municipality involved in the testing of the solutions.
Expected project duration:	24 months
Maximum Funding rate and maximum EU contribution	Maximum funding rate: 90% - Maximum EU contribution: EUR 1 million

5) Holistic orientations towards environmental new infrastructures in Ukrainian cities - Water

Sub-Programme: Circular Economy and Quality of LIFE

Specific priority objectives:

In the context of the Ukrainian's path towards the European Union and aligning with the EU acquis, the project aims at building on a legislative and policy framework to showcase solutions to water management challenges in the country.

Specific needs addressed:

In the context of the Eastern Partnership, Ukraine has signed an Association Agreement with the EU, which explicitly foresees approximation to EU legislation. Chapter 6 (Environment) of Title V, Article 363 of this agreement foresees gradual approximation of Ukrainian legislation to EU law and policy on environment, including the EU water directives.

Following the decision by the European Council on 23 June 2022, Ukraine was granted the status of candidate country for EU membership, which further reinforces the country's commitment to progressing towards implementation of EU policy and the acquis.

Ukraine has adopted in October 2016 a framework law implementing the EU Water Framework Directive (2000/60 / EC).

At present the alignment of Ukraine with the acquis on water management. Ukraine updated its Water Code and established some river basin districts. Ukraine joined the Water Convention and ratified the Water Protocol. Alignment with the Urban Waste Water Treatment (currently under revision) and Bathing Water Directives is still needed, as well as with the recast Drinking Water Directive.

The State program 2022 to 2026 for construction and reconstruction of drinking water infrastructure is not in line with latest EU standards. In terms of enforcement, clean water services are in place but there is no clear responsibility on drinking water and wastewater. General principles of marine water protection are reflected in the legislation.

In synergy with actions under the City Mission (Horizon Europe), the project aims to support Ukraine's progress in approximation to the EU acquis on water - including the Water Framework Directive, the Drinking Water and the Urban Waste Water Directives - by providing support to Ukrainian municipalities to develop, demonstrate and promote innovative techniques, methods and approaches¹⁵ for reaching the objectives of Union water policy. The Phoenix initiative combines twinning and awareness raising for green smart city management (sustainability and climate neutrality) with administrative capacity building, training in urban planning and permitting and in EU environmental acquis in order to ensure a holistic, sustainable city planning approach, including innovative

¹⁵ 'Innovative techniques, methods and approaches' means solutions which are new when compared to the state of the art at Member State and sector level and which are implemented at an operational scale.

solutions for the rapid reconstruction of destroyed or damaged water and waste facilities.

The proposal should include:

- guidance and capacity building to get closer to EU standards, in particular with respect to the implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive;
- activities to ensure safe and efficient use of water resources, improving quantitative water management and resilience, preserving a high level of water quality and avoiding misuse and deterioration of water resources.

Activities that can be funded:

The project aims to support, in cooperation with EU cities¹⁶, small or medium size Ukrainian cities and contribute to the implementation of the water management framework. It should include at least one of the following:

- the development of relevant urban planning approaches and permitting actions at municipal level, with possible use of dedicated Geographical Information Systems or satellites;
- the identification and design of innovative solutions to improve access to safe drinking water and wastewater treatment;
- the promotion of innovative solutions for the design and reconstruction of water and wastewater infrastructures and treatment facilities.

The project should involve the relevant national authorities and to consider the broader water challenges in the country, such as water resources availability and vulnerability (notably vulnerability to contamination by industrial activities), climate change effects, and more frequent droughts and floods; doing so will help ensure that the modernization of Water and Sanitation Services and implements innovative, sustainable, green, and resilient options, like nature-based wastewater solutions¹⁷.

The project should also develop proposals for further actions (content, planning and budget) to be implemented under other EU and national programmes or public private partnerships.

Expected impacts:

It is expected that the specific priority awarded in the framework of this call will have a substantial support to:

¹⁶ <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/how-to-participate/partner-search> supports the twinning/partner search opportunities

¹⁷ UKRAINE RAPID DAMAGE AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT - March 2023, the World Bank, the Government of Ukraine, the European Union, the United Nations. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_23_1852

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ improve water and sanitation services management for Ukrainian cities; ▪ facilitate the use of innovative and state of the art water services management approaches through twinning with EU cities (preferably members of Covenant of Mayors or Green City Accord, or participating in LIFE Strategic Integrated Projects for water management plans) ▪ Provide capacity building and training for relevant city administrative, technical and political staff on strategic planning; ▪ identify further needs to the full implementation of water management facilitate replication
Specific consortium requirements (if any)	To be eligible, the consortium shall include one or more Ukrainian small or medium-sized municipality and one or more EU cities.
Expected project duration:	24 months
Maximum Funding rate and maximum EU contribution	Maximum funding rate: 90% - Maximum EU contribution: EUR 1 million

