



# Programme for the Environment and Climate Action (LIFE)

## Call for proposals

Strategic Nature and Integrated Projects (SNaP/SIP)

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**EUROPEAN CLIMATE, INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENVIRONMENT EXECUTIVE AGENCY (CINEA)**  
CINEA.D – Natural Resources, Climate, Sustainable Blue Economy and Clean Energy  
**CINEA D.2** – LIFE Environment (Nature & Circular Economy)  
**CINEA.D.1** – LIFE Energy + LIFE Climate

## **CALL FOR PROPOSALS**

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## 0. Introduction

This is a call for proposals for EU **action grants** in the fields of Circular Economy and Quality of Life, Nature and Biodiversity and Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation 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<sup>1</sup>](#)).

The call is launched in accordance with the LIFE 2021-2024 Multiannual Work Programme (MAWP)<sup>2</sup> and will be managed by the **European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency (CINEA)** ('Agency').

The call covers the following **topics**:

- **LIFE-2024-STRAT-NAT-SNaP-two-stage - Strategic Nature Projects**
- **LIFE-2024-STRAT-ENV-SIP-two-stage - Strategic Integrated Projects – Environment**
- **LIFE-2024-STRAT-CLIMA-SIP-two-stage - Strategic Integrated Projects - Climate Action**

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

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

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

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

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<sup>1</sup> 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).

<sup>2</sup> Commission Implementing Decision C(2021)4997 final of 9 July 2021 on the financing of the LIFE Programme and the adoption of the work programme for the years 2021 to 2024.

- 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:
  - detailed annotations on all the provisions in the Grant Agreement you will have to sign in order to obtain the grant (*including cost eligibility, payment schedule, accessory obligations, etc.*).

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

## 1. Background

### *What is the LIFE Programme?*

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

As such, it is one of the key contributors to the European Green Deal<sup>3</sup> which aims to:

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

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

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

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

Environment:

- sub-programme Nature and Biodiversity

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<sup>3</sup> Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: The European Green Deal (COM [\(2019\)640](#) final).

- sub-programme Circular Economy and Quality of Life

Climate Action:

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

### *Nature and Biodiversity*

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, 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](#)<sup>4</sup> and the reduction of hazardous waste in view of the EU's commitment under the [Basel Convention](#)<sup>5</sup>
- 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
- 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, these activities are in line with the EU Mission 'A Soil Deal for Europe.

### *Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation*

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

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

This sub-programme will contribute to the transformation of the EU into a climate- neutral and resilient society, by supporting the implementation of the EU's climate policy and preparing the EU for the climate action challenges in the coming years and decades working also in synergy with the EU Mission 'Adaptation to Climate Change' where relevant.

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<sup>4</sup> 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).

<sup>5</sup> Basel Convention on the control of transboundary movements of hazardous wastes and their disposal.

### Clean Energy Transition - not concerned by this call

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

- to develop, demonstrate and promote innovative techniques, methods and approaches for reaching the objectives of the EU legislation and policy on the transition to sustainable renewable energy and increased energy efficiency, and to contribute to the knowledge base and to the application of best practice
- to support the development, implementation, monitoring and enforcement of the EU legislation and policy on the transition to sustainable renewable energy or increased energy efficiency, 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 on the transition to renewable energy or increased energy efficiency 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 an energy-efficient, renewable energy-based, climate-neutral and -resilient economy by funding coordination and support actions across Europe. These actions, of high EU added-value, aim at breaking market barriers that hamper the socio-economic transition to sustainable energy, typically engaging multiple small and medium-size stakeholders, multiple actors including local and regional public authorities and non-profit organisations, and involving consumers.

The sub-programme will contribute to the implementation of the energy-related actions of the Green Deal, including the 'Renovation wave' initiative for the building sector, and will give due consideration to territories not connected to the European grids such as the EU outermost regions. It will contribute to the Just Transition objectives by accompanying the territories and the groups of citizens negatively affected by the transition from fossil fuels to clean energy, by building capacity of actors and fostering clean energy investments, mainly in energy efficiency and locally available, sustainable, renewable energy sources. Activities related to biofuels will not be included.

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

### Type of action

The topics under this call for proposals concern LIFE Strategic Integrated Projects (SIPs) and Strategic Nature Projects (SNaPs).

#### **SNaPs**

Under the sub-programme for Nature and Biodiversity:

SNaPs target the implementation of the following types of plans, strategies or action plans required by specific EU environmental legislation or policy:

- the Prioritised Action Frameworks (PAF) pursuant to Article 8 of the Habitats Directive [92/43](#)<sup>6</sup> and
- other plans or strategies adopted at international, national, regional or multiregional level by nature and biodiversity authorities, that implement EU

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<sup>6</sup> Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (OJ L 206, 22.7.1992, p. 7).

nature and/or biodiversity policy or legislation and include specific and measurable actions, or targets, with a clear timeline and budget.

SNaPs should aim at the full implementation of the targeted plan/strategy/action plan and, together with the complementary measures needed to achieve full implementation, remove all remaining administrative, financial, structural and other barriers for its implementation.

They should support the plan/strategy/action plan on a large territorial scale, meaning regional, multi-regional, national or transnational.

They should typically be coordinated by the authority responsible for the implementation of the plan/strategy/action plan (*see consortium composition requirements in section 6*) and must involve the stakeholders that are instrumental for its successful implementation.

SNaPs should also include a mobilisation and coordination mechanism for additional funding sources for the complementary measures (EU, national, private, etc.).

Considering their complexity, SNaPs will be implemented based on a revolving programming mechanism structured in phases (i.e. Phase 1, Phase 2, etc.). Each phase should normally last at least 3 years, to reduce administrative burden.

## **SIPs**

SIPs target the implementation of the following types of plans, strategies or action plans required by specific EU environmental, climate or energy legislation or policy:

Under the sub-programme Circular Economy and Quality of Life:

- Circular Economy: national or regional circular economy action plans, strategies, roadmaps or similar, which are officially approved, include specific and measurable actions, or targets, with a clear timeline and are in line with or
- complement the objectives of the [EU Circular Economy Action Plan](#)<sup>7</sup>.
- Waste: national and regional Waste Management Plans (WMPs) and/or Waste Prevention Programmes (WPPs) pursuant to Articles 28 and 29 of the Waste Framework Directive [2008/98/EC](#)<sup>8</sup>.
- Water: River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs) pursuant to Annex VII to the Water Framework Directive [2000/60/EC](#)<sup>9</sup> Flood Risk Management Plans (FRMPs) pursuant to the Floods Directive [2007/60/EC](#)<sup>10</sup>, Marine Strategies pursuant to the Marine Strategy Framework Directive [2008/56/EC](#)<sup>11</sup>.
- Air: Air Quality Plans pursuant to the Ambient Air Quality Directive [2008/50/EC](#)<sup>12</sup> or National Air Pollution Control Programmes (NAPCP) pursuant to the National

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<sup>7</sup> Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions; A new Circular Economy Action Plan For a cleaner and more competitive Europe (COM/2020/98 final).

<sup>8</sup> Directive 2008/98/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 November 2008 on waste and repealing certain Directives (Text with EEA relevance) (OJ L 312, 22.11.2008, p. 3–30).

<sup>9</sup> Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2000 establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy (OJ L 327, 22.12.2000, p. 1).

<sup>10</sup> Directive 2007/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2007 on the assessment and management of flood risks (OJ L 288, 6.11.2007, p. 27).

<sup>11</sup> Directive 2008/56/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 June 2008 establishing a framework for community action in the field of marine environmental policy (Marine Strategy Framework Directive) (Text with EEA relevance) (OJ L 164, 25.6.2008, p. 19).

<sup>12</sup> Directive 2008/50/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 May 2008 on ambient air quality and cleaner air for Europe (OJ L 152, 11.6.2008, p. 1).

Emission Ceilings Directive [2016/2284](#)<sup>13</sup>.

Under the sub-programme for Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation:

- National Energy and Climate Plans (NECP) pursuant to Regulation [2018/1999](#) on the Governance of the Energy Union and Climate Action <sup>14</sup>.
- National adaptation strategies and plans pursuant to Article 5 of the Regulation 2021/1119 ('European Climate Law')<sup>15</sup>, or regional adaptation strategies or action plans.
- Urban or community-based action plans pioneering the transition to a climate neutral and/or climate resilient society, including climate-neutral cities plans and actions, for instance in the context of the EU Mission 'Climate neutral and smart cities' and Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans.
- National, regional or industry-/sector-specific greenhouse gas mitigation strategies or economy roadmaps contributing to climate neutrality.

SIPs should aim at the full implementation of the targeted plan/strategy/action plan and, together with the complementary measures needed to achieve full implementation, remove all remaining administrative, financial, structural and other barriers for its implementation.

They should support the plan/strategy/action plan on a large territorial scale, meaning regional, multi-regional, national or transnational. A multi-city approach or smaller territorial scale may also be acceptable for SIPs dealing with air quality management as long as the project delivers substantial impact.

They should typically be coordinated by the authority responsible for the implementation of the plan/strategy/action plan (*see consortium composition requirements in section 6*) and must involve the stakeholders that are instrumental for its successful implementation.

SIPs should also include a mobilisation and coordination mechanism for additional funding sources for the complementary measures (EU, national, private, etc.).

Considering their complexity, SIPs will be implemented based on a revolving programming mechanism structured in phases (i.e. Phase 1, Phase 2, etc.). Each phase should normally last at least 3 years, to reduce administrative burden.

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<sup>13</sup> Directive (EU) 2016/2284 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 December 2016 on the reduction of national emissions of certain atmospheric pollutants (OJ L 344, 17.12.2016, p.1).

<sup>14</sup> Regulation (EU) 2018/1999 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2018 on the Governance of the Energy Union and Climate Action (OJ L 328, 21.12.2018, p. 1).

<sup>15</sup> Regulation (EU) 2021/1119 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 June 2021 establishing the framework for achieving climate neutrality and amending Regulations (EC) No 401/2009 and (EU) 2018/1999 ('European Climate Law')

## **2.1 LIFE-2024-STRAT-NAT-SNaP-two-stage - Strategic Nature Projects**

### Objectives

The objective of a SNaP project is to support the achievement of EU nature and biodiversity objectives by implementing coherent programmes of action in Member States in order to mainstream those objectives and priorities into other policies and financing instruments. This will include the coordinated implementation of:

- Prioritised Action Frameworks (PAF) and/or
- other plans or strategies adopted at international, national, multiregional or regional level by nature and biodiversity authorities, that implement EU nature and/or biodiversity policy or legislation, through coordination of the available funding and mobilisation of additional funding and with the active engagement of all the relevant stakeholders (see "*additional conditions*" further down within this topic).

In this way, a SNaP project will support effective mainstreaming of nature and biodiversity objectives and priorities into other policies and financing instruments.

### Scope — Activities that can be funded

SNAPs should target the implementation of PAFs and/or the other Plans and Strategies listed below. Please note that a single SNaP can target both a PAF and another Plan/Strategy.

