



Programme for the Environment and Climate Action (LIFE)

Call for proposals

**Circular Economy and Quality of Life - Standard Action
Projects (SAP)**

LIFE-2023-SAP-ENV

Version 1.0
18 April 2023



HISTORY OF CHANGES			
Version	Publication Date	Change	Page
1.0	18.04.2023	▪ Initial version (new MFF).	
		▪	
		▪	
		▪	



EUROPEAN CLIMATE, INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENVIRONMENT EXECUTIVE AGENCY (CINEA)

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

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

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0. Introduction

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

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

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

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

The call covers the following **topics**:

- **LIFE-2023-SAP-ENV-ENVIRONMENT - Circular Economy, resources from Waste, Air, Water, Soil, Noise, Chemicals, Bauhaus**
- **LIFE-2023-SAP-ENV-GOV - Environmental Governance**

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

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

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

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

¹ Regulation (EU) 2021/783 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2021 establishing a Programme for the Environment and Climate Action (LIFE) (OJ L 172, 17.5.2021, p. 53).

² Commission Implementing Decision 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.

- 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 Deal³ which aims to:

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

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

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

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

Environment:

- sub-programme Nature and Biodiversity
- sub-programme Circular Economy and Quality of Life

Climate Action:

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

Nature and Biodiversity

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

- to develop, demonstrate, promote and stimulate scale up of innovative techniques, methods and approaches (including nature-based solutions and

³ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: The European Green Deal (COM (2019)640 final).

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](#)⁴ and the reduction of hazardous waste in view of the EU's commitment under the [Basel Convention](#)⁵.

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

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

- 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.

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.

Clean Energy Transition

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 Standard Action Projects (SAPs).

SAPs represent the 'traditional LIFE projects' aimed to:

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

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

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

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

LIFE-2023-SAP-ENV-ENVIRONMENT — Circular Economy, resources from Waste, Air, Water, Soil, Noise, Chemicals, Bauhaus

Objectives – Themes and priorities

The aim is to facilitate the transition toward a sustainable, circular, toxic-free, energy-efficient/climate-resilient economy and toward a toxic-free environment as well as to protect, restore and improve the quality of the environment.

The specific objective is to cover one or more of the following topics (the description is further detailed in the sections afterwards):

1. Circular Economy and Waste
2. Air
3. Water
4. Soil
5. Noise
6. Chemicals
7. A new European Bauhaus

Please note that the assessment of the extent to which the project is in line with the specific priorities of the call (part of Award criterion 1) will be done **exclusively on the basis of the topics identified and described under section 'Compliance with LIFE programme objectives and call topic' of the Standard application form**. Please also note **that a maximum of two sub-topics will be considered** (e.g.: air quality improvement and emission reduction of PM.... solutions **and** sustainable road transport mobility....platforms.).

1. CIRCULAR ECONOMY AND WASTE

1.1. Recovery of Resources from Waste

- Implementation of innovative solutions to support value-added⁶ recycled materials, components or products for the following areas:
 - Separate collection and recycling of waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE) in particular but not limited to photovoltaic panels, smartphones, tablets and computers;
 - Separate collection and recycling of batteries and accumulators;
 - Dismantling, remanufacturing and recycling of End of Life Vehicles (ELVs) and End-of-Life Ships;
 - Selective separation and recycling of construction works or buildings;
 - Sorting and recycling of plastics⁷;
 - Separate collection and recycling of bio-waste⁸;
 - Separate collection and recycling of textiles;
 - Recycling of composite and multilayer materials in particular but not limited to carbon or glass fibres. Special attention should be given to face-masks used by the general public for COVID protection purposes, in such case also best practice solutions will be considered;
 - Recovering critical raw materials from waste
 - Sorting and recycling of packaging.

⁶ Value added means recycling into high quality products. For the concept see: Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions 'Towards a circular economy: A zero waste programme for Europe, COM(2014) 398 final of 02.07.2014, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A52014DC0398>.

⁷ This includes plastic packaging and micro-plastic.

⁸ Including anaerobic digestion and composting

- Implementation of innovative solutions for the identification⁹, tracking, separation, prevention and decontamination of waste containing hazardous substances (e.g. asbestos), to enable value-added recycling of the treated waste and safe disposal of the hazardous substances or reducing the scale of the problem within the framework of the project. Special attention should be given to those substances considered as the most harmful for the environment and human health, also known as substances of concern¹⁰.