6) Developing best practices in low tillage farming without herbicides

Sub-Programme: Nature & Biodiversity

Specific priority objectives: The European Green Deal has set out ambitious objectives for the reduction of nutrient losses and the use of harmful chemicals (pesticides) in agriculture. So-called 'regenerative' farming practices promise the potential to reduce the need for external fertiliser inputs through practices to improve soil fertility. Key practices include continuous plant cover, diverse crop mixes (including cover crops), minimal tillage of soils, minimal artificial inputs, and integration of livestock in the management of soils. However, a key challenge remains the reconciliation of low/no tillage practices on the one hand with low/no use of chemical plant protection products on the other. Many no-tillage operations use herbicides to manage weeds and to terminate cover crops before planting a new crop. Similarly, organic farms have traditionally found it difficult to apply low/no-tillage practices, as tillage is regarded as a necessary means of controlling weeds in the absence of chemical inputs in organic agriculture. Hence, there is a need to develop knowledge in this area.

The reduction of nutrient losses and the use of harmful chemicals in agriculture have been identified as essential objectives under the EU's Biodiversity Strategy to 2030 and the targets set out in the Global Biodiversity Framework. Existing policies (Common Agricultural Policy, Horizon Europe) already promote organic farming and regenerative

practices in various ways.

Considering the specificities of this priority, the consortium could include agricultural research institutes, farm advisory services, organic farmers and regenerative farmers' associations, and others entities with the requisite knowledge and experiences.

Specific needs addressed:

There is a need for specific research and demonstration of best practices in low/no-tillage farming to overcome a key barrier (the control of weeds) to the wider uptake of such practices in EU agriculture.

By developing **best practices on how to avoid herbicide use in low/no-tillage farming**, this project aims to lead the way to the wider use of sustainable regenerative practices in agriculture, while simultaneously minimising the use of chemical herbicides. It is expected that the results of the project will be applicable in organic farming as well as promoting sustainable practices more widely.

Activities that can be funded:

The project will include:

- a review of existing scientific and other relevant literature on low/no-tillage practices, including experience from Europe and other regions of the world, in order to establish the baseline of available knowledge. The review should consider, in particular, approaches associated with organic farming as well as so-called 'regenerative' practices that seek to minimise soil disturbance while at the same time avoiding the reliance on herbicides for weed control,
- concrete field tests and demonstration projects on low/no-tillage farming without use of herbicides, in cooperation with a number of farms, including research farms. The field experiments should cover a range of major crops, including livestock farming, and reflect different soil and climate conditions typical of European farming.

In terms of outputs, the project is expected to:

- produce a review of low/no-tillage farming practices without herbicides based on field experiments that demonstrate various methods and best practices of 'regenerative' practices that seek to minimise soil disturbance and contribute to nature restoration,
 - undertake activities aimed at disseminating the outcome of the literature review and collecting the feedback from the farming community in cooperation with independent (non-commercial) farm advisory services in a number of Member States,
 - produce a final report on low/no-tillage farming without herbicides based on the two previous outcomes.
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Expected impacts:	The project will contribute to a wide range of objectives and Union legislation, including the improvement of ecosystem health and biodiversity in agricultural areas, facilitating the improvement of soil health and biodiversity, as well as the protection of aquatic ecosystems impacted by excess nutrients as well as chemical plant protection products and their derivatives.
Specific consortium requirements (if any)	Not applicable
Expected project duration:	48 months
Maximum Funding rate and maximum EU contribution	Maximum funding rate: 90% - Maximum EU contribution: EUR 1.2 million

7) Circular Europe Hotspot, a new governance model for the ECESP, with a focus on Circular Business model mainstreaming

Sub-Programme: Circular Economy and Quality of LIFE

Specific priority objectives: The [European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform](#) (ECESP) is an initiative of the [EU Circular Economy Action Plan \(CEAP\)](#), launched together with the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) in 2017. Since then, it has successfully gathered stakeholders across Europe and has promoted their circular solutions contributing to the transition to a circular economy in the EU.

The activities of the Platform are led by a group of stakeholders (stakeholder organisations, which are leaders in the field). This group, known as **Coordination Group**, has grown in experience with the platform.

The aim of this project is to better equip the future group of stakeholders leading the activities of the platform under the new Commission's mandate, so they contribute to the successful **implementation** of the EU circular economy policies and work towards eliminating the obstacles that are inhibiting it. To attain this, this project will have the following objectives:

- Identify and ensure the exchange of **good practices** from relevant stakeholders (national, regional, and local circular economy actors).
- Foster the **debate and dialogue** among the circular economy community at the level closer to the citizens (i.e., focus on Member States, regions, and cities, rather than Brussels, the

project should prioritise engagement at national, regional, and local level for instance acting as hubs for circular economy).

- Facilitate **capacity and capability building and knowledge creation**.