A SNaP full proposal cannot be submitted in the absence of a PAF or other eligible plan approved/adopted at the appropriate level and, if relevant, submitted to the European Commission which considered it of acceptable quality.

Should the target plan(s) require a major modification regarding e.g. selection of conservation measures or financial architecture, e.g. as a result of the operational programmes negotiations, the relevant authority should submit both the currently applicable plan plus the latest version of the new plan or explanation justifying the expected changes and attach them together with the full proposal.

Depending on the administrative structures of the Member States, PAFs or other eligible plans cover either an entire country or a region. This has a direct impact on the geographical scope of a SNaP as in most cases they would address the implementation of a single plan. Nevertheless, applicants may find it appropriate to submit a SNaP covering territories falling under the scope of more than one plan of the same or a neighbouring country.

The applicants should demonstrate how the project aims at the implementation of the target plan. To this effect the project should include actions that may facilitate the mobilisation and use of other complementary funds that can finance the implementation of actions or measures beyond those supported by the SNaP – both as regards scope and timeframe.

This means in practice that the SNaP shall include (i) a combination of actions that contribute directly to the implementation of measures – and achievement of targets – of the target plan foreseen to be financed by LIFE; and (ii) horizontal actions that facilitate the full implementation of the plan.

SNaP must include specific actions to mainstream the objectives of the targeted plan or plans into other policies and financing instruments.

Further to the general objectives of SNaPs, the proposal should therefore present information on:

- the expected level of implementation of the target plan as a direct consequence of the actions foreseen in the SNaP or through the complementary actions financed by other means mobilised in parallel to the SNaP;
- the area covered by measures, the number of sites, the relevance of these sites in terms of species and habitat types within their bio-geographical regions;
- the expected improvement of the conservation status of species and habitats with particular attention to those habitats and species that are considered as priority and/or those that have been reported as being in unfavorable conservation status; and
- the expected improvement on the long term capacity to monitor and assess the status of species and habitats of EU importance (art 11 and 17 of the Habitats Directive).
- actions planned in order to effectively mainstream nature conservation objectives in the territory targeted by the SNAP into other policy areas and financing instruments

Proposals should present comprehensive projects that will deliver on their core objective and do so in a way that also delivers benefits for other environmental and climate objectives<sup>16</sup>.

These additional benefits can include contributions to the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 as well as the achievement of 'good environmental status' under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, or achieving Water Framework Directive objectives like the:

- evaluation, assessment and restoration of ecosystems and their services,
- increase of the contribution of agriculture and forestry to biodiversity,
- reduction of the impact of fisheries and of other uses of marine and coastal natural resources on biodiversity,
- monitoring, prevention, eradication and control of invasive alien species
- monitoring and conservation of pollinating insects.

#### Implementation of PAF:

As regards PAF implementation, SNaPs should support the further development, implementation and management of the Natura 2000 network, in particular via the development, testing, demonstration and application of conservation methods and practices, improving knowledge base about the nature values of the sites, raising awareness and improving administrative capacity of the beneficiaries and management authorities. These SNaPs may include Green Infrastructure<sup>17</sup> actions if referred to in the PAF, so as to, for instance, improve the structural and functional connectivity of the Natura 2000 sites or the condition of ecosystems and the services they provide<sup>18</sup>.

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In particular the marine environment in accordance with the objectives of Directive 2008/56/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 June 2008 establishing a framework for Community action in the field of marine environmental policy (Marine Strategy Framework Directive), OJ L 164, 25.6.2008, p. 19.

<sup>17</sup> Green Infrastructure (GI) is a strategically planned network of natural and semi-natural areas with other environmental features designed and managed to deliver a wide range of ecosystem services. It incorporates green spaces (or blue if aquatic ecosystems are concerned) and other physical features in terrestrial (including coastal) and marine areas. On land, GI is present in rural and urban settings. See <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A52013DC0249>

<sup>18</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/knowledge/ecosystem\\_assessment/index\\_en.htm](https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/knowledge/ecosystem_assessment/index_en.htm)

The authorities that elaborated the PAF normally indicated the LIFE programme among the funds that can contribute to achieving targets of the Biodiversity Strategy. Other complementary funds (ERDF; EAFRD, INTERREG, Horizon Europe, EMFF) are usually listed as well. The applicants of SNaPs can in principle base themselves on these indicative funding arrangements when designing the SNaP itself.

SNaPs are expected to implement a chosen set of actions foreseen to be financed by LIFE in the corresponding PAF or PAFs of a country or region (or a combination of countries/regions). For this reason the PAF should be officially adopted at the latest by the full proposal submission deadline for the proposal to be eligible.

Eligibility of SNaPs targeting a PAF which was already the target of a prior nature Integrated Project (IP): a follow-up SNAP proposal targeting the same plan as a past or ongoing nature Integrated Project (IP) can only be eligible, under the following conditions:

- No double funding: LIFE cannot fund twice the same activity, so the proposal should clearly show that this will not be the case.
- The SNAP proposal must demonstrate a clear added value compared to the past or ongoing nature IP, considering that the IP was already designed to catalyse the full implementation of the target PAF.

#### Implementation of other plans/strategies:

Full implementation of PAF is the key element in most SNaPs. Applicants are strongly encouraged, however, to also consider in their SNaP a contribution to the full implementation of other plans or strategies beyond the scope of EU Birds and Habitats Directives. This is particularly the case for the EU Regulation (EU) 1143/2014 on Invasive Alien Species but may also concern other plans in particular where those are stemming from the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030. Transnational approaches are also encouraged in this context.

SNaPs should support the implementation of the EU biodiversity policy and legislation (indicatively the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, EU Pollinators Initiative, Regulation (EU) 1143/2014 on invasive alien species), in particular via the development, testing, demonstration and application of relevant methods and practices, developing long term capacity for species monitoring, improving knowledge base, raising awareness and improving administrative capacity of the beneficiaries and management authorities.

SNaPs are expected to implement a chosen set of actions foreseen to be co-financed by LIFE in the corresponding plan or strategy of a country or region (or a combination of countries/regions). Due to this requirement, a SNaP full proposal cannot be submitted in the absence of an overarching plan or strategy adopted at the appropriate level by nature and biodiversity authorities, such as national Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) developed under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Plans or strategies addressing specific areas under those overarching plans or strategies could be supported even if they are in the planning or development stage at the time of submission of the concept note, but they need to be officially adopted at the latest by the full proposal submission deadline. Examples include the following:

- National or Regional Pollinator/Insect Strategies and/or Action Plans
- National or Regional Plans for Green Infrastructure Networks
- National or Regional Restoration Plans, National or Regional Urban Greening Plans, etc. as called for in the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030
- National or Regional Plans or strategies supporting implementation of the objectives of the Regulation (EU) 1143/2014 on Invasive Alien Species

Depending on the administrative structures of the Member States, these plans or strategies cover either an entire country or a region. This has a direct impact on the geographical scope of a SNaP. Nevertheless, applicants may find it appropriate to submit a SNaP covering territories falling under the scope of more than one plan or strategy of the same or a neighboring country.

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

#### Expected impact

- After the project end (3-5 years after): catalysing full implementation of the PAF and/or other eligible plan(s)/strategy(ies)/action plan(s) as per the “objectives”.
- Significant contribution to the favourable conservation status of natural habitats and species of EU importance maintained and/or restored as per measures identified in the target plan.
- Significant contribution to the reduction of pressures on habitats and species and restored degraded ecosystems as per measures identified in the targeted plan(s)/strategy(ies)/action plan(s).

At stage 2 (full proposal), applicants should review relevant indicators (KPI) in Part C of the eGrant application and complete them with the estimated impact of the project. Part C data should be coherent with the description of impacts of section 2 of Part B of the Application Form.

In case Part C does not include impact indicators that are important for your project (e.g.: NOx emission reduction in case of Air quality projects) you should make use of the indicator “Other project specific KPIs” in Part C and provide a relevant description of such indicators in section 2 of Part B of the Application Form.

More detailed KPI information will be requested during the project implementation time.

#### Funding rate

Strategic Nature Projects (SNaPs) — maximum 60% funding rate.

#### Additional conditions

- Please **check as well** the information in the **Frequently Asked Questions** (see Chapter 12 “Help” of this document).

Please note that at full proposal stage (latest by the time of submission of the full proposal), the targeted plan/strategy/action plan should be approved by the relevant authorities in your country. Moreover, if the targeted plan/strategy/action plan has a legal obligation to be submitted to the European Commission, it should be reviewed by the European Commission and considered at least of acceptable quality.

#### Ongoing and recurring activities

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

during the project lifetime and how their continuation will be financed after the end of the project.

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

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

#### Mainstreaming - Activities aiming at establishing the targets and or measures for other strategies not targeted by SNaP

SNaPs could include activities aiming at establishing the targets and/or measures for other strategies in order to facilitate mainstreaming and catalysing financing from other financial instruments, provided that this is well justified by the scope and objectives of the project.

Mainstreaming in the context of SnaPs means adapting other policies, actions and/or changing the rules for other funds to stop some of the drivers which are leading to failure of the target plans. The mainstreaming actions should be linked to the objectives of the targeted plan (and thus facilitate its full implementation), but not necessary explicitly mentioned in the plan. In particular, they can tackle other policies or instruments which work against the objectives of the plan. For instance when the plan is about preserving and restoring certain habitats, a relevant mainstreaming action would be to allow the Ministry of Environment to influence the development of land use planning (LUP) instruments, to ensure that they are compatible with the habitat protection (assuming that LUP is one of the factors presently driving degradation of those habitats). Similarly it could be actions by the beneficiaries or partners to review and revise the eligibility rules for financing instruments in other ministries (incl. but not limited to agriculture, regional development, industrial development, etc. plans).

#### Participation in the Natura 2000 Biogeographical Process

Applicants are strongly encouraged to consider how the SNaP can facilitate active participation of the Member State in the relevant biogeographical process.

In particular, the applicants should consider how the SNaP will support the implementation of the biogeographical roadmaps for cooperation and exchange of best practices between all parties involved in Natura 2000 at biogeographical level. In addition, SNaPs could be used by the Member States for actions at biogeographical level to reach the protected area targets and achieve the target on improving 30% of species or habitats conservation statuses in line with the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030.