1.2. Circular Economy and the Environment

- Implementation of business and consumption models or solutions¹¹ to support value chains, particularly the key product value chains set out in the new EU Action Plan for the Circular Economy¹², aiming at reducing or preventing resource use and waste including one or more of the following:
 - Implementation of design for the environmental solutions, including circular design, to improve durability, reparability, reusability, upgradability, recycling and use of recycled content in new products;

These solutions shall aim at reducing impacts holistically¹³ by considering aspects such as: life cycle approach, wide uptake of labelling, green procurement and tracking of raw materials in components and products;
 - Solutions (post-design) to support the implementation, transfer and/or uptake of product durability, reuse and repair, including upgrading and remanufacturing;
 - Support to the implementation, transfer and/or uptake of one or more of the following:
 - a) Product-as-a-service solutions and other business models or technologies to optimise asset use,
 - b) Industrial symbiosis and creation of circular value chains, better tracking resources and matching surplus or by-product materials or recyclable waste across industrial sectors,
 - c) Digital product passports¹⁴.

⁹ Including characterisation and product passport approaches.

¹⁰ Substances having a chronic effect for human health or the environment (Candidate list in REACH and Annex VI to the CLP Regulation) but also those which hamper recycling for safe and high quality secondary raw materials.

¹¹ Circular districts involving creation of circular value chains to boost urban economies whilst producing urban and territorial regeneration will be as well considered.

¹² A new circular economy action plan for a cleaner and more competitive Europe, COM/2020/98 final. The action plan present the following key product value chains: Packaging, Electronics and ICT, Batteries and Vehicles, Plastics, Textiles, Construction and building, Food, Water and nutrients.

¹³ If the concept requires to apply life cycle assessment, projects have to use the Product Environmental Footprint method. The method is an annex to the [Commission Recommendation 2013/179/EU](https://eplca.jrc.ec.europa.eu/permalink/PEF_method.pdf) and is expected to be updated through policy based on the version https://eplca.jrc.ec.europa.eu/permalink/PEF_method.pdf.

¹⁴ A digital product passport (DPP) is gathering data on a product (including its environmental characteristics, from the origin of the materials to environmental performance, durability, reparability, and chemicals of concern...) and its value chain. It contributes to appropriate and efficient value-retaining and value-recovering actions. For both public and private agents, and for individual consumers, the DPP helps to make informed sustainable decisions, and also facilitates market surveillance and access to available information regarding product's compliance with applicable EU

The models and/or solutions proposed should ideally consider the environmental performance of the whole value chain¹⁵, but can equally focus on any specific stage of the value chain. Projects may include, as an element, the development of data to support value chain thinking¹⁶. Particular attention should be given to the involvement and active participation of SMEs.

Priority will be given to projects that minimise or eliminate environmental impact, without simply shifting negative impacts elsewhere or to other stages of the product lifecycle.

Those projects dealing in particular with waste prevention, should, as part of their actions and where relevant, involve citizens, through information and awareness on:

- a) the environmental performance associated with proposed solution throughout its life cycle (to encourage more informed purchases),
- b) the return, collection and recovery systems available and with respect to the meaning of the labels related to ecological performance and recycling affixed on the products.

2. AIR

The thematic priority "Air" focuses on the implementation of air quality legislation and a comprehensive approach to related urban, industrial and rural environmental problems. Effective implementation of clean air legislation forms an essential contribution to 'a zero pollution ambition for a toxic-free environment' announced by the Commission in the European Green Deal and related initiatives. Air pollution remains the most serious environmental health problem in Europe, with a mortality rate more than ten times that from traffic accidents, and it also has a significant impact on ecosystems. Projects should refer to reducing air pollutants, particularly PM, NO_x, and/or ammonia. If reducing emissions of CO₂ is the primary objective, the project should be submitted under the sub-programme for Climate Mitigation and Adaptation.

The Industrial Emissions Directive (IED) is a key instrument for pollution prevention and control from large point sources. Experience with implementation of the IED has allowed for identifying additional needs in terms of public information and the introduction of emerging techniques.

2.1. Air quality legislation and the NEC Directive

Where not explicitly stated otherwise, air quality projects should generally focus on urban areas, or on approaches for rural areas with a large replicability potential in the EU, in order to cover as many people as possible.

legislation. The European Green Deal and the New Circular Economy Action Plan identify the DPP as a way to contribute to effective product policy.

¹⁵ This is directly reflecting the Sustainable Development Goal #12, which calls for sustainable consumption and production patterns. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, provided a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, at its heart are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300>

¹⁶ Development of data on the environmental impacts of different processes, to test the impact of alternative solutions, please refer to previous footnote on Product Environmental Footprint method for life cycle related data.