Within this project, the above-mentioned objectives will be focused on **circular business models (CBMs)**. These are at the core of the transition to a circular economy, which will require far-reaching transformations across value chains.

Within the Sustainable Products Initiative, the respective impact assessment, and the Communication on 'Making sustainable products the norm' (March 2022) an 'European Circular Business Hub', which will 'support the uptake of circular business models, channel information and services including awareness raising, cooperation, training and exchanges of best practices' was announced to support mainstream private businesses with this challenge. It will build on the expertise and service offering of existing EU actions, such as Enterprise Europe Network Sustainability Advisors and the network of European green tech cluster. Furthermore, the ESPR proposes specific support measures for SMEs and microenterprises, both at EU as well as Member state level.

Therefore, the project also has as core objectives to:

- Support and stimulate the shift to circular business models (CBM) and practices, including but not limited to sectors or products with ESPR relevance, which would have to be further assessed/defined.
- Mainstream circular business models and linked innovative approaches as well as targeted support to SMEs and micro-enterprises.
- Support the Commission in its activities to bring different stakeholders together to promote CBMs and practices, and in preparing guidance on boosting CBMs for businesses, Member States and regions.

Specific needs addressed:

The proposed project should set up "Circular Europe Hotspot" group (title tbc), a new governance system for the group of stakeholders that drives the activities of the European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform. The role and categories of stakeholders have been in the past defined in the document 'Aim and Structure of the European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform'¹⁸. Circular Europe

¹⁸ <https://circulareconomy.europa.eu/platform/sites/default/files/ecesp-aim-and-structure-20-ec-eesc.pdf>

Hotspot will also lead the work on Circular Business Model (CBM) mainstreaming within the platform.

Building on the experience of the ECESP obtained since 2017, the project should strengthen the cooperation among stakeholders' networks to facilitate the generation and dissemination of knowledge, exchange of expertise and good practices on the circular economy, including CBMs across the EU. The project should acknowledge the work already carried out under the two mandates of the current coordination group of the platform, their documents and working groups as well as the opportunities offered by the ECESP website. The project should ensure regular dialogue with the secretariat of the ECESP, run by the EESC.

This project, as one of its tasks, should select a maximum of four organisations per stakeholder category (public authorities, businesses, knowledge community), based on an open call for expressions of interest. Additionally, further three members (public authority, business, and knowledge community) will be selected from the field of work on CBMs.

This project should ensure that the selected organisations collaborate and work in a coordinated manner to implement the actions listed below, as well as to complement them within their proposal based on their own expertise.

The project should include an annual work plan with clear areas of work, core actions with determined actor responsible for its implementation, timing and deliverables. Each annual work plan should have a specific section dedicated to the objective of mainstreaming of CBMs by supporting economic operators, including sectors with ESPR relevance – in particular furniture and textiles, with the shift towards more circularity. The project should take into account the Communication on 'Making sustainable products the norm', the ESPR legislative proposal as well as the preliminary draft technical report by JRC¹⁹ on new product priorities for the first ESPR working plan.

Activities that can be funded:

Activities can include:

- Identification, mapping of good practices, and population of the website of the platform, including those of relevance for the uptake of CBMs and practices.
 - Identification and list of useful networks, sector organisations and other intermediaries that could further spread the information and tools, in particular, a multiplayer per Member State that can eventually act as a national circular hub.
 - Participation in targeted events on circular economy to represent
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¹⁹ JRC (2023), Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation - preliminary study on new product priorities

the platform, as well as developing and organizing a series of trainings and events within the website of the platform (continuing with the EU Circular Talks branding), in particular with the aim of disseminating content and methods related to CBMs.

- Identify and propose knowledge sharing, matchmaking and mentoring tools and events to facilitate the involvement of SMEs and micro-enterprises. A number of these proposals should have to target CBMs including in ESPR relevant sectors such as textiles and furniture.
- Launch of awareness raising campaigns, communication activities and specific engagement actions, involving the organisations selected and channelling them through the Platform's website.
- Organisation and steering of sectorial working subgroups, among the stakeholder selected, one of which would have to focus on CBMs.
- Build up circular economy hubs at national or regional level on behalf of the platform. Cross sectorial or specific hubs related to circular economy will be also possible.
- Collect Circular Economy theory including CBMs and translate it into practical and easy to understand concepts to share in presentations, guidelines and tools.
- Develop and share guidance and trainings to practitioners and recommendation to public authorities.

In particular, in the case of CBMs:

- Assess potential approaches and gather best practices of CBM.
 - Analyse and define ESPR relevant sectors and sectors/products with the highest potential to develop CBM approaches, taking into account the upcoming ESPR working plan.
 - Assess available EU and national funding and support options available with regard to the transition to CBMs including for SMEs and micro-enterprises.
 - Analyse the interaction/interplay of CBMs with EU legislation: identify supporting legislation, or those creating challenges to mainstreaming CBMs.
 - Deliver training and provide practical hands-on guidance to support the transition to CBMs including targeted approaches for SMEs and micro-enterprises and 'training-the-trainers' via the EEN.
 - Liaison with Enterprise Europe Network, including training and application of tools, developing the role of sustainability advisers in EEN hubs as multipliers.
 - Support the Commission in preparing guidance on:
 - Directing investment and funding and optimising local resource stocks and flows, with a view to creating
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circular value and jobs.