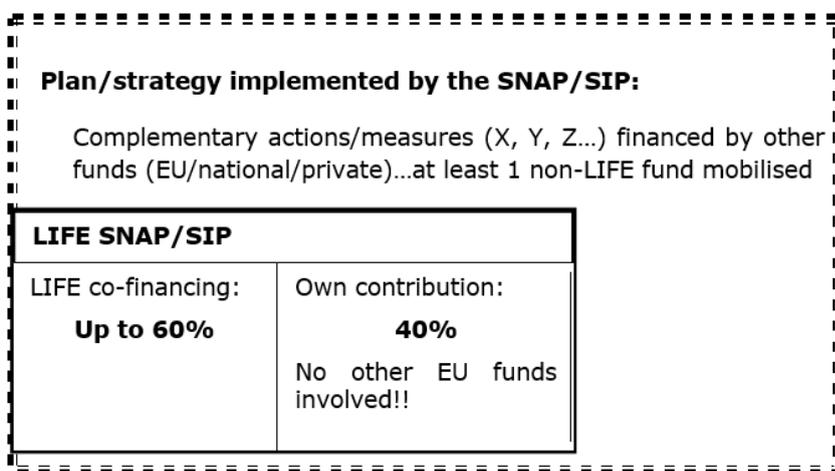
#### Platform meetings

SNaPs are encouraged to organise platform meetings in coordination with other SNaPs on similar topics. LIFE platform meetings bring together projects working on a specific theme (or geographic area), to exchange experiences, to align to policy priorities and to extract common lessons and experiences. Furthermore, SNaPs are encouraged to invite beneficiaries in other SNaPs on the same topic to participate in workshops or conferences organised by them where appropriate and useful.

#### Requirements related to complementary funds mobilisation/coordination

Please remember that a SNaP **must** be able to **mobilise at least one** relevant Union, national or private funding source other than LIFE to finance complementary actions needed for the implementation of the targeted plan or strategy.

The general concept of a SNaP is illustrated in the following schematic diagram:



Accordingly, applicants should design the SNaP by **selecting from the targeted plan or strategy a coherent set of measures or actions for which LIFE is the most appropriate funding source**. Other complementary measures or actions should be largely financed using other (Union, national or private) funding sources and should be implemented in complement to the LIFE interventions.

In particular, the LIFE Programme should be complementary to **other major Union funding** programmes, including the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, INTERREG, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and Horizon Europe (the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation).

In addition to these EU funding sources, international (e.g. EFTA, UNESCO funds, etc.), national or private donors will be equally considered. Please note that international, national, and private funds (excluding EU funds) can also contribute co-financing to the 40% of the eligible costs of the SNaP itself, which have to be provided by its beneficiaries.

Please **check** in the [LIFE projects database](#) examples of ongoing integrated projects to see examples of coordinated or mobilised complementary funds.

Complementary actions shall always implement **the same large scale plan or strategy** that the SNaP is targeting. This **complementarity** could take the form of:

- **Actions similar** to those financed by the SNaP, but implemented in **a different geographical area**.
- **Actions different** from but **complementary** to those implemented in the framework of the SNaP, implemented in the **same geographical area** as the SNaP.

In most cases, in order to ensure the largest possible impact by the SNaP and complementary actions, **a combination** of the above described **two** forms of complementarity is expected.

The quality of the coordination with other funding mechanism(s) and the level of mobilisation of complementary funds as well as the likelihood of their actual mobilisation and their functional link to the plan to be implemented will have an impact on the evaluation of the **EU added value** of the SNaP.

It is therefore important to highlight that for the purposes of the SNaP proposal, complementary funding can only be considered to be **"mobilised"** if such funding:

- has not been granted to or spent by one of the beneficiaries of the SNaP before the launch of this call for applications. In exceptional cases and having explicit justifications from the applicants, funds granted before that date can also be accepted but under no circumstances will funds granted or spent before the launch of the LIFE2022 call (17/05/2022) be accepted; and
- has been committed/confirmed by the relevant funding source by the time of the submission of the full proposal and evidenced by **a formal letter of intent (i.e. Annex "Complementary Funding Declaration")** signed by the competent body representing the funding source **clearly confirming the availability or the actual commitment of the complementary funding**; or
- in the absence of an actual commitment/confirmation by the time of the full proposal, **a formal letter of intent** has been signed by the competent body representing the funding source referred to by the applicant, **confirming the potential eligibility of the actions proposed by the applicant** for funding from this source and indicating **the timing and likelihood of a future funding commitment**.

If, for objective reasons, such as the timing of application periods of other funds, these general requirements for "mobilisation of additional funding sources" are not met, the applicants must provide – at the latest **with their full proposal** – an appropriate justification for the lack of a formal commitment or letter of intent regarding the funds concerned.

**In any case, for the application to be eligible at full proposal stage at least one of the following conditions must be met:**

- **one letter of intent (Annex "Complementary Funding Declaration") clearly confirming the availability or the actual commitment of the complementary funding to be mobilised**, signed by the competent body representing the funding source, **is submitted with the full proposal**;
- proof is provided of the granting of complementary funds after the launch of the LIFE2022 call (17/05/2022).

It is essential that, prior to submitting their SNaP Concept Note and full proposal, beneficiaries confirm whether the actions proposed within the SNaP itself **are not already or could be more appropriately funded** through other EU funds.

**Besides the mobilised funding** (i.e. signed Annex(es) "Complementary Funding Declaration"), most likely, there will be a range of complementary funds relevant to the SNaP and the targeted plan or strategy that are and will be implemented in parallel to the SNaP. The level of engagement/coordination of the SNaP with these funds will differ from project to project. In any case, **these funds are very relevant and should be listed** in the proposal and counted towards the complementary funds of the SNaP, as they will help to implement the plan or strategy.

In the application, when speaking about complementary actions the primary focus should be on actions financed by funds genuinely mobilised by the SNaP itself, with a secondary focus on complementary actions that are, if not mobilised, actively coordinated with the SNaP actions. Actions and funds neither genuinely mobilised nor actively coordinated by the SNaP shall only be mentioned in case they are needed for the provision of comprehensive information on the implementation of the plan.

Attention: during the SNaP, other LIFE projects may be part of the complementary actions contributing to the plan's implementation. LIFE funding for these projects will not be however considered as "mobilised" for the purpose of meeting eligibility criteria.

### Stakeholder involvement

Appropriate involvement of all the concerned stakeholders is essential to ensure successful implementation of the targeted plan or strategy and sustainability of project results. In the respective section in the application please state the stakeholders the proposal intends to involve and how. Please indicate what kind of input you expect from them and how their involvement will be relevant, used in and/or needed for the project. Also provide your arguments in case main stakeholders are not involved as beneficiaries. In case it is impossible to involve one of the key stakeholder groups, a dedicated action aiming at removing barrier for their effective involvement in the plan or strategy implementation should be included in the SNaP.

### Project management & coordination with complementary funds

The workload linked to management, coordination and internal/external reporting of this kind of projects is frequently underestimated by applicants, please allocate enough human resources from both the coordinator and rest of beneficiaries.

The technical project management may be partially outsourced, provided the coordinating beneficiary retains full and day to day control of the project. The proposal should clearly describe how this control will be guaranteed. The project management structure must be clearly presented (including an organigram and details of the responsibilities of each person and organisation involved). It is strongly recommended that the project management staff have previous experience in project management and that the project manager is employed full-time.

Coordination/Working Group – or a similar arrangement - with the managers of the relevant complementary funds is expected to be established to improve, over the long-term, the mobilisation and coordination of these funds for the implementation of the targeted plan/strategy.

### Replicability & transferability

Replicability and transferability is the potential of the project to be replicated in other regions of the same Member State or in other Member States, or in neighbouring countries if relevant to achieve EU environmental and climate objectives, during and after the implementation of the SNaP. Successful replication and transferability requires a clear plan at the outset, an evaluation strategy, a capacity building strategy (skills, communication, funding) and a legacy strategy that will reach critical mass during the project and/or in a short and medium term perspective after the end of the LIFE project.

This goes beyond transfer of knowledge and networking, and involves putting the techniques, methods or strategies developed or applied in the project into practice elsewhere. It may be achieved by implementing some of the SNaP actions only within a limited part of the project area and replicating those via complementary actions in the entire area covered by the project and by the plan.

### Polluter pays principle & eligibility of actions

LIFE funding will not co-finance clean-up actions that derive from the application of the polluter pays principle. Such actions for which this principle should be applied will not be eligible for funding.

### Land purchase

The eligibility of any costs for land purchase is subject to the conditions listed below. The applicant must address each of these conditions in his proposal, explaining how each condition is met or will be met during the project.

(i) The land purchase must be clearly related to the objectives of the project.

- (ii) The land purchased must contribute to improving, maintaining or restoring the integrity of the Natura 2000 network.
- (iii) The purchase is the only or most cost-effective way of achieving the desired conservation outcome.
- (iv) The purchased land is reserved in the long-term for uses consistent with the objectives set out in Article 3 of the LIFE Regulation, through the most appropriate form of legal protection.
- (v) The beneficiaries must ensure that the sales contract / notary act and/or entry in the land register includes a guarantee that the land is assigned definitively (without time limitation) to nature conservation purposes. Where both possibilities exist (sales contract and land registry entry), the beneficiaries must use the option that offers the strongest long-term protection. Note that at the latest with the final report, the beneficiaries will have to submit a copy of the sales contract and/or entry in the land register including the above mentioned guarantee. Should they fail to provide such documents, the corresponding land purchase costs and associated costs will be considered ineligible. For countries where it would be illegal to include such a guarantee in both the land register and in the sale contract, the granting authority may accept an equivalent guarantee, provided it offers the same legal level of protection in the long term.
- (vi) The land must be purchased by one of the project beneficiaries who is either a well-established private organisation (e.g. nature conservation NGO or other) or a public body with nature conservation responsibility, and must remain in its ownership after the end of the project.
- (vii) The proposal must demonstrate that each beneficiary that will carry out land purchase has the necessary competence and experience in land purchase for nature conservation, and that the planned target is realistic within the time framework of the project.
- (viii) If the purchasing body is a private organisation, its statutes must include a provision that, in case of dissolution, the land will be transferred to another legal body primarily active in the field of nature conservation (e.g. another conservation NGO or appropriate public body).
- (ix) Evidence must be provided in the proposal that the purchase price is consistent with the current market prices for the type of land and the region concerned.
- (x) Evidence must be provided that the land purchased was not owned by a public authority in the 24 months prior to the project application date.
- (xi) The purchased land must be the subject, during the project, of specific restoration and/or active management or restrictions of use that go beyond legal obligations and existing restrictions that could not be imposed without purchasing the land. The purchase of land that is in excellent conservation status (i.e. that requires no restoration or specific management or restrictions of use) is only eligible if strategic to the objectives of the project.

Land lease, purchase of rights and one-off compensation payments:

The same conditions for land purchase listed above apply here, as and where appropriate, to these types of payments. The applicant must address each of these conditions in the proposal, explaining how each condition is met or will be met during the project. The duration of a lease must be sufficient to guarantee the durability of the conservation investment (e.g. 30 years or longer). See also the General Conditions of

the [Model Grant Agreement](#)<sup>19</sup>.

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

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

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

For the exception to be valid, it must be explicitly foreseen in the project and beneficiaries must demonstrate that it is the only cost-effective solution to reach the objectives of the project. Moreover, it is recommended that local authorities re-invest the income from such payments into conservation or public awareness-raising measures for Natura 2000 network or for achieving the targets of the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2030. Those proposals which include a commitment from the local authorities in question to do so will be considered for a higher scoring on EU added value in the project evaluation process and may therefore have a higher chance of being selected for co-funding.