- **Air quality improvement and emission reduction of particulate matter (PM) in areas:**
 - o with high use of solid fuel like biomass, coal, and peat for domestic heating, or
 - o with high emissions of PM from (re)construction, quarrying, mining, mineral handling, or other dust generating activities, if not covered by the IED

Such projects shall implement one or more of the following:

- technical¹⁷,
 - management,
 - innovative regulatory and/or
 - innovative incentive based solutions¹⁸.
- **Sustainable road transport mobility** aiming at emissions of air pollutants, the reduction of which is essential for helping meet air quality standards, focusing on one or more of the following:
 - reduction of emissions of air pollutants during real world driving conditions (e.g. technical measures for vehicles, eco-driving, measurement and surveillance technology)
 - zero-emission two- or three wheelers and/or analysis for and implementation on a test scale of related infrastructure needs;
 - zero- emission vehicles and related infrastructure needs;
 - the innovative use of alternative fuels;
 - innovative retrofit programmes for vehicles¹⁹;
 - alternative drivetrain technology²⁰;
 - innovative technologies to reduce emissions from wear and tear (e.g. brakes, tyres, road surface);
 - high-impact traffic access systems (such as Low and Zero Emission Zones and road pricing schemes) through advanced access criteria and/or labels e.g. promoting zero-emission vehicles. Priority will be given to projects in urban areas in order to improve the situation for a maximum number of persons;
 - the use of innovative logistic or passenger mobility platforms²¹.
 - Sustainable mobility, other than road transport, including maritime transport, ports, aviation and Non Road Mobile Machinery (NRMM) mobility, including their supporting infrastructure and logistics, for propulsion and/or

¹⁷ E.g. fuel pre-treatment, ultra-low dust technologies, high efficiency and clean combustion and control technologies, combinations with no-emission renewable energy, heat storage, lower emission fuel options.

¹⁸ Please note that the direct payment of incentives in the form of financial support to third parties is subject to restrictions according to the requirements set in the LIFE model Grant Agreement.

¹⁹ Products envisaged include cars as well as motorised two-wheelers and three-wheelers.

²⁰ As, for example, electro-mobility and hydrogen-based mobility.

²¹ E.g. for last mile delivery of goods or urban intermodal passenger mobility.

cargo²². If aiming at reducing emissions from NRMM, projects can address existing NRMM not covered (yet) by Regulation (EU) 2016/1628²³, and/or address improvements to reduce emissions from NRMM already covered by the NRMM Regulation beyond the legal requirements mentioned in it.

- Reduction of ammonia, methane and PM emissions from agriculture in support of the implementation of the upgraded UNECE Code of Good Practice for reducing emissions from agriculture²⁴.

2.2. Industrial Emissions Directive

- Application of pollution prevention and abatement techniques referred to in the Industrial Emissions Directive as emerging techniques or development and application of pollution prevention and abatement techniques, which could qualify as candidate emerging techniques under the Industrial Emissions Directive's BREFs review process. Projects will focus on the reduction of air pollutants and should notably address PM_{2.5}, NO_x, SO₂, NH₃ and/or NMVOCs generated by industrial installations regulated by the Industrial Emissions Directive (IED).

3. WATER

One of the aims of the new Green Deal²⁵ is to restore natural functions of ground and surface water. This is essential to preserve and restore biodiversity in lakes, rivers, wetlands, marine ecosystem, and estuaries, and to prevent and limit damage from floods. Implementing the Farm to Fork' Strategy will contribute to reducing pollution from excess nutrients. In addition, the Commission will propose measures to address pollution from urban runoff and from new or particularly harmful sources of pollution such as micro plastics and hazardous chemicals, including pharmaceuticals. There is also a need to address the combined effects of different pollutants.

Green Deal strategies may support: reduction of pollution through the Farm to Fork Strategy and the Zero Pollution Action Plan, restoration of aquatic nature through the Biodiversity Strategy, addressing sources of chemicals pollution through the Circular Economy Action Plan and the Chemicals Strategy, shift to renewables (except small hydropower) as a result of stepped up climate action, etc.

Taking into account and following up on the findings of the Fitness Check of EU water legislation and the evaluation of the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive, the focus of water actions, both legislative and non-legislative, will be

²² E.g. for cargo: avoiding leakages of air pollutants or dangerous substances into the atmosphere, degassing.

²³ E.g. from Maritime and Inland Waterway Transport, port infrastructure and construction sites. This may include fuel switching (including electricity), low emission fuel (e.g. aviation fuel resulting in low Particle Number emissions), retrofitting with emission reduction technologies or actions to reduce PM from wear and tear (e.g. brakes or railway tracks). Actions can be complemented by the implementation of related urban policies, regulatory approaches and planning. The actions should result in measurable emission reduction of air pollutants such as PM and NO_x.