- How to support uptake and partnerships for the circular economy between social enterprises and other actors, including mainstream businesses.

Expected impacts:

The project strives to create positive impact by promoting circular solutions contributing to the successful transition to a circular economy in the EU. These impacts will be delivered by:

- Identifying and ensuring the exchange of good practices from relevant stakeholders (national, regional and local circular economy actors).
- Fostering the debate and dialogue among the circular economy community.
- Facilitate capacity and capability building as well as knowledge creation.

In particular, related to the Platform, the expected main impacts relate to:

- **A clear governance system** for the group of stakeholders that drive pro-actively the work of the platform and ensure cross dissemination.
- Strong cooperation with Member State representatives as to also support policy making at national and regional level.
- Offer to future stakeholders selected to be part of Circular Europe Hotspot **quality services** so they can scale up the activities of the platform more efficiently.
- **Wider outreach** of the stakeholder pillar of the platform.

In addition to the common objectives, for CBMs the envisaged core impacts relate to:

- Increased uptake and efficient shift towards circular business models including for ESPR relevant sectors and SMEs, based on:
 - Increased awareness and knowledge about potential CBM approaches amongst economic actors, including with regard to furniture and textiles as well as other potential ESPR priority products.
 - Availability of targeted hands-on guidance and tools on how to potentially transition the business model, practices or individual products towards more circular approaches; channel finance and investment and foster partnerships.
 - Application of best-practices and knowledge shared via
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networks/ exchange amongst peers and other stakeholders.

- Improved/Facilitated access to funding by raising awareness about existing funding options for businesses (EU, national, regional) to support their transition to CBMs.

The applicants are encouraged to develop or identify key performance indicators (KPIs) who support quantification of the envisaged impacts related to the expected outcomes and deliverables below. The KPIs should be included in the annual activity report.

Indicators, which can be considered include (non-exhaustive):

- Screening of best practice taken-up;
- Number of events training schemes and capacity building activities developed;
- Number of trainers trained and/or trainings held;
- Number of companies, including in ESPR relevant sectors, benefitting from the trainings and using the tools/approaches developed;
- Quantitative and qualitative surveys to test knowledge and progress towards shifting to CBMs;
- Evaluation surveys by relevant stakeholders.

Expected outcomes:

- Identification of good practices that will be incorporated into the website of the platform, as well as list of useful networks, sector organisations and other intermediaries. 30% of these should be on CBMs.
 - Participation in and organisation of events and trainings on the topics identified in the work plan and agreed with the organisations. 20% of these should be on CBMs.
 - Proposal of knowledge sharing, matchmaking and mentoring tools and events to facilitate the involvement of SMEs. 30% of these should be relevant for CBMs.
 - At least a working subgroup for textiles, plastics, green public procurement, investments and CBMs
 - Organisation of awareness raising campaigns, communication activities and specific engagement actions. 30% should be relevant for CBMs.
 - Establishment of at least one circular hub per geographical region in Europe (Southern, Nordic, Eastern and Central European countries).
 - Preparation of presentations, guidelines and tools per working
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	<p>group and other relevant knowledge sources (e.g. climate, investments...). 30% of these should be relevant for CBMs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and share guidance to practitioners incl. SMEs and recommendations to public authorities. 50% should be relevant for CBMs. • Facilitate access to funding for business strategy and implementation work for economic actors wanting to transition to more circular business models (via funding map/screening). • Analyse CBM opportunities and pathways with a specific focus on to be defined/assessed products and sectors with ESPR relevance. <p>It is expected to see in the proposal a detailed description of the resources that would be mobilised for specific expected outcomes given a clear indication to the split between more general activities under "Circular Europe Hotspot" as well as specific activities and deliverables linked to CBMs. Furthermore, expected deliverables should be quantified to facilitate the assessment of proposals (e.g. number of good practices, trainings/hours etc).</p>
Specific consortium requirements (if any)	Not applicable
Expected project duration:	36 months
Maximum Funding rate and maximum EU contribution	Maximum funding rate: 90% - Maximum EU contribution: EUR 1.8 million

8) Support for actions to address degassing of NMVOCs in inland waterway and maritime transport