#### Indicative distribution of SNaPs per Member State

The applicants are invited to coordinate with other potential applicants from their Member States with the support of the LIFE National Contact Points (NCPs) in view of the following indicative budget allocation for SNaPs in the period from 2021-2027, as defined in the LIFE Multiannual Work Programme:

<b>Reference :</b> <b>Eurostat data</b>	<b>Countries</b>	<b>Coefficient</b>
Smaller-sized Member States (less than 30.000 km <sup>2</sup> )	Cyprus, Luxembourg, Malta, Slovenia	1
Average-sized Member States (between 30.000 and 100.000 km <sup>2</sup> )	Austria, Belgium, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovakia	2
Larger-sized Member States (more than 100.000 km <sup>2</sup> ):	Bulgaria, Germany, Greece, Spain, Finland, France, Italy, Poland, Romania, Sweden	3

The coefficient attributed to each group of countries designates the indicative size per country of the EU co-funding to be provided through SNaPs in the period 2021-2027. A coefficient of 1 indicatively corresponds to EUR 10 million of EU cofinancing, a coefficient of 2 to EUR 20 million of EU cofinancing and EUR 30 million for a coefficient of 3.

<sup>19</sup> The Model Grant Agreement that will be used (and all other relevant templates and guidance documents) can be found on [Portal Reference Documents](#).

Whereas all Member States are encouraged to submit one single large SNaP proposal the financial volume of which should be based on the above table, LIFE support may be divided into two or more SNaPs in Member States where this is duly justified. To ensure the highest possible geographical coverage of EU Member States by SNaPs by 2027, regional authorities considering to submit a SNaP are strongly encouraged to team up with other regions when preparing their proposal.

## **2.2 LIFE-2024-STRAT-ENV-SIP-two-stage - Strategic Integrated Projects - Environment**

### Objectives

Applicants should target the implementation of one of the following plans/strategies:

- 1) Circular Economy: National or Regional Circular Economy Action Plans, Strategies, Roadmaps or similar, which are officially approved, and which include specific and measurable actions, or targets, with a clear timeline and are in line with or complementing the objectives of the EU Circular Economy Action Plan.
- 2) Waste: National and regional Waste Management Plans (WMPs) pursuant to Article 28 of the Waste Framework Directive and/or Waste Prevention Programmes (WPPs) as requested by Article 29 of the Waste Framework Directive.
- 3) Water: River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs) pursuant to Annex VII to the Water Framework Directive, Flood Risk Management Plans (FRMPs) pursuant to the Floods Directive or Marine Strategies pursuant to the Marine Strategy Framework Directive.
- 4) Air: Air Quality Plans pursuant to the Air Quality Directive or National Air Pollution Control Programmes (NAPCP) pursuant to the National Emission Ceilings Directive.

### Scope — Activities that can be funded

#### Circular Economy SIPs:

These SIPs shall be designed to support the application, development, testing and demonstration of integrated approaches for the implementation of National or Regional Circular Economy Action Plans, Strategies, Roadmaps or similar.

Such Plans or Strategies will be considered as eligible for this SIP topic provided that they:

- are officially approved,
- include specific and measurable actions, or targets, with a clear timeline and
- are in line with or complement the objectives of the EU Circular Economy Action Plan.

The extent to which each proposal contributes to one or several of the general and specific objectives of LIFE as set out in Article 3 of the LIFE Regulation and section 2.2 of the LIFE multiannual work programme 2021-2024 will be evaluated.

#### Waste SIPs:

These SIPs shall be designed to support the application, development, testing and demonstration of integrated approaches for the implementation of the WMPs as required by Article 28 of the Waste Framework Directive and/or WPPs as requested by Article 29 of the Waste Framework Directive.

With the chosen set of actions, the Waste SIP proposals should demonstrate their EU added value with regard to their contribution to the implementation of the waste hierarchy (Article 4 of the Waste Framework Directive), the achievement of the recycling targets as foreseen in Article 11 of the Waste Framework Directive and additional targets included in the EU waste legislation, as well as the implementation of necessary measures to support those objectives.

The extent to which each proposal contributes to one or several of the general and specific objectives of LIFE as set out in Article 3 of the LIFE Regulation and section 2.2 of the LIFE multiannual work programme 2021-2024 will be evaluated.

Further to the general objectives of SIPs, the proposals should therefore address the following aspects:

- the expected level of implementation of the WMPs/WPPs as a direct consequence of the actions foreseen in the SIP or through the complementary actions financed by other means mobilised in parallel to the SIP in particular for investments for collection, sorting and treatment of waste;
- the impact on the reduction of waste generation, the re-use of products and preparing for re-use activities, increase in separate collection (in particular for paper, glass, metal, plastic and bio-waste), recycling, material recovery, phasing out landfilling, reduction of littering and reduction or adequate treatment of hazardous waste;
- the implementation of the Landfill Directive, Waste Shipment Regulation and specific waste streams directives, like the WEEE Directive, Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive;
- the implementation of economic instruments in support of sustainable waste management (extended producer responsibility, Pay-As-You-Throw schemes, landfill/incineration taxes);
- the development of communication, education and awareness-raising actions in support of the above mentioned objectives (including use of novel techniques such as social media, interaction with schools etc.) ;
- the expected improvement/consolidation of the long term capacity to monitor and assess the generation of municipal waste, its composition, its treatment according to the waste hierarchy, as well as the reinforcement of controls on movements (shipments) of waste;
- where applicable, the contribution to the implementation of the recommendations to the Member States included in the [Roadmaps elaborated under the compliance-promotion exercises in support of the implementation of the European waste legislation<sup>20</sup>](#).

### Water SIPs

The extent to which proposals for Water SIPs contribute to one or several of the general and specific objectives of LIFE as set out in Article 3 of the LIFE Regulation and section 2.2 of the LIFE multiannual work programme 2021-2024 will be evaluated.

### Considerations relevant only to water SIPs targeting river basin management plans (RBMPs):

These SIPs shall support the targeted implementation of measures that will deliver progress towards achievement of Water Framework Directive good status/potential objectives, in line with RBMP established in Member States pursuant to the Water Framework Directive.

SIPs should implement a chosen set of measures identified as necessary in the RBMP in

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<sup>20</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/environment/topics/waste-and-recycling/implementation-waste-framework-directive\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/environment/topics/waste-and-recycling/implementation-waste-framework-directive_en)

a whole river basin or large sub-catchment.

The projects should focus on large scale (e.g. major sub-catchment or river basin) planning and establishment of measures to increase water retention in urban and rural areas, enhance infiltration, increase water storage capacity and remove pollutants through natural or "natural-like" processes. They should seek synergies to implement actions that will redress existing hydro-morphological pressures and improve biodiversity and amenity value.

The proposed actions should target significant pressures impacting on current water status in that river basin in general, and significant pressures affecting the environment's capacity for water retention in particular. Such pressures should have been identified in the most recent assessments carried out by the Member State for the preparation of implementation plans for relevant EU legislation and policies (e.g. Water Framework Directive, MSFD, Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive, Drinking Water Directive, Bathing Water Directive, Flood Directive and/or Drought plans).

SIPs targeting RBMPs should demonstrate their EU added value with regard to their contribution towards achieving Water Framework Directive objectives – either in a quantified reduction of pressure or a predicted improvement in water bodies towards good status. Where possible this should be supplemented with an assessment of the wider ecosystem service benefits that will be realised through the SIP.

Further to the general objectives of SIPs, the proposals should address the following aspects:

- the expected level of implementation of the target RBMP as a direct consequence of the actions foreseen in the SIP or through the complementary actions financed by other means mobilised in parallel to the SIP,
- the impact of the project in terms of addressing significant unaddressed pressures and or improvement towards Water Framework Directive good status/potential objectives,
- how an ecosystems approach will be used to define and implement actions that deliver for Water Framework Directive but also for other EU water policy objectives (MSFD, Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive, Drinking Water Directive, Nitrate Directive, Bathing Water Directive, Flood directive and/or Drought plans), and an assessment of the environmental, social and economic benefits that are expected to be realized through the SIP,
- how the SIP will help delivery of the Water Framework Directive outside the scope of the SIP - transferability of results to other river basins.

#### Considerations relevant only to water SIPs targeting Flood Risk Management Plans (FRMPs):

These SIPs shall support the targeted implementation of measures identified in the flood risk management plans established in Member States, focused on prevention,

protection and preparedness pursuant to the Directive on the assessment and management of flood risks.

SIPs should aim at the implementation of the whole set of measures identified in the flood risk management plans (FRMP) and ensure adequate involvement all the concerned stakeholders in the process.

Further to the general objectives of SIPs, the proposals should address the following aspects:

- the expected level of implementation of the target FRMPs as a direct consequence

of the actions foreseen in the SIP or through the complementary actions financed by other means mobilized in parallel to the SIP;

- the impact of the project in terms of addressing significant flood risks; and
- how the SIP will help delivery of the Floods Directive outside the scope of the SIP - transferability of results especially in terms of the coordination of flood risk management practices with the objectives of the Water Framework Directive, but also coordination in transboundary river basins, including with third countries.

#### Considerations relevant only to water SIPs targeting Marine Strategies<sup>21</sup>:

These SIPs shall support the targeted implementation of measures or actions that need to be taken in order to achieve or maintain good environmental status in the marine waters of each Member State. These measures or actions should be identified within the Member States' Marine Strategies that have been established pursuant to the Marine Strategy Framework Directive. This is in line with the EU mission 'Restore our Ocean and Waters' that aims to protect and restore the health of ocean and waters through research and innovation, citizen engagement and blue investments.

The SIPs should aim at the implementation of the whole set of measures/actions in Marine Strategy of the Member State, ensuring adequate involvement of all the concerned stakeholders in the process, as well as, if needed, cooperation with other Member States or international organisations such as the Regional Sea Conventions, sharing the same marine region.

Further to the general objectives of SIPs, the proposals should address the following aspects:

- the expected level of implementation of the targeted Marine Strategies as direct consequence of the actions foreseen in the SIP or through the complementary actions financed by other means mobilized in parallel to the SIP;
- the impact of the project in terms of ensuring good environmental status of marine waters; and
- how the SIP will help the delivery of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive outside the scope of the SIP - transferability of results especially in terms of the

coordination of marine measures/actions/practices in shared marine regions, including with third countries.

#### Air Quality SIPs

SIPs falling under the thematic priority area of Air shall be designed to support the application, development, testing and demonstration of integrated approaches for the implementation, monitoring and further development of local and regional Air Quality Plans (AQPs) as defined by Directive 2008/50/EC, or for the implementation, monitoring and further development of National Air Pollution Control Programmes (NAPCP) pursuant to the National Emission reduction Commitment Directive 2016/2284.

In general, large scale projects will be favoured. Accordingly, if an Air SIP is based on local AQPs, then it should include coordination and cooperation between at least five cities with such plans.

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<sup>21</sup> The Marine Strategy Framework Directive aims to achieve Good Environmental Status (GES) of the EU's marine waters and to protect the resource base upon which marine-related economic and social activities depend. The Directive enshrines in a legislative framework the ecosystem approach to the management of human activities having an impact on the marine environment, integrating the concepts of environmental protection and sustainable use. In order to achieve GES, each Member State is required to develop a strategy for its marine waters, in respect of each marine region or sub-region concerned. In addition, because the Directive follows an adaptive management approach, the Marine Strategies must be kept up-to-date and reviewed every 6 years.