²⁴ <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=41358>

²⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/info/files/communication-european-green-deal_en

on both water quality and quantity management, as well as coastal and marine waters management:

- integrated approaches for the implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive²⁶;
- actions targeted at the implementation of Floods Directive²⁷;
- actions targeted at the implementation of Marine Strategy Framework Directive²⁸;
- activities to ensure safe and efficient use of water resources, improving quantitative water management and resilience, preserving a high level of water quality and avoiding misuse and deterioration of water resources.

Addressing water quality and quantity in a cost efficient way is a challenge within the EU. Responding to the challenges and opportunities in the water sector requires a holistic approach across a number of actors.

In line with the implementation of the Water Framework Directive and the Flood Directive, projects should focus on developing and particularly implementing actions which can help Member States move to genuinely integrate water resource management, reduce pressures on water quality and quantity, promoting Nature Based Solutions and supporting the EU Biodiversity Strategy where relevant.

Regarding topics of actions targeted at the implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, particular emphasis should be placed on the main pressures and impacts, as well as actions applying Maritime Spatial Planning Directive²⁹ that lead to better integrated coastal zone management and maritime spatial planning.

Regarding topics of actions targeted at the implementation of the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive and the revised Drinking Water Directive, new technologies and processes used to ensure the provision of water services (i.e. production of high quality drinking water and improved treatment of wastewater) need to reach maturity.

3.1. Water quality & quantity

- Improvement of water quality via one or both of the following:
 - Integrated management of nutrients and organic pollution of human (urban) and/or agricultural origin by directly removing pollution. The solutions foreseen should be innovative and should be identified as a result of a comprehensive gap analysis³⁰ defining the measures needed

²⁶ 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

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2000:327:0001:0072:EN:PDF>

²⁷ Directive 2007/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2007 on the assessment and management of flood risks

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2007:288:0027:0034:EN:PDF>

²⁸ 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)

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2008:164:0019:0040:EN:PDF>

²⁹ Directive 2014/89/EU - Maritime Spatial Planning

³⁰ An analysis of the gap between the current status of water bodies and the reduction in pressures necessary to reach the good status objective as derived from derives from Art. 11(1) of the Water

on a river basin scale or catchment scale to allow for the achievement of the Water Framework Directive and Marine Strategy Framework Directive requirements, taking into account what has been delivered via the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive³¹, Nitrates Directive³², Bathing Water Directive³³ and Groundwater Directive³⁴ requirements.

- Innovative solutions for the reduction of pressures from chemical pollutants in the water environment by reducing emissions of priority substances³⁵ and other chemicals identified as river basin specific pollutants at source, through the use of appropriate substitutes³⁶ or alternative technologies. This should include, where relevant, other pollutants such as pharmaceuticals and (micro) plastics.
- Implementation of flood and/or drought risk management actions by applying at least one of the following:
- Nature-based solutions consisting in natural water retention measures that increase infiltration and storage of water and remove pollutants through natural or "natural-like" processes including re-naturalisation of river, lake, estuary and coastal morphology and/or re-creation of associated habitats including flood- and marsh plains;
 - Innovative prevention and protection tools and techniques for support of policy, land use planning, risk reduction, post-event resilience and emergency management and/or
 - Innovative integrated risk assessment and management approaches taking into account social vulnerability and aiming at improved resilience while ensuring social acceptance.
- Innovative projects addressing hydro morphological pressures identified in River Basin Management Plans and originating from land or water uses in

Framework Directive, according to which Member States have to establish programmes of measures "taking account of the results of the analyses required under Article 5" (analysis of pressures and impacts), "in order to achieve the objectives established under Article 4" (good status). Art. 11(8) also specifies that the programmes of measures have to be reviewed every six years. For more see the WFD Reporting Guidance 2016, http://cdr.eionet.europa.eu/help/WFD/WFD_521_2016/Guidance/WFD_ReportingGuidance.pdf, in particular chapter 10.1.8.2, p. 245 (description of what Member States have to report in terms of gap indicators for each significant pressure type or chemical substance) and sections 10.1.4 and 10.1.5.

³¹ Council Directive 91/271/EEC of 21 May 1991 on urban waste-water treatment (OJ L 135, 30.5.1991, p. 40–52).

³² Council Directive 91/676/EEC of 12 December 1991 on the protection of waters against pollution caused by nitrates from agricultural sources (OJ L 375, 31.12.1991, p. 1–8).

³³ Directive 2006/7/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 February 2006 on the management of bathing water quality and repealing Directive 76/160/EEC (OJ L 64, 4.3.2006, p. 37–51).

³⁴ Directive 2006/118/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 December 2006 on the protection of groundwater against pollution and deterioration (OJ L 372, 27.12.2006, p. 19–31).