Sub-Programme:	Circular Economy and Quality of LIFE
Specific priority objectives:	<p>Inland waterway transport and maritime transport are major sources of air pollution (SO_x, PM, NO_x), impacting human health in coastal areas and ecosystems (sea, land). So far, the focus at EU level for this sector has been on emissions from propulsion (combustion engines) and on-board engines. However, shipping can also cause air pollution in other ways. This kind of air pollution is related to the cargo. This relates to chemical substances that by coincidence (leakages) or on purpose (to clear the vessel for new cargo) evaporate from the vessel. The latter is called degassing.</p> <p>The main category of substances that can be cleared in this way are Non-Methane Volatile Organic Compounds (NMVOCs). Degassing of Non-Methane Volatile Organic Compounds (NMVOCs) is an issue that is getting more attention. One of the reasons is NMVOCs neurological</p>

toxicity. In addition, NMVOCs contribute to ground level ozone and PM formation, and therefore they are in the scope of Directive (EU) 2016/2284. Unfortunately, no Member State addressed the issue of degassing from vessels in their National Air Pollution Control Programmes submitted under this Directive and not much is known about the exact order of magnitude.

The overall objective of this project will be to assess the current situation regarding the transport of Non Methane Volatile Organic Compounds in inland waterway and maritime transport and the issue of degassing, and assess pathways and measures to (further) limit or ban degassing of NMVOCs in inland waterway and maritime transport.

Considering the specificity of this topic, applicants are expected to have a thorough knowledge of and experience with current regional, national, EU (e.g. National Emission reduction Commitment Directive, Ambient Air Quality Directives) and international (e.g. IMO) legislation, regulations and initiatives related to emissions of air pollutants from inland waterway and maritime transport.

Specific needs addressed:

Some degassing commitments have already been taken at national level (e.g. the ban in Germany) or are in preparation (e.g. the CDNI initiative in the Rhine delta), but they need to be followed up by an appropriate implementation by the private sector, in cooperation with public authorities and ports. This leaves other important river basins in Europe (the Danube area and elsewhere). It does not take yet into account degassing in the maritime sector either.

Questions and issues that so far have been raised by stakeholders, authorities and NGOs, and which are relevant for EU measures and funding, include the following items: the kind of infrastructure needed and the best locations/areas; the scope of degassing measures; the maturity of the technology and the needs for dedicated research and innovation and pilot projects; the profile of the stakeholders involved; the role of EU programmes which might be of interest for the (co)funding of such technology; the amounts needed and possible approaches (e.g. grants, soft loans, guarantees, blending, PPP); timelines (e.g. ratification process of the Convention on the Collection, Deposit and Reception and Waste Generated During Navigation on the Rhine (CDNI) and implementation; EU Zero Pollution Action Plan); conditions and requirements, with lessons learned from the CDNI process (e.g. polluter pays, enforcement); a wish for a supporting coherent legislative approach in the EU, creating a level playing field and a limited administrative burden (e.g. using electronic Freight Transport Information (eFTI) and harmonised digital documents); options to reduce/ban degassing in open sea (e.g. Non Methane Volatile Organic Compounds Emission Control Areas –“NMVOC ECAs”); cost-benefit scenarios, environmental and economic sustainability of degassing; differences and synergies with degassing for other purposes than preparing for new cargo, like degassing after decontamination of cargo (e.g. fumigation for pest control with release of phosphine gases); differences and synergies with solutions for processes in chemical plants that could result in emissions to the atmosphere; synergies with transport of dangerous goods policies and

developments.

Activities that can be funded:

The project activities shall include:

- Exploring and quantifying the scope and nature of the issue of degassing of NMVOCs in the EU and quantifying its impacts on health and the environment to the extent possible;
- Drafting an inventory and analysis of existing legislation and initiatives at EU and international level, as well as guidance documents, with relevance for degassing, to explore effectiveness and synergies;
- Drafting an inventory of needs, options, bottlenecks and barriers for degassing and possible alternative solutions to degassing in inland waterway and maritime transport (governance and implementation, technical, legal, environmental, economic, financial);
- Developing options and scenarios for implementation measures and funding, including quantifying costs and benefits (socio-economic, environmental);
- Exploring the possible use of EU financial support mechanisms, taking into account the nature of the stakeholders;
- Setting up a cooperation structure at EU level for support to legislative governance, transfer of best practice, dialogue with industry (i.a. vessel owners and operators, ports, chemical industry, authorities, NGOs, ...);
- Investigating how, by supporting developments and/or ratification of international conventions and participation in the IMO and UNECE fora, the issue of degassing from vessels from non-EU countries can be addressed which would also benefit EU based ship owners and operators operating in EU waters, including the possibility of (regional) "NMVOC Emission Control Areas" (geographic scope, air pollutants, ...);
- Proposing recommendations for funding (including infrastructure and research and innovation needs), implementation measures, governance, and any other issue of relevance.