In case the Air SIP is based on one or more regional AQPs, the LIFE SIP projects should include coordination and cooperation between a substantial number of local administrations and regional administrations concerned. In case the Air Quality SIP is based on a NAPCP, the project should include coordination and cooperation with a substantial number of relevant actors at national, regional and local level, such as national or regional environment agencies, administrations of regions and large urban agglomerations, associations.

The extent to which each proposal contributes to one or several of the general and specific objectives of LIFE as set out in article 3 of the LIFE Regulation and section 2.2 of the LIFE multiannual work programme 2021-2024 will be evaluated.

The proposals should therefore address the following aspects:

- the expected level of implementation and associated air quality improvements of the AQP or NAPCP as a direct consequence of the actions foreseen in the SIP or through the complementary actions financed by other means mobilised in parallel to the SIP (in particular the contribution towards compliance with EU air quality legislation (for AQP-based SIPs, existing limit and target values for ambient air quality and, where possible, levels recommended by the WHO, and for NAPCP-based SIPs the National Emission reduction Commitments);
- the attention given to the chain of actions required to implement, evaluate and further develop an AQP or NAPCP: monitoring and modelling, establishing emission inventories and source attributions, policy development and implementation, public information and participation;
- the contribution to strengthening the air quality management and governance, including the level of involvement and commitment of the relevant competent authorities at local, regional and national level;
- the geographic area and the number of people that would benefit from better levels of air quality, taking into account any challenging geographical, meteorological and socio-economic conditions.

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

#### *Expected impact of SIPs*

- By the end of the project: at least substantial contribution to the implementation of the targeted plan/strategy/action plan, and mechanisms established to ensure full implementation of the plan/strategy/action plan.
- After the project (3-5 years after): catalysing full implementation of the targeted plan(s)/strategy(ies)/action plan(s).

At stage 2 (full proposal), applicants should review relevant indicators (KPI) in Part C of the eGrant application and complete them with the estimated impact of the project. Part C data should be coherent with the description of impacts of section 2 of Part B of the Application Form.

In case Part C does not include impact indicators that are important for your project (e.g.: NO<sub>x</sub> emission reduction in case of Air quality projects) you should make use of the indicator "Other project specific KPIs" in Part C and provide a relevant description of such indicators in section 2 of Part B of the Application Form.

If relevant, projects must upload a Geographic Information System (GIS) file and associated data of the specific geographical area where the intervention took place as a deliverable in their final report. This map should enable to spatially visualise the impact

already reported in the KPI database. The specific format and technical requirements of the GIS files will be provided to the supported projects during their implementation.

More detailed KPI information will be requested during the project implementation time.

### Funding rate

Strategic Integrated Projects (SIPs) — maximum 60% funding rate.

In case you have a co-financier contribution, kindly upload the related signed declaration among the optional annexes. Please indicate either "Confirmed" or "To be confirmed". If the status is "to be confirmed", this must be explained. Note that at a later stage, if successful in the selection process, you will be required to provide a signed declaration with status "confirmed" as a pre-condition to sign the Grant Agreement.

### Additional conditions

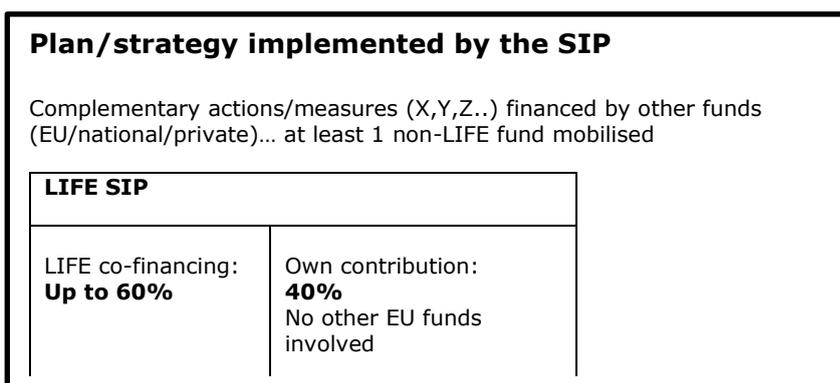
 Please **check as well** the information in the **Frequently Asked Questions** (see Chapter 12 "Help" of this document).

Please note that at full proposal stage (latest by the time of submission of the full proposal), the targeted plan/strategy/action plan/programme should be approved by the relevant authorities in your country. Moreover, if the targeted plan/strategy/action plan/programme has a legal obligation to be submitted to the European Commission, it should be reviewed by the European Commission and considered at least of acceptable quality.

### Requirements related to complementary funds mobilisation/coordination

Please remember that a SIP **must** be able to **mobilise at least one** relevant Union, national or private funding source other than LIFE to finance complementary actions needed for the implementation of the targeted plan or strategy.

The general concept of a SIP is illustrated in the following schematic diagram:



Accordingly, applicants should design the SIP by **selecting from the targeted plan or strategy a coherent set of measures or actions for which LIFE is the most appropriate funding source**. Other complementary measures or actions should be largely financed using other (Union, national or private) funding sources and should be implemented in complement to the LIFE interventions.

In particular, the LIFE Programme should be complementary to **other major Union funding** programmes, including the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, INTERREG, the European Agricultural Fund

for Rural Development, the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and Horizon Europe (the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation).

In addition to these EU funding sources, international (e.g. EFTA, UNESCO funds, etc.), national or private donors will be equally considered. Please note that international, national, and private funds (excluding EU funds) can also contribute co-financing to the 40% of the eligible costs of the SIP itself, which have to be provided by its beneficiaries.

Please **check** in the [LIFE projects database](#) examples of ongoing integrated projects to see examples of coordinated or mobilised complementary funds.

Complementary actions shall always implement **the same large scale plan or strategy** that the SIP is targeting. This **complementarity** could take the form of:

- **Actions similar** to those financed by the SIP, but implemented in **a different geographical area**.
- **Actions different** from but **complementary** to those implemented in the framework of the SIP, implemented in the **same geographical area** as the SIP.

In most cases, in order to ensure the largest possible impact by the SIP and complementary actions, **a combination** of the above described **two** forms of complementarity is expected.

The quality of the coordination with other funding mechanism(s) and the level of mobilisation of complementary funds as well as the likelihood of their actual mobilisation and their functional link to the plan to be implemented will have an impact on the evaluation of the **EU added value** of the SIP.

It is therefore important to highlight that for the purposes of the SIP proposal, complementary funding can only be considered to be "**mobilised**" if such funding:

- has not been granted to or spent by one of the beneficiaries of the SIP before the launch of this call for applications. In exceptional cases and having explicit justifications from the applicants, funds granted before that date can also be accepted but under no circumstances will funds granted or spent before the launch of the LIFE2022 call (17/05/2022) be accepted; and
- has been committed/confirmed by the relevant funding source by the time of the submission of the full proposal and evidenced by **a formal letter of intent (i.e. Annex "Complementary Funding Declaration")** signed by the competent body representing the funding source **clearly confirming the availability or the actual commitment of the complementary funding**; or
- in the absence of an actual commitment/confirmation by the time of the full proposal, **a formal letter of intent** has been signed by the competent body representing the funding source referred to by the applicant, **confirming the potential eligibility of the actions proposed by the applicant** for funding from this source and indicating **the timing and likelihood of a future funding commitment**.

If, for objective reasons, such as the timing of application periods of other funds, these general requirements for "mobilisation of additional funding sources" are not met, the applicants must provide – at the latest **with their full proposal** – an appropriate justification for the lack of a formal commitment or letter of intent regarding the funds concerned.

In any case, for the application to be eligible, at full proposal stage at least one of the following conditions must be met:

- **one letter of intent (Annex "Complementary Funding Declaration") clearly confirming the availability or the actual commitment of the**

**complementary funding to be mobilised**, signed by the competent body representing the funding source, **is submitted with the full proposal**;

- proof is provided of the granting of complementary funds after the launch of the LIFE2022 call (17/05/2022).

It is essential that, prior to submitting their SIP Concept Note and full proposal, beneficiaries confirm whether the actions proposed within the SIP itself **are not already or could be more appropriately funded** through other EU funds.

**Besides the mobilised funding** (i.e. signed Annex(es) “Complementary Funding Declaration”), most likely, there will be a range of complementary funds relevant to the SIP and the targeted plan or strategy that are and will be implemented in parallel to the SIP. The level of engagement/coordination of the SIP with these funds will differ from project to project. In any case, **these funds are very relevant and should be listed** in the proposal and counted towards the complementary funds of the SIP, as they will help to implement the plan or strategy.

In the application, when speaking about complementary actions the primary focus should be on actions financed by funds genuinely mobilised by the SIP itself, with a secondary focus on complementary actions that are, if not mobilised, actively coordinated with the SIP actions. Actions and funds neither genuinely mobilised nor actively coordinated by the SIP shall only be mentioned in case they are needed for the provision of comprehensive information on the implementation of the plan.

Attention: during the SIP other LIFE projects may be part of the complementary actions contributing to the plan’s implementation. LIFE funding for these projects will not be however considered as “mobilised” for the purpose of meeting eligibility criteria.

#### Platform meetings

SIPs are encouraged to organise platform meetings in coordination with other SIPs on similar topics. LIFE platform meetings bring together projects working on a specific theme (or geographic area), to exchange experiences, to align to policy priorities and to extract common lessons and experiences. Furthermore, SIPs are encouraged to invite beneficiaries in other SIPs on the same topic to participate in workshops or conferences organised by them where appropriate and useful.

#### Stakeholder involvement

Appropriate involvement of all the concerned stakeholders is essential to ensure successful implementation of the targeted plan or strategy and sustainability of project results. In the respective section in the application please state the stakeholders the proposal intends to involve and how. Please indicate what kind of input you expect from them and how their involvement will be relevant, used in and/or needed for the project. Also provide your arguments in case main stakeholders are not involved as beneficiaries. In case it is impossible to involve one of the key stakeholder groups, a dedicated action aiming at removing barrier for their effective involvement in the plan or strategy implementation should be included in the SIP.

#### Project management & coordination with complementary funds

The workload linked to management, coordination and internal/external reporting of this kind of projects is frequently underestimated by applicants, please allocate enough human resources from both the coordinator and rest of beneficiaries.

The technical project management may be partially outsourced, provided the coordinating beneficiary retains full and day to day control of the project. The proposal should clearly describe how this control will be guaranteed. The project management structure must be clearly presented (including an organigram and details of the

responsibilities of each person and organisation involved). It is strongly recommended that the project management staff have previous experience in project management and that the project manager is employed full-time.

Coordination/Working Group – or a similar arrangement – with the relevant complementary funds is expected to be established to improve over the long-term the mobilisation and coordination of these funds for the implementation of the targeted plan/strategy.