³⁵ Directive 2013/39/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 August 2013 amending Directives 2000/60/EC and 2008/105/EC as regards priority substances in the field of water policy (OJ L 226, 24.8.2013, p. 1–17)

³⁶ 'Appropriate substitutes' are other chemical substances, which produce the same desired effects with a reduced environmental impact.

order to achieve good water status or potential as required by the Water Framework Directive objectives and attain the objectives of the EU Biodiversity Strategy. This could include projects working on development of sediment transport management techniques and solutions, ensuring ecological flow, removal of obstacles, etc.

- Implementation of innovative **water saving measures** in order to reduce the quantitative and qualitative pressures on water bodies/resources. This includes measures for reduction of over-abstraction of water taking into account circular economy measures.

3.2. Marine and coastal water management

- Application of innovative solutions (tools, technologies or practices) to ensure the protection and conservation of the seas, oceans and their coasts, by fostering sustainable human activities within the marine environment. This would include initiatives aimed at reducing the pressure of human activities on the marine environment, and addressing at least one of the following topics of high concern:
 - underwater noise,
 - marine litter and/or contaminants (addressed at source or in the sea - giving priority to prevention rather than clean-up),
 - disturbance of and damage to the sea floor,
 - examination and reduction of impacts of deep sea exploitation and exploration ,
 - over-fishing and/or incidental by-catch,
 - nutrient and organic matter inputs from agriculture or aquaculture and/or
 - navigation (e.g. from dredging navigation channels, from shipping highways).

3.3. Water services

- Application of innovative technologies and tools for drinking water and urban wastewater treatment systems, through at least one of the following:
 - the use of resource efficient processes for the provision of water services³⁷,
 - the use of processes to diminish the presence of pollutants of emerging concern,

³⁷ E.g. aiming to reduce energy consumption for the treatment and management of water and water losses.

- the treatment of drinking water and/or waste water for reuse that can ensure highest safety levels, e.g. treatment efficacy for pathogen (viruses, bacteria) removal.
- Application of innovative tools ensuring the resource efficient provision of water services compliant with the revised Drinking Water Directive and the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive to population living in rural areas³⁸.
- Improvement of the efficiency and effectiveness of innovative solutions and/or innovative treatment options regarding recycled/reclaimed water, implementing one or more of the following:
 - Concepts for (alternative) water supply, wastewater treatment, reuse (where applicable, in accordance to Regulation (EU) 2020/741 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 May 2020 on minimum requirements for water reuse PE/12/2020/INIT) recovery and recycling of resources³⁹;
 - Source control methods and on-site technologies for decreased discharges of pollutants of emerging concern (e.g. pharmaceuticals¹³, nanoparticles, textile fibres) and/or pathogens with wastewater effluent;
 - Systematic approaches to avoid loss of water, energy and resources in industrial production and/or in provision of water services.

4. SOIL

Contribute to the soil-related commitments set in the EU Biodiversity Strategy towards 2030:

- Implementation of actions to protect the quality of EU's soil, including innovative actions:
 - encourage transition to sustainable practices of soil and land management, promote and scale up innovative soil and land management techniques and scale-up the implementation of the sustainable soil management with a view to eliminate and prevent adverse effects (erosion, pollution, loss of soil organic carbon, etc.) and negative impacts on provided soil ecosystem services and/or,
 - prepare for extreme weather events and combat desertification, in order to increase resilience of agricultural and tourism sectors to climate threats (e.g. floods, soil erosion and droughts) by scaling up the implementation of effective nature based solutions.
- Restoration, protection and improvement of soil health and prevention of soil degradation including soil loss also through innovative actions:
 - sustain soil fertility and soil biodiversity, restore them after pollution and enhance their capacity to improve water quality,

³⁸ Population living in rural areas is the population living outside urban areas. Urban areas are identified through the following method: 1. a population density threshold (300 inhabitants per km²) applied to grid cells of 1 km²; 2. a minimum size threshold (5,000 inhabitants) applied to grouped grid cells above the density threshold. For more information see: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Urban-rural_typology.

³⁹ E.g. land nutrients (P, K, N) and organic compounds.

- apply cost-effective investigation, assessment and remediation solutions for point-source and diffuse soil contamination,
- support to sustainable soil and land management practices, including those specifically intended to remove CO₂,
- address soil degradation including soil loss to preserve land resources ('land degradation neutrality') and/or,
- apply cost-effective solutions to unseal already sealed areas.

5. *NOISE*

Under this heading, priority will be given to projects in urban areas in order to improve the situation for a maximum number of persons.

- Substantial reduction of noise inside densely populated urban areas through solutions with high environmental and economic sustainability; for instance, by using low noise surfaces and/or tyres having life cycle costs comparable to those of standard surfaces and/or tyres, low height barriers with low landscape impact and eco-friendly materials, or lowering noise from railway traffic or airports.