The project is expected to take into account and, where useful, build on related initiatives (e.g. the CDNI ratification process, UNECE, ADN, IMO (e.g. ECAs), ...), and relevant EU legislation (e.g. on air quality, transport of dangerous goods, eFTI, ...) and guidelines in place or under development, as well as policy initiatives such as the European Green Deal, the Zero Pollution Action Plan, Fit for 55, Circular Economy initiatives and Naiades III, to maximise synergies.

Deliverables must reflect the above-mentioned activities and should also include the following:

- A report on the state of play of transport of NMVOCs in
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	<p>maritime and inland water shipping and the problem of degassing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A report on the needs and barriers for reducing degassing of NMVOCs in the EU, and solutions on how best to address these. • During the project, the set-up of a long-term cooperation structure at EU level for exchanges of best practice and governance, and for discussing relevant implementation options. • Proposals for a harmonised approach for the reduction of degassing in EU inland waters and maritime waters (options and scenarios, with a cost-benefit assessment). • Recommendations on how to best use EU funding instruments to support the reduction of degassing of NMVOCs in the EU, to accompany a transition of a situation of a relative freedom to emit NMVOCs towards a situation in which degassing of these air pollutants is not allowed and alternatives are available (e.g. degassing infrastructure or dedicated tankers). • Recommendations on how best to address and support the reduction of degassing in an international context (e.g. ECAs, IMO actions).
<p>Expected impacts:</p>	<p>The project is expected to contribute to an environmentally and economically sustainable pathway for the reduction of degassing in EU waters, and possibly beyond, in a holistic and consistent manner, with similar approaches everywhere in the EU, providing a level playing field for shipping and for the (petro)chemical industry and an equal protection for all from degassing of NMVOCs throughout the EU. The deliverables after completion of the project will offer a clear handle to reduce emissions of NMVOCs from shipping.</p> <p>The ultimate impact of the project and the follow-up implementation and funding actions will be lower emissions of NMVOCs from shipping, contributing to less air pollution (NMVOCs, but also secondary PM and ozone), and in this way, easier compliance with AAQD and NECD targets, a better health situation for workers on vessels and in ports and of citizens living close to waterways and ports, a reduced impact of NMVOCs on ecosystems, as well as a reduced impact on global warming from shipping.</p>
<p>Specific consortium requirements (if any)</p>	<p>The consortium shall include one or more applicants who have direct involvement in regulating and/or operating inland waterway and maritime transport such as Member States, Regions, (Associations of) inland and maritime ports or individual port authorities, inland and maritime (Associations of) vessel operators and cargo owners and (Petro-) chemical industry associations.</p>
<p>Expected project duration:</p>	<p>30 months</p>
<p>Maximum Funding</p>	<p>Maximum funding rate: 90% - Maximum EU contribution: EUR 1</p>

rate and maximum EU contribution million

9) Testing and promoting high-quality biodiversity certificate and credit schemes in EU wetlands

Sub-Programme: Nature & Biodiversity

Specific priority objectives:

The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework sets the ambition to double biodiversity financing from 2020 to 2030, both nationally and internationally, and includes a concrete commitment to stimulate innovative support instruments for biodiversity. Biodiversity certificates and credits²⁰ can become an increasingly important tool to help landowners and managers obtain a reward for their positive actions for nature, and thus make the restoration, protection and sustainable management of ecosystems a virtuous new business model in Europe.

Although a great deal of technical experience has been gained, thanks, in particular, to LIFE, Horizon and cohesion projects, and the implementation of the Birds²¹, Habitats²² and Water Framework²³ Directives, there is still a lack of economic models for making the protection, restoration and sustainable management of wetlands in Europe a profitable activity for landowners and managers. Certification and credits application are often limited to small-scale projects within pilot-stage initiatives. The current proliferation of biodiversity and climate certification schemes in Europe and elsewhere, combined with the lack of a structured market, is a source of confusion for those who undertake nature-positive actions to produce certificates and credits, and those who purchase them, and even a source of reputational damage, particularly in terms of greenwashing.

The project aims to scan and test the various biodiversity and climate certification systems and credit schemes on EU wetlands to identify the key elements needed to provide the high-quality guarantees expected by investors, buyers and stakeholders including landowners, land managers and local communities.

Specific needs

About 80 % of the European wetlands that existed 100 years ago have

²⁰ Although there is no consensual terminology for biodiversity support instruments, a “biodiversity certificate” correspond to a support of recognition that an activity is providing high-quality nature-positive action, in accordance with a grid of criteria and a certification process, while a “biodiversity credit” is a tradable unit representing a quantified and certified high-quality nature-positive action to be used beyond the mitigation hierarchy.

²¹ 2009/147/CE

²² 92/43/CEE

²³ 2000/60/EC

addressed:

been lost and the trend continues. Given their high ecological value, particularly for migratory species, their importance in pollution control and in preventing water-related disasters, including floods and droughts, and their potential to contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation, wetlands are priority ecosystems where landowners and managers should be remunerated for their positive actions in favour of nature.