#### Replicability & transferability

Replicability and transferability is the potential of the project to be replicated in other regions of the same Member State or in other Member States, or in neighbouring countries if relevant to achieve EU environmental and climate objectives, during and after the implementation of the SIP. Successful replication and transferability requires a clear plan at the outset, an evaluation strategy, a capacity building strategy (skills, communication, funding) and a legacy strategy that will reach critical mass during the project and/or in a short and medium term perspective after the end of the LIFE project.

This goes beyond transfer of knowledge and networking, and involves putting the techniques, methods or strategies developed or applied in the project into practice elsewhere. It may be achieved by implementing some of the SIP actions only within a limited part of the project area and replicating those via complementary actions in the entire area covered by the project and by the plan.

#### Polluter pays principle & eligibility of actions

LIFE funding will not co-finance clean-up actions that derive from the application of the polluter pays principle. Such actions for which this principle should be applied will not be eligible for funding.

#### Land purchase

The eligibility of any costs for land purchase is subject to the conditions listed below. The applicant must address each of these conditions in his proposal, explaining how each condition is met or will be met during the project.

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

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

#### Land lease, purchase of rights and one-off compensation payments:

The same conditions for land purchase listed above apply here, as and where appropriate, to these types of payments. The applicant must address each of these conditions in the proposal, explaining how each condition is met or will be met during the project. The duration of a lease must be sufficient to guarantee the durability of the conservation investment (e.g. 30 years or longer). See also the General Conditions of the [Model Grant Agreement](#)<sup>22</sup>.

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

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

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

For the exception to be valid, it must be explicitly foreseen in the project and beneficiaries must demonstrate that it is the only cost-effective solution to reach the objectives of the project. Moreover, it is recommended that local authorities re-invest the income from such payments into conservation or public awareness-raising measures for Natura 2000 network or for achieving the targets of the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2030. Those proposals which include a commitment from the local authorities in question

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<sup>22</sup> The Model Grant Agreement that will be used (and all other relevant templates and guidance documents) can be found on [Portal Reference Documents](#)

to do so will be considered for a higher scoring on EU added value in the project evaluation process and may therefore have a higher chance of being selected for co-funding.

## **2.3 LIFE-2024-STRAT-CLIMA-SIP-two-stage - Strategic Integrated Projects - Climate Action**

### Objectives

Applicants should target the implementation of one or more of the following plans/strategies:

- 1) National Energy and Climate Plans (NECP) including Long-Term Strategies (LTS).
- 2) Regulation on the governance of the energy union and climate action (EU)2018/1999.
- 3) National adaptation strategies and plans pursuant to Article 5 of the Regulation 2021/1119 ('European Climate Law'), or regional adaptation strategies or action plans.
- 4) Urban or community-based action plans pioneering the transition to a climate neutral and/or climate resilient society, including climate-neutral cities plans and actions, for instance in the context of the EU Mission 'Climate neutral and smart cities' and Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans.
- 5) National, regional or industry-/sector-specific greenhouse gas mitigation strategies or low carbon economy roadmaps.

### Scope — Activities that can be funded Climate change adaptation SIPs:

Climate change adaptation SIPs should help achieve the objectives of Article 5 of the European Climate Law<sup>23</sup> or the EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change<sup>24</sup>.

In order to do so, SIPs should support the implementation of national climate change adaptation strategies or plans, as required under the European Climate Law, or comparable regional, multi-regional or transnational strategies and plans.

More specifically, they are expected to select and implement a clearly defined set of actions in the corresponding adaptation strategy or plan, which are to be financed by LIFE. Applicants should explain how and to what extent this set of actions will help to implement the overall strategy or plan.

Also, in order to substantially contribute to the implementation of this strategy or plan, SIPs should specify:

- additional, complementary adaptation actions, which are to be funded by other EU, national or private funding sources;
- how the project will mobilise complementary funds that can finance activities beyond the scope and timeframe of what is funded by LIFE, like measures to integrate climate adaptation objectives in private investment decisions;
- auxiliary actions that facilitate the implementation of the overall strategy or plan,

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<sup>23</sup> Regulation (EU) 2021/1119 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 June 2021 establishing the framework for achieving climate neutrality and amending Regulations (EC) No 401/2009 and (EU) 2018/1999 ('European Climate Law')

<sup>24</sup> COM(2021) 82 final: Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Forging a climate-resilient Europe - the new EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change.

such as capacity-building;

- how the project ensures the involvement and coordination of all relevant levels of government.

Furthermore, the proposal should present clear and quantifiable information on:

- the expected level of implementation of the adaptation strategy or plan as a direct consequence of (a) the actions foreseen in the SIP and (b) the complementary actions financed by other means mobilised in parallel to the SIP;
- the geographical area covered by these measures (which can span across national borders if climate risks and vulnerabilities are similar e.g. in river catchment areas);
- the specific climate risks and vulnerabilities to be addressed (considering also available information on projected future climatic conditions) and how the project's actions help to minimise them;
- the level of involvement and commitment of the relevant competent authorities and stakeholders at local, regional and national level;
- the contribution to mainstreaming climate change action into different sectors.

Finally, climate change adaptation SIPs should develop synergies with other environmental and climate policies (e.g. climate mitigation, disaster risk reduction, biodiversity and water policy), and are encouraged to develop synergies with the EU Mission 'Adaptation to Climate Change'<sup>25</sup>, wherever relevant. Climate change adaptation SIPs selected under this call will receive invitations to join the Community of Practice of that Mission.

#### *Urban climate change mitigation and/or adaptation SIPs:*

SIPs under this category shall support the implementation of urban action plans pioneering the transition to a climate neutral and/or climate resilient society. Projects are encouraged to address the following themes:

- The implementation of urban adaptation and/or mitigation strategies and action plans, such as those linked to the Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy;<sup>26</sup>
- The development and deployment of innovative adaptation solutions in urban areas, including in the water, energy and construction sectors, promoting and developing blue and green infrastructure, contributing to nature conservation and biodiversity objectives in urban areas; and implementing public-private partnerships on climate change resilience;
- The implementation of urban and/or rural low-carbon, low-emission strategies, including transport and mobility, renewable energy generation, storage and use (electric power and/or heat) within the urban area, district heating, energy efficiency of public and private buildings, low-emission city lighting, carbon removals in nature-based solutions and bio-based carbon storage products.

Urban action plans should integrate at the same time climate change mitigation and adaptation objectives.

**A SIP under this category must cover several cities and should support the implementation of the whole strategy or action plan.**

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<sup>25</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/research-and-innovation/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe/eu-missions-horizon-europe/adaptation-climate-change-including-societal-transformation\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/research-and-innovation/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe/eu-missions-horizon-europe/adaptation-climate-change-including-societal-transformation_en)

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.covenantofmayors.eu>

It shall also include measures to integrate climate considerations in private investment decisions.

Urban climate change mitigation and/or adaptation SIPs are encouraged to develop synergies with the EU missions 'Adaptation to Climate Change' and 'Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities'.

Further to the general objectives of SIPs, the proposal should therefore present information on:

- the expected level of implementation of the adaptation and/or mitigation action plan as a direct consequence of the actions foreseen in the SIP or through the complementary actions financed by other means mobilised in parallel to the SIP,
- the geographical area covered by measures and the citizens reached under the adaptation and/or mitigation action plans,
- the expected contribution to a shift towards a low emission and climate- resilient economy in the cities/local communities targeted through actions funded under the SIP and complementary projects,
- the expected increase in the number of cities/local communities applying integrated approaches with support of the IP or replicating the results from the SIP,
- the contribution to strengthening climate change adaptation and/or mitigation management and governance, including the level of involvement and commitment of the relevant competent authorities and stakeholders at local, regional and national level,
- the contribution to mainstreaming climate change action across different policy areas.

*Climate change mitigation SIPs:*

SIPs falling under the area of climate change mitigation shall support the implementation of greenhouse gas mitigation strategies, action plans or low carbon economy roadmaps and concern:

- specific municipalities or regions (e.g. as indicated by the Global Covenant of Mayors);
- industrial sectors;
- agriculture, forestry and other land uses (e.g. peatland rewetting);
- other economic sectors (e.g. maritime transport, aviation, finance) by promoting and implementing sustainable technologies and services.

SIPs should contribute to the implementation and development of current and future Union climate change mitigation policy and legislation, as amended, which could include:

- the European Climate Law (EU) 2021/1119;
- the Governance of the Energy Union and Climate Action (EU) 2018/1999;
- the EU ETS Directive (2003/87/EC);
- the Effort Sharing Regulation (EU) 2018/842;
- the LULUCF Regulation (EU) 2018/841;
- the Renewable Energy Directive (EU) 2018/2001;
- the Energy Efficiency Directive (EU) 2018/2002;
- the Energy Performance of Building Directive (EU) 2018/844);
- the Proposal for a Regulation establishing a Union certification framework for

permanent carbon removals, carbon farming and carbon storage in products (COM/2022/672 final)<sup>27</sup>;

- The Regulation on substances that deplete the ozone layer (EU) 2024/590;
- the Regulation on fluorinated greenhouse gases (EU)2024/573;
- the Carbon dioxide capture and geological storage Directive (2009/31/EC);
- the EU initiatives on sustainable finance, including uptake of the taxonomy, corporate reporting and due diligence requirements;

Potential stakeholders to be involved could include industry associations, companies along the supply chain, research institutions, public authorities, NGOs. Applications for implementation at regional, national or transnational level are welcome.

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

### Expected impact

- By the end of the project: at least substantial contribution to the implementation of the targeted plan/strategy, and mechanisms established to ensure full implementation of the plan/strategy.
- After the project (3-5 years after): catalysing full implementation of the targeted plan(s)/strategy(ies)/action plan(s).

At stage 2 (full proposal), applicants should review relevant indicators (KPI) in Part C of the eGrant application and complete them with the estimated impact of the project. Part C data should be coherent with the description of impacts of section 2 of Part B of the Application Form.

In case Part C does not include impact indicators that are important for your project (e.g.: NOx emission reduction in case of Air quality projects) you should make use of the indicator "Other project specific KPIs" in Part C and provide a relevant description of such indicators in section 2 of Part B of the Application Form.

If relevant, projects must upload a Geographic Information System (GIS) file and associated data of the specific geographical area where the intervention took place as a deliverable in their final report. This map should enable to spatially visualise the impact already reported in the KPI database. The specific format and technical requirements of the GIS files will be provided to the supported projects during their implementation.

More detailed KPI information will be requested during the project implementation time.

### Funding rate

Strategic Integrated Projects (SIPs) — maximum 60% funding rate.

In case you have a co-financier contribution, kindly upload the related signed declaration among the optional annexes. Please indicate either "Confirmed" or "To be confirmed". If the status is "to be confirmed", this must be explained. Note that at a

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<sup>27</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_24\\_885](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_24_885)

later stage, if successful in the selection process, you will be required to provide a signed declaration with status "confirmed" as a pre-condition to sign the Grant Agreement.