6. *CHEMICALS*

- Prevention and Reduction of the impact on the environment or human health, of hazardous substances, in particular at least one of the following:
 - Substances identified as being of concern (including endocrine disruptors and persistent substances)⁴⁰;
 - combination effects of substances;
 - nanomaterials;
 - biocidal products and/or pesticides;
 - PFAS (Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances).

This shall be reached through innovation for safe and sustainable by design approaches for chemicals, materials and products and promotion of the phasing out of substances of concern.

- Prevention and Reduction of the impact on the environment or human health of chemical production and use across the value chain to promote:
 - a. the development of green and digital/smart technologies
 - b. advanced materials
 - c. low-carbon and low environmental impact industrial production and use of chemicals
- Digital innovations for advanced tools, methods and models, and data analysis capacities to also move away from animal testing.
- Implementation of safe- and sustainable-by-design solutions, including through the development, commercialisation, deployment and uptake of safe- and sustainable-by-design substances, material and product. The

⁴⁰ Substances identified as having a chronic effect for human health or the environment (*inter alia* Candidate list in REACH and Annex VI to the CLP Regulation).

overall sustainability should be ensured by minimising the whole environmental footprint in particular on climate change, resource use, ecosystems and biodiversity from a life cycle perspective.

- Facilitation of the implementation of the Seveso III Directive (Directive 2012/18/EU) on the control of major-accident hazards involving dangerous substances through deployment of particularly cost-effective methodological tools for carrying out human health and environmental risk mapping, and for addressing domino effects. Projects shall foresee the demonstrative application of these tools by different duty holders and implement risk preventing or reducing measures on their basis.

7. *A NEW EUROPEAN BAUHAUS*

On January 2021, the Commission launched the New European Bauhaus (NEB) initiative, an environmental, economic and cultural project to combine design, sustainability, accessibility and affordability in order to help deliver the European Green Deal. It is suitable to develop synergies for supporting this initiative under LIFE Circular economy and quality of life and LIFE Nature and Biodiversity, including for showcasing the potential of the Bauhaus initiative in third countries associated to the LIFE Programme.

In particular, the following project proposals that contribute to the implementation of the New European Bauhaus initiative will be given priority for LIFE support:

- Proposals focussed on a holistic reduction⁴¹ of environmental impacts of new buildings;
- Proposals on circular districts involving creation of circular value chains to boost urban economies whilst producing urban and territorial regeneration.
- Proposals for maintaining or restoring biodiversity that contribute to the implementation of the New European Bauhaus initiative. This may include, for example, demonstrating biodiversity friendly practise for the energetic isolation of buildings, innovative architectural approaches for wildlife-friendly buildings, etc.

Scope – Activities that can be funded

The present Call topic targets Standard Action Projects (SAP) aimed at achieving the objectives of the Circular Economy and Quality of Life sub-programme. SAP are defined in section 2 (Type of Action) while the general objectives of the sub-programme in section 1 ('Circular Economy and Quality of Life').

SAP focussing exclusively on environmental governance are excluded from this Call topic and covered by the related Call topic named LIFE-2023-SAP-ENV-GOV.

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

Applicants are expected to define, calculate, explain and achieve the expected

⁴¹ Considering aspects such as life cycle approach and green procurement

impacts as described in the Award criterion 'Impact' (see section 9).

All LIFE proposals will have to report on their expected outputs and impacts taking into account the LIFE Key Performance indicators (KPIs). These KPIs will contribute to evaluating the impact of the LIFE proposals on an environmental but also socio-economic level (e.g. via actions impacting the local economy and population).

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

In case Part C does not include impact indicators that are important for 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

Standard Action Projects (SAPs) — 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.

LIFE-2023-SAP-ENV-GOV — Environmental Governance

Objectives-Themes and priorities

The aim is to facilitate the transition toward a sustainable, circular, toxic-free, energy-efficient/climate-resilient economy and toward a toxic-free environment as well as to protect, restore and improve the quality of the environment.

The specific objective is to cover one or more of the following topics (the description is further detailed in the sections afterwards):

1. Activities in support of public administrations' decision-making and voluntary approaches
2. Environmental compliance assurance and access to justice
3. Behavioral change and awareness-raising initiatives

Please note that the assessment of the extent to which the project is in line with the specific priorities of the call (part of Award criterion 1) will be done **exclusively on**

the basis of the topics identified and described under section 'Compliance with LIFE programme objectives and call topic' of the Standard Application Form. Please also note **that a maximum of two sub-topics will be considered** (e.g.: "Activities in support of public administration (...) voluntary approaches" and "Behavioral change (...) initiatives").