In that view, the project shall:

- identify and benchmark the existing and emerging biodiversity certification and credit schemes on wetlands, including as regards the reporting and monitoring aspects.
- propose one or more high-quality biodiversity certification schemes and credit schemes based on the outcome of the action 1) and apply them to a selection of European wetlands that are the subject of nature-positive measures, including Natura 2000 sites and Ramsar sites.
- set up a platform to connect private investors and potential financial intermediaries willing to buy the certificates and/or credits with wetland managers and owners, and support the transactions carried out, including in terms of compliance with the relevant European regulations on corporate sustainability reporting. Where appropriate, transactions may involve climate certificates or credits with biodiversity co-benefits.

The project will contribute to the LIFE Nature and biodiversity sub-programme, while generating synergies with the Climate change mitigation and adaptation sub-programme.

Potential applicants may include :

- 1) wetland owners and managers implementing nature-positive actions and practices,
- 2) companies interested in buying biodiversity certificates or credits from wetlands,
- 3) intermediaries interested in bringing suppliers and buyers of wetland biodiversity certificates and credits together.

While providing additional incomes to wetland managers and owners engaged in nature-positive actions, biodiversity certificates and credits could meet a number of business needs, including reflecting levels of nature-positive investments to reduce exposure to climate and disaster risks, underpinning nature result-based payments, substantiating green claims, upgrading carbon certificates and credits with biodiversity co-benefits, or enhancing the access to the European market and the value for products that are proven not to be linked to

	the degradation of ecosystems.
Activities that can be funded:	<p>The expected deliverables include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) a benchmarking report on biodiversity certification and credit systems for wetlands, 2) a feasibility report and proposal for biodiversity certification or credit systems applicable to European wetlands, 3) a pilot platform for linking investors and buyers of biodiversity certificates or credits from European wetlands, 4) a financial report on the transactions carried out and their terms and conditions, 5) a report on the potential for replication and upscaling across Europe.
Expected impacts:	<p>It is expected that the project, through concrete demonstrator cases, leads to the identification of the key factors needed to make the protection, restoration and sustainable management of wetlands in Europe a profitable and sustainable business model through biodiversity certification and credit schemes. The objective will be to obtain practical feedback in order to identify the relevant stakeholders on the supply and demand sides and to define the market structuring issues and the needs in terms of financing mechanisms. In addition, the project is expected to characterise the regulatory gaps that are hampering the deployment of these schemes and may require political action.</p>
Specific consortium requirements (if any)	<p>To be eligible, the consortium must include at least one representative of each type of applicant identified above, i.e. wetland owners and managers, companies interested in purchasing certificates or credits and intermediaries interested in putting suppliers and buyers of certificates and credits in contact with each other.</p>
Expected project duration:	24 months
Maximum Funding rate and maximum EU contribution	Maximum funding rate: 90% - Maximum EU contribution: EUR 1 million

3. Available budget

The estimated available call budget is EUR 10,300,000.00

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

4. Timetable and deadlines

Timetable and deadlines (indicative)	
Call opening:	18 April 2024
<u>Deadline for submission:</u>	19 September 2024 17:00 CET (Brussels)
Information on evaluation results:	January 2025
Grant Agreement signature:	April 2025

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 [Search Funding & Tenders](#) 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.

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*)
- Application **Form Part B** — contains the technical description of the project (*to be downloaded from the Portal Submission System, completed and then 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** (*to be uploaded*):
 - for single stage:
 - detailed budget table (*mandatory excel template available in the Submission System*)
 - activity reports of last year: *not applicable*
 - participant information (*mandatory doc template available in the Submission System*)
 - letters of support from competent authorities, if available (*not mandatory and not template*)
 - other annexes, if available (*not mandatory*).


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 the 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**.

Proposals are limited to maximum **50 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*).

 Please be aware that some proposal information may be shared with the LIFE programme committee established under Regulation No [182/2011](#)²⁴, 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.

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

6. Eligibility

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.

²⁴ 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).

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 (associated countries) ([list of participating countries](#))²⁵
- 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

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.

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 persons²⁶.

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

Associations and interest groupings — Entities composed of members may participate as 'sole beneficiaries' or 'beneficiaries without legal personality'²⁷. ⚠ 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 participation in the programme (*see list of participating countries above*) may participate in the call and can sign grants if the negotiations are concluded

²⁵ Applicants from countries which requested to be associated to the LIFE Programme may participate in this call for proposals. However, no grant agreement will be signed if the related association agreement is not entered into force by the finalisation of the evaluation process.

²⁶ See Article 197(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

²⁷ For the definitions, see Articles 187(2) and 197(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

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 certain entities (e.g. 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)²⁸. 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).