Additional conditions

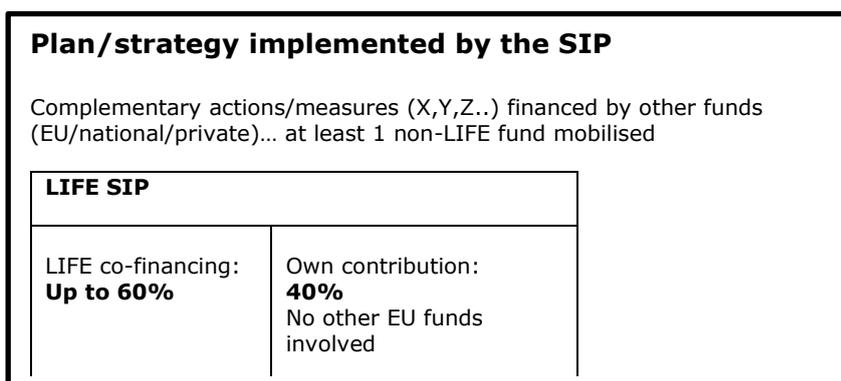
 Please **check as well** the information in the **Frequently Asked Questions** (see Chapter 12 "Help" of this document).

Please note that at full proposal stage (latest by the time of submission of the full proposal), the targeted plan/strategy/action plan should be approved by the relevant authorities in your country. Moreover, if the targeted plan/strategy/action plan has a legal obligation to be submitted to the European Commission, it should be reviewed by the European Commission and considered at least of acceptable quality.

Requirements related to complementary funds mobilisation/coordination

Please remember that a SIP **must** be able to **mobilise at least one** relevant Union, national or private funding source other than LIFE to finance complementary actions needed for the implementation of the targeted plan or strategy.

The general concept of a SIP is illustrated in the following schematic diagram:



Accordingly, applicants should design the SIP by **selecting from the targeted plan or strategy a coherent set of measures or actions for which LIFE is the most appropriate funding source**. Other complementary measures or actions should be largely financed using other (Union, national or private) funding sources and should be implemented in complement to the LIFE interventions.

In particular, the LIFE Programme should be complementary to **other major Union funding** programmes, including the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, INTERREG, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and Horizon Europe (the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation).

In addition to these EU funding sources, international (e.g. EFTA, UNESCO funds, etc.), national or private donors will be equally considered. Please note that international, national, and private funds (excluding EU funds) can also contribute co- financing to the 40% of the eligible costs of the SIP itself, which have to be provided by its beneficiaries.

Please **check** in the [LIFE projects database](#) examples of ongoing integrated projects to see examples of coordinated or mobilised complementary funds.

Complementary actions shall always implement **the same large scale plan or strategy** that the SIP is targeting. This **complementarity** could take the form of:

- **Actions similar** to those financed by the SIP, but implemented in a **different geographical area**.
- **Actions different** from but **complementary** to those implemented in the framework of the SIP, implemented in the **same geographical area** as the SIP.

In most cases, in order to ensure the largest possible impact by the SIP and complementary actions, a **combination** of the above described **two** forms of complementarity is expected.

The quality of the coordination with other funding mechanism(s) and the level of mobilisation of complementary funds as well as the likelihood of their actual mobilisation and their functional link to the plan to be implemented will have an impact on the evaluation of the **EU added value** of the SIP.

It is therefore important to highlight that for the purposes of the SIP proposal, complementary funding can only be considered to be **"mobilised"** if such funding:

- has not been granted to or spent by one of the beneficiaries of the SIP before the launch of this call for applications. In exceptional cases and having explicit justifications from the applicants, funds granted before that date can also be accepted but under no circumstances will funds granted or spent before the launch of the LIFE2022 call (17/05/2022) be accepted; and
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- in the absence of an actual commitment/confirmation by the time of the full proposal, a **formal letter of intent** has been signed by the competent body representing the funding source referred to by the applicant, **confirming the potential eligibility of the actions proposed by the applicant** for funding from this source and indicating **the timing and likelihood of a future funding commitment**.

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**In any case, for the application to be eligible, at full proposal stage at least one of the following conditions must be met:**

- **one letter of intent (Annex "Complementary Funding Declaration") clearly confirming the availability or the actual commitment of the complementary funding to be mobilised**, signed by the competent body representing the funding source, **is submitted with the full proposal**;
- proof is provided of the granting of complementary funds after the launch of the LIFE2022 call (17/05/2022).

It is essential that, prior to submitting their SIP Concept Note and full proposal, beneficiaries confirm whether the actions proposed within the SIP itself **are not already or could be more appropriately funded** through other EU funds.

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- (x) Evidence must be provided that the land purchased was not owned by a public authority in the 24 months prior to the project application date.
- (xi) The purchased land must be the subject, during the project, of specific restoration and/or active management or restrictions of use that go beyond legal obligations and existing restrictions that could not be imposed without purchasing the land. The purchase of land that is in excellent conservation status (i.e. that requires no restoration or specific management or restrictions of use) is only eligible if strategic to the objectives of the project.

Land lease, purchase of rights and one-off compensation payments:

The same conditions for land purchase listed above apply here, as and where appropriate, to these types of payments. The applicant must address each of these conditions in the proposal, explaining how each condition is met or will be met during the project. The duration of a lease must be sufficient to guarantee the durability of the conservation investment (e.g. 30 years or longer). See also the General Conditions of the [Model Grant Agreement](#)<sup>28</sup>.

Land lease or compensation payments with a limited duration, within the project period, will only be eligible insofar as they are necessary for the demonstration of pilot actions favourable to the conservation status of the species, habitats or ecosystem targeted.

Note that appropriate justification for the cost-effectiveness of short term lease payments (consistency with current market prices for the type of land and the region concerned) will have to be provided with the project's final report.

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

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

For the exception to be valid, it must be explicitly foreseen in the project and beneficiaries must demonstrate that it is the only cost-effective solution to reach the objectives of the project. Moreover, it is recommended that local authorities re-invest the income from such payments into conservation or public awareness-raising measures for Natura 2000 network or for achieving the targets of the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2030. Those proposals which include a commitment from the local authorities in question to do so will be considered for a higher scoring on EU added value in the project evaluation process and may therefore have a higher chance of being selected for co-funding.

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<sup>28</sup> The Model Grant Agreement that will be used (and all other relevant templates and guidance documents) can be found on [Portal Reference Documents](#).

### 3. Available budget

The estimated available call budget is **EUR 150 000 000**.

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

Topic	Topic budget	Indicative range of project budgets	Indicative number of projects to be funded	Indicative expected project duration
LIFE-2024-STRAT-NAT-SNaP-two-stage - Strategic Nature Projects	<b>EUR 70 million</b>	<b>EUR 10-30 million</b>	3 - 5 projects	60 - 120 months
LIFE-2024-STRAT-ENV-SIP-two-stage - Strategic Integrated Projects – Environment	<b>EUR 50 million</b>	<b>EUR 10-30 million</b>	3 - 4 projects	60 - 120 months
LIFE-2024-STRAT-CLIMA-SIP-two-stage - Strategic Integrated Projects - Climate Action	<b>EUR 30 million</b>	<b>EUR 10-30 million</b>	2 - 3 projects	60 - 120 months

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

### 4. Timetable and deadlines

<b>Timetable and deadlines(indicative)</b>	
Call opening:	18 April 2024
<u>Deadline for submission (concept note):</u>	<u>05 September 2024– 17:00:00 CET (Brussels)</u>
Information on evaluation results (concept note):	November 2024 (indicative)
Consultation i.e. Q&A phase:	January 2025 - March 2025
<u>Deadline for submission (full proposal):</u>	<u>6 March 2025 (indicative) – 17:00:00 CET (Brussels)</u>
Information on evaluation results:	June 2025 (indicative)
GA signature:	November 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. For stage 1 (concept note), some sections are not applicable (noted as n/a); for stage 2 (full proposal), all sections must be completed.

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

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

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

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

- Application Form Part B — contains the technical description of the project (*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 (*not applicable at stage 1*) (*to be filled in directly online*)
- **mandatory annexes and supporting documents** (*to be uploaded*):
  - for concept notes (stage 1):
    - detailed budget table: **not applicable**
    - CVs of core project team: **not applicable**
    - activity reports of last year: **not applicable**
    - list of previous projects: **not applicable**
    - targeted plan/strategy/action plan (if several, combine in one file)
    - implementation overview for the plan/strategy/action plan
    - complementary funding plan.
  - for full proposals (stage 2):
    - detailed budget table (*mandatory excel template available in the Submission System*)

- CVs of core project team: **not applicable**
  - activity reports of last year: **not applicable**
  - list of previous projects: **not applicable**
  - participant information
  - targeted plan/strategy/action plan (if several, combine in one file)
  - implementation overview for the plan/strategy/action plan
  - complementary funding plan
  - complementary funding declarations (at least one).
- **optional annexes** (  relevant info about activities should be in the main text. Optional annexes are to be used only if necessary to support statements in Parts A-B-C):
    - for stage 1: **not applicable**
    - for stage 2:
      - letters of support
      - co-financing declarations
      - other annexes (maps, schemes, etc.)

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 **45 pages** (Part B) at **stage 1 (you cannot delete instructions)** and **200 pages** (Part B) at **stage 2 (you cannot delete instructions)**. 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*).

Only the proposals invited after the first stage evaluation will be admissible for the second stage.



Please be aware that some proposal information may be shared with the LIFE programme committee established under Regulation No [182/2011](#)<sup>29</sup>, i.e. name and

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<sup>29</sup> 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*).

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

The eligibility conditions set out in this section apply to both the first and the second stages of application.

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

### *Eligible 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 ([participating countries](#))<sup>30</sup>.
- 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 (*see work programme*).

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

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

Entities without legal personality — Entities which do not have legal personality under their national law may exceptionally participate, provided that their representatives have the capacity to undertake legal obligations on their behalf, and offer guarantees for the protection of the EU financial interests equivalent to that offered by legal persons<sup>31</sup>.

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<sup>30</sup> 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

<sup>31</sup> See Article 197(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

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'<sup>32</sup>. ⚠ Please note that if the action will be implemented by the members, they should also participate (either as beneficiaries or as affiliated entities, otherwise their costs will NOT be eligible).

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

EU restrictive measures — Special rules apply for 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)<sup>33</sup>). 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

Proposals must be submitted by:

for all topics of this Call:

- minimum 2 applicants (beneficiaries; not affiliated entities)
- the authority responsible for the plan/strategy/action plan should be in principle participating in the consortium as coordinator. In well justified cases it may participate not as coordinator, but it should in any case be part of the consortium.

### Eligible activities

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

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

Financial support to third parties is allowed in all topics of this Call for grants and prizes

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<sup>32</sup> For the definitions, see Articles 187(2) and 197(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

<sup>33</sup> 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](#).

under the following conditions:

- the calls must be open, published widely and conform to EU standards concerning transparency, equal treatment, conflict of interest and confidentiality

Financial support to third parties will be accepted in projects which aim to assist entities outside the project partnership (*e.g. non-profit organisations, local authorities or citizens groups*) in the implementation or development of local initiatives that will contribute to the project's objectives.