1. ACTIVITIES IN SUPPORT OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATIONS' DECISION-MAKING AND VOLUNTARY APPROACHES

- Improving the capacity of public administration to implement a holistic vision of the environment, including managing, monitoring, assessing environmental plans, programmes and initiatives, by involving responsible authorities, also through institutional collaboration at different territorial level and/or where appropriate in partnership with private entities, with a view to develop synergies, to reduce administrative burden and/or to optimise environmental outcomes. These activities will contribute, where applicable, to the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development Goals.

One or more of the following shall be targeted:

- Plans, programmes, initiatives, analyses, reviews and assessments
 - National air pollution control programmes⁴²;
 - Air Quality Plans
 - Programmes of measures, analyses and reviews associated with the River Basin Management Plans;
 - Flood risk management plans⁴³;
 - Nitrate action plans⁴⁴;
 - Waste management plans⁴⁵;
 - National or Regional Circular Economy Action Plans, Strategies, Roadmaps or similar⁴⁵;
 - Actions, Measures and Plans to implement the Green City Accord⁴⁶ ;

⁴² Directive 2016/2284/EU on the reduction of national emissions of certain atmospheric pollutants, OJL 344, 17.12.2016, p. 1.

⁴³ 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. 27–34).

⁴⁴ Directive 91/676/EEC concerning the protection of waters against pollution caused by nitrates from agricultural sources, OJL 375, p. 31.12.1991, p 1.

⁴⁵ Such Plans, Strategies, Roadmaps or similar shall: be officially approved, include specific and measurable actions, or targets, with a clear timetable and be in line with or complement the objectives of the EU Circular Economy Action Plan.

⁴⁶ Under the Green City Accord, EU Local authorities commit to making their cities, greener, cleaner and healthier by achieving the following five goals by 2030: 1) A significant improvement in air quality, 2) important progress in improving water quality and efficiency of water use, 3) considerable progress in conserving and enhancing urban biodiversity, 4) significant improvement in the management of municipal waste, reduction in waste generation and landfilling, increase in re-use, repair and recycling thereby advancing the Circular Economy, 5) a significant reduction in noise pollution.

- National Radon Action Plans⁴⁷

and/or

- Decisions related to:
 - industrial emissions;
 - waste management;
 - water pollution and water abstraction⁴⁸.
- Development, promotion, implementation and/or harmonisation of one or more of the following voluntary instruments and approaches and their use by entities aiming at reducing the environmental impact of their activities, products and services:
 - Third-party verification of the performance of innovative technologies when they are ready for the market;
 - Product environmental footprint category rules (PEFCR) and/or organisation environmental footprint sectoral rules (OEFSR) at European level for products and sectors not yet covered by the existing PEFCRs/OEFSRs and related high-quality data bases, based on the latest available version of the European environmental footprint methods⁴⁹ and the latest available guidance⁵⁰;
 - The EU Ecolabel⁵¹, for the promotion of products (goods and services) with excellent environmental performance, in all sectors concerned and in particular in tourism and finance, and as a tool to promote sustainable consumption patterns and lifestyles. In a broader perspective, fostering the use of officially recognised ecolabels⁵² ;
 - Actions, services, networks and innovative business models for fostering the use of reused, repaired, refurbished, remanufactured also linked to

⁴⁷ Council Directive 2013/59/EURATOM, of 5 December 2013, laying down basic safety standards for protection against the dangers arising from exposure to ionising radiation

⁴⁸ Including the analysis necessary to establish effective water pricing policies.

⁴⁹ Commission Recommendation of 9 April 2013 on the use of common methods to measure and communicate the life cycle environmental performance of products and organizations, OJ 124/1, 4.5.2013, p. 1–210. See also https://eplca.jrc.ec.europa.eu/permalink/PEF_method.pdf and https://eplca.jrc.ec.europa.eu/permalink/OEF_method.pdf

⁵⁰ [https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/wikis/display/EUENVFP/Documents+of+common+interest.____The+development+of+PEFCRs+and+OEFSRs+has+to+respect+processes+established+at+EU+level+for+developing+them.+Projects+will+only+be+accepted+if+there+are+open+opportunities+\(e.g.+calls+for+volunteers/expression+of+interest\)+for+the+development+of+PEFCRs/OEFSRs.+See+https://eplca.jrc.ec.europa.eu/permalink/PEF_method.pdf](https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/wikis/display/EUENVFP/Documents+of+common+interest.____The+development+of+PEFCRs+and+OEFSRs+has+to+respect+processes+established+at+EU+level+for+developing+them.+Projects+will+only+be+accepted+if+there+are+open+opportunities+(e.g.+calls+for+volunteers/expression+of+interest)+for+the+development+of+PEFCRs/OEFSRs.+See+https://eplca.jrc.ec.europa.eu/permalink/PEF_method.pdf) and https://eplca.jrc.ec.europa.eu/permalink/OEF_method.pdf