Following the Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/2506, as of 16th December 2022, no legal commitments (including the grant agreement itself as well as subcontracts, purchase contracts, financial support to third parties etc.) can be signed with Hungarian public interest trusts established under Hungarian Act IX of 2021 or any entity they maintain. Affected entities may continue to apply to calls for proposals. However, in case the Council measures are not lifted, such entities are not eligible to participate in any funded role (beneficiaries, affiliated entities, subcontractors, recipients of financial support to third parties). In this case, co-applicants will be invited to remove or replace that entity and/or to change its status into associated partner. Tasks and budget may be redistributed accordingly.

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

Consortium composition

Consortium composition - please see section 2 above for additional conditions.

Eligible activities

Eligible activities per specific priority are the ones set out in section 2 above (Type of action — Objectives — Themes and priorities — Activities that can be funded).

The following activities are not considered as eligible for funding under this call:

- land purchase
- volunteer work.

Projects must comply with EU policy interests and priorities (*such as environment, social, security, industrial and trade policy, etc.*).

Financial support to third parties is not allowed.

Geographic location (target countries)

Proposals must relate to activities taking place in the eligible countries (*see above*). Projects with activities outside the EU must be necessary to achieve EU environmental and climate objectives and ensure the effectiveness of interventions carried within the EU (e.g. actions

²⁸ 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](#).

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-EU 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 these 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 all consortiums 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 participate²⁹:

- 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 misconduct³⁰ (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 Regulation No [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 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).

²⁹ See Articles 136 and 141 of EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

³⁰ Professional misconduct includes: violation of ethical standards of the profession, wrongful conduct with impact on professional credibility, false declarations/misrepresentation of information, participation in a cartel or other agreement distorting competition, violation of IPR, attempting to influence decision-making processes or obtain confidential information from public authorities to gain advantage.

Applicants will also be rejected if it turns out that³¹:

- 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** 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 against the operational capacity and award criteria (*see sections 7 and 9*).


The committee will rank the proposals as follows:

- 1) The proposals with the highest passing score per specific priority;
- 2) Other passing proposals ranked by score.

When establishing the ranking of the proposals with the highest passing scores per specific priority, a **priority order** will be determined for proposals responding to the same specific priority and with the same score 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.

 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. Compliance will be a pre-condition for signing the grant.

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 are considered to

³¹ See Article 141 EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

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:

single stage:

1. Relevance (0-20 points)

- Relevance of the contribution to one or several of the specific objectives of the LIFE Programme and the targeted sub-programme
- Extent to which the proposal is in line with the description included in the call for proposals, including its specific priorities
- Concept and methodology: soundness of the overall intervention logic

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
- Quality of the measures for the exploitation of project results

3. Quality (0-20 points)

- Clarity, relevance and feasibility of the work plan
- Identification and mobilisation of the relevant stakeholders
- Appropriate geographic focus of the activities
- 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
- Value for money of the proposal

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) score (without bonus)	55	90	N/A

Maximum points 90 points.

Individual thresholds per criterion: 10 points.

Overall threshold: 55 points.

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. Retroactive application can be granted exceptionally for duly justified reasons — but never earlier than the proposal submission date.

Project duration: per specific priority, the duration of the project is set under the section 2. Extensions are possible, if duly justified and through an amendment. Since the exact submission date is not known in advance, it is suggested to add two or three months as a safety margin to the expected project duration.

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 (maximum grant amount): *see section 2 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 as indicated below:

- 90% for the topic LIFE-2024-PLP-NAT-ENV – Projects on Legislative and Policy Priorities in the fields of Nature & Biodiversity and Circular Economy & Quality of Life

(*See section 2 above for further details*).


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
 - 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
- E. Indirect costs

Specific cost eligibility conditions for this call:

- personnel costs:
 - SME owner/natural person unit cost³²: Yes
 - volunteers unit cost: No
- travel and subsistence unit cost³³: No (only actual costs)
- equipment costs: depreciation
- other cost categories:
 - costs for financial support to third parties: not allowed
 - land purchase costs: n/a
- indirect cost flat-rate: 7% of the eligible direct costs (categories A-D, 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:
 - 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 (for example 1 travel/year, 5 days) n/a
 - other ineligible costs: Yes
 - land purchase costs are not eligible
 - Volunteers costs are not eligible

Reporting and payment arrangements

³² 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)7715).

³³ 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).


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 no **interim payments**. There will be one or more **additional prefinancing payments** linked to a prefinancing report.

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 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. The Grant Agreement contains additional record-keeping rules (*Data Sheet, point 3 and art 20*).

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

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 EULogin 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 [Search Funding & Tenders](#) 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 might 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 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

For individual questions on the Portal Submission System, please contact the [IT Helpdesk](#).

Non-IT related questions should be sent to the following email address: CINEA-LIFE-ENQUIRIES@ec.europa.eu.



Please:

- send your questions at the latest 7 days before the submission deadline (*see section 4*)
- 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).
- **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. If you would like to nonetheless benefit from different EU funding opportunities, 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 Model 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 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](#).