Your project application must clearly specify why financial support to third parties is needed, how it will be managed and provide a list of the different types of activities for which a third party may receive financial support. The proposal must also clearly describe the results to be obtained.

For further information on the conditions for the support to third parties please refer to the section 6.2.D.1 of the model grant agreement.

#### Geographic location (target countries)

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

E.g. actions aimed at the conservation of migratory birds in wintering areas, actions implemented on a transboundary river, or projects aimed to address environmental problems that cannot be solved successfully or efficiently unless actions are carried out also in non-eligible countries.

## **7. Financial and operational capacity and exclusion**

### Financial capacity

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

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

needed, it may also be done for affiliated entities.

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

- further information
- an enhanced financial responsibility regime, i.e. joint and several responsibility for all beneficiaries or joint and several liability of affiliated entities (*see below, section 10*)

- prefinancing paid in instalments
  - (one or more) prefinancing guarantees (*see below, section 10*)
- or
- propose no prefinancing
  - request that you are replaced or, if needed, reject the entire proposal.

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

### Operational capacity

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

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

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

Applicants will have to show their capacity via the following:

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

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 participate<sup>34</sup>:

- 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 misconduct<sup>35</sup> (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

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<sup>34</sup> See Articles 136 and 141 of EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

<sup>35</sup> 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.

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).

Applicants will also be rejected if it turns out that<sup>36</sup>:

- 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 a **two-stage submission procedure**.

In the first stage, applicants will be requested to submit only an outline application, which will be evaluated against a first set of award criteria. Successful applicants (those fulfilling the four criteria assessed at first stage) will be invited to submit a full application for the second stage which will then be evaluated against the full set of award criteria. Between stage 1 (concept note) and 2 (full proposal)out, there will be a written question and answer phase, during which successful applicants can submit questions on the preparation of full proposals.

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

For SIP/SNaP calls, in case of lack of budget to finance all the proposals that reached the minimum threshold, priority will be given to the proposals from Member States which do not have yet a SIP or SNaP project financed under the specific sub- programme. Furthermore, the part of the LIFE grant assigned to co-finance beneficiaries of country X will be taken into account when computing the total amount granted for SIP/SNaPs in country X<sup>37</sup>.

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

Successively for every group of ex aequo proposals, starting with the highest scored

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<sup>36</sup> See Article 141 EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

<sup>37</sup> The 2021-2024 LIFE Multiannual Work Programme (MAWP, *see footnote 2*) does not include any legal obligation related to the number of SIPs and SNaPs that can be submitted by Member States. For SNAPs, the Commission encourages all Member States to submit in 2021-2027 one single large SNAP proposal which indicative financial volume is based on the table included in page 19 of the MAWP. LIFE support may be divided into two or more SNAPs in Member States where this is duly justified.

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

All proposals will be informed about the evaluation result (**evaluation result letter**). Successful proposals will be invited for grant preparation; the other ones will be put on the reserve list or rejected. Proposals that are below the budget threshold (i.e. passed, but not ranked high enough to receive funding) will be awarded a **Seal of Excellence**<sup>38</sup>.

 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 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:

For concept notes (stage 1):

### 1. Implementation of plans or strategies (Yes/No)

- The proposal aims at implementing the plans/strategies/action plans as described in the call for proposals.

### 2. Territorial coverage (Yes/No)

- The implementation of the targeted EU plan/strategy/action plan will cover a large and representative territorial area, in particular, regional, multiregional, national, trans-national. A multi-city approach or smaller territorial scale may also be acceptable for SIPs dealing with air quality management and climate action as long as the project delivers substantial impact.

### 3. Coordination of complementary funds (Yes/No)

- The activities will mobilise complementary funding from at least one EU, national or private funding source and take into consideration other relevant

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<sup>38</sup> Seal of Excellence is a certification awarded to candidates that apply for LIFE funding and are assessed to meet the relevant evaluation criteria as defined in the call text, but cannot be funded due to lack of budget. The projects which have been awarded the Seal of Excellence could be supported by the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund+ or the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, under the same conditions as they would have been financed under the LIFE programme. It is only awarded to those applicants who agree to share the data about their proposal (basic information on the proposal, the call and the applicant) with other alternative funding bodies, which may decide to fund the project.

EU, national or private funding.

- The funding is complementary to the SIP/SNaP and used to support and implement complementary activities necessary for the implementation of the targeted plan/strategy/action plan.
- Mechanisms for the coordination of the complementary funding are clearly defined.

#### **4. Involvement of key stakeholders** (Yes/No)

- Key stakeholders will be actively involved in the implementation of the targeted plan/strategy/action plan.

No maximum points: Each criterion will be assessed as to whether it is fulfilled or not. If one or more criteria are not fulfilled, the proposal will be considered failing and will not be invited to the next stage.

For full proposals (stage 2):

#### **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 topic description of the call for proposals.
- Concept and methodology: soundness of the overall intervention logic.
- Extent to which the proposal offers co-benefits and promotes synergies with other policy areas relevant for achieving environment and climate policy objectives.

#### **2. Impact** (0-20 points)

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

#### **3. Quality** (0-20 points)

- Clarity, relevance and feasibility of the work plan.
- Appropriate geographic focus of the activities
- Quality of the plan to monitor and report impacts.
- Identification and mobilisation of relevant stakeholders.
- 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 consortium in terms of expertise, skills and responsibilities and appropriateness of the management structure.

- Appropriateness of the budget and resources and their consistency with the work plan.
- Transparency of the budget, i.e. the cost items should be sufficiently described.
- Extent to which the project environmental impact is considered and mitigated, including through the use of green procurement. The use of recognised methods for the calculation of the project environmental footprint (e.g. PEF or OEF methods or similar ones such as PEFCRs/ OEFSRs) or environmental management systems (e.g. EMAS) would be an asset.
- Value for money of the proposal.

**5. Complementary funding** (0-20 points)

- Level of mobilisation of other funds complementary to the LIFE project foreseen (beyond the minimum necessary for eligibility) as well as the likelihood of their actual mobilisation and their functional link to the plan/strategy/action plan to be implemented
- Quality of the coordination mechanism for the optimal use of other funds, in particular EU funds, necessary to implement the targeted plan/strategy/action plan
- Identification, relevance and feasibility of the necessary complementary actions

Award criteria	Minimum pass score	Maximum score	Weighting
Relevance	10	20	1
Impact	10	20	1
Quality	10	20	1
Resources	10	20	1
Complementary funding	10	20	1
<b>Overall weighted (pass) scores</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>100</b>	N/A

Maximum points (full proposals): 100 points.

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

Overall threshold (full proposals): 55 points.

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

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

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

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

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

### Starting date and project duration

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

Project duration: between 60 and 120 months indicatively (extensions are possible, if duly justified and through an amendment, but please ensure that the proposed work plan includes sufficient time and flexibility to handle an evolving project situation without the need for an amendment).

### Milestones and deliverables

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

### Form of grant, funding rate and maximum grant amount

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

Project budget (maximum grant amount): *see section 3 above*. The grant awarded may be lower than the amount requested.

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

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

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
- D. Other cost categories
  - D.1 Financial support to third parties
  - D.2 Land purchase
- E. Indirect costs

#### *Specific cost eligibility conditions for this call:*

- personnel costs:
  - SME owner/natural person unit cost<sup>39</sup>: Yes
  - volunteers unit cost<sup>40</sup>: Yes (without indirect costs)
- travel and subsistence unit cost<sup>41</sup>: No (only actual costs)
- equipment costs: full cost + depreciation for listed equipment (*— under the special conditions set out in the Grant Agreement (art 6.2.C.2) and linked to special durability clause (use and maintain for 5 years after end of action; annex 5)*)
- other cost categories:
  - costs for financial support to third parties: allowed for grants or similar and prizes; maximum total amount for financial support to third parties EUR 200

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<sup>39</sup> 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)715).

<sup>40</sup> Commission [Decision](#) of 10 April 2019 authorising the use of unit costs for declaring personnel costs for the work carried out by volunteers under an action or a work programme (C(2019)2646).

<sup>41</sup> 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).

000; maximum amount per third party EUR 60 000, unless a higher amount is required because the objective of the action would otherwise be impossible or overly difficult to achieve and this is duly justified in the Application Form

- land purchase costs: subject to the conditions specified in Art. 6.2 - D.2 Eligible and ineligible costs and contributions of the LIFE General Model Grant Agreement. The applicant must address each of these conditions in his proposal, explaining how each one is met or will be met during the project. Such conditions refer, for example, to the contribution to the integrity of the Natura 2000 network, to the guarantee that in the long term the land will be used consistently with the specific objectives of the LIFE Programme, to the fact that land purchase is the only or most cost-effective way of achieving the desired conservation outcome etc.
- indirect cost flat-rate: 7% of the eligible direct costs (categories A-D, except volunteers costs and exempted specific cost categories (land purchase), if any)
- VAT: non-deductible VAT is eligible (but please note that since 2013 VAT paid by beneficiaries that are public bodies acting as public authority is NOT eligible)
- other:
  - in-kind contributions for free are allowed, but cost-neutral, i.e. they cannot be declared as cost
  - kick off meeting: costs for kickoff meeting organised by the granting authority are eligible (travel costs for maximum 2 persons, return ticket to Brussels and accommodation for one night) only if the meeting takes place after the project starting date set out in the Grant Agreement; the starting date can be changed through an amendment, if needed
  - project websites: communication costs for presenting the project on the participants' websites or social media accounts are eligible; costs for separate project websites are not eligible unless duly justified by the project objectives.
  - common information and dissemination activities: foresee resources to increase synergies between, and the visibility of LIFE and EU supported actions
  - other ineligible costs: No



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

### Reporting and payment arrangements

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

After grant signature, you will normally receive a **prefinancing** to start working on the project (float of normally **20%** of the maximum grant amount; exceptionally less or no prefinancing). The prefinancing will be paid 30 days from entry into force/financial guarantee (if required) — whichever is the latest.

There will be one or more **interim payments** (with cost reporting through the use of resources report).

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

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

All payments will be made to the coordinator.

 Please be aware that payments will be automatically lowered if 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 of all the work done and the costs declared.

### Prefinancing guarantees

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

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

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

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

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

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

### 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

n/a

### Non-compliance and breach of contract

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



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

## **11. How to submit an application**

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

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

### **a) create a user account and register your organisation**

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

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

### **b) submit the proposal**

Access the Electronic Submission System via the Topic page in the [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):

- [FAQs in LIFE website](#)
- [Online Manual](#)
- [Portal FAQ](#) (for general questions on submission/IT).
- [LIFE Info Days](#)

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

### Contact

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

- For individual questions on the Portal Submission System, please contact the [IT Helpdesk](#).
- Non-IT related questions should be sent to the following email address: [CINEA-LIFE-ENQUIRIES@ec.europa.eu](mailto: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 double funding** — There is a strict prohibition of double 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 declared to two different EU actions.
- **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 language of an eligible country (the 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](#).