⁵⁰ Commission Recommendation of 9 April 2013 on the use of common methods to measure and communicate the life cycle environmental performance of products and organizations, OJ 124/1, 4.5.2013, p. 1–210. See also https://eplca.jrc.ec.europa.eu/permalink/PEF_method.pdf and https://eplca.jrc.ec.europa.eu/permalink/OEF_method.pdf

⁵⁰ [https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/wikis/display/EUENVFP/Documents+of+common+interest.____The+development+of+PEFCRs+and+OEFSRs+has+to+respect+processes+established+at+EU+level+for+developing+them.+Projects+will+only+be+accepted+if+there+are+open+opportunities+\(e.g.+calls+for+volunteers/expression+of+interest\)+for+the+development.eu/permalink/OEF_method.pdf](https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/wikis/display/EUENVFP/Documents+of+common+interest.____The+development+of+PEFCRs+and+OEFSRs+has+to+respect+processes+established+at+EU+level+for+developing+them.+Projects+will+only+be+accepted+if+there+are+open+opportunities+(e.g.+calls+for+volunteers/expression+of+interest)+for+the+development.eu/permalink/OEF_method.pdf)

⁵¹ <https://ec.europa.eu/environment/ecolabel/>

⁵² <https://ec.europa.eu/environment/ecolabel/useful-links.html>

product durability and planned obsolescence⁵³; Development of indicators linked to product policy.

- Green and Circular Public Procurement⁵⁴: common tender specifications and/or uptake monitoring tools for public authorities with similar purchasing needs, in order to foster uptake. The option of making public procurement green compulsory should be considered;
- Linking regulatory, financial or reputational incentives to environmental performance by using EMAS⁵⁵;
- Assessment and reporting of the sustainability performance of buildings⁵⁶, using Level(s), the building framework with core indicators⁵⁷.

2. ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE ASSURANCE AND ACCESS TO JUSTICE

- Supporting environmental compliance assurance by

- establishing new or, where in place, enhancing existing cross-border, national or regional networks of environmental compliance assurance practitioners or experts; and/or establishing or, where in place, improving professional qualifications and training⁵⁸ to improve compliance with binding EU environmental instruments (other than on nature and biodiversity), through promoting, checking and enforcing compliance, and applying the polluter pays principle, using a mix of administrative law, criminal law and environmental liability⁵⁹; and/or
- by developing and implementing strategies and policies and/or developing and using innovative tools and actions to promote, monitor and enforce compliance with binding EU environmental instruments (other than on nature and biodiversity), and ensure application of the polluter pays principles through environmental liability; and/or
- engaging with citizens and others to promote and monitor compliance, and ensure application of environmental liability⁶⁰.

Explanatory note:

Environmental compliance assurance practitioners can include those working for authorities and bodies with compliance assurance responsibilities such as local, regional, police and customs authorities, environment agencies and inspectorates, supreme public audit bodies and the judiciary. They can also include non-governmental organisations and academics and researchers specialised in one or more aspects of compliance assurance. With regard to professional qualifications and training, projects should ensure academic credentials and maximise the

⁵³ E.g. with a usage counter, a reduced VAT for repair, extension of the legal guarantee, etc.

⁵⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/environment/gpp/index_en.htm

⁵⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/environment/emas/index_en.htm

⁵⁶ http://susproc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/Efficient_Buildings/

⁵⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/environment/topics/circular-economy/levels_en

⁵⁸ Projects should ensure the academic credentials of the qualifications and training and maximise the potential of information technology through means such as webinars and massive open online courses (MOOCs) to allow distance learning reach as many practitioners as cost-effectively as possible.

⁵⁹ See in particular the Environmental Liability Directive, Directive 2004/35/EC on environmental liability with regard to the prevention and remedying of environmental damage, OJL 143, 30.4.2004, p. 56–75.

⁶⁰ See VadeMecum on complaint-handling and citizen engagement, adopted by the Environmental Compliance and Governance Forum in 2019, and summary guide for national administrations.

potential of information technology through means such as webinars and massive open online courses (MOOCs) to allow distance learning to reach as many practitioners as cost-effectively as possible. Promotion systems and techniques could involve the use of guidance, advisory services, awareness-raising campaigns, partnership agreements, or self-monitoring systems that assist duty-holders to comply. Strategies and policies are aimed at high-level organization of activities and interventions, especially risk-based ones. Monitoring systems and techniques could relate to site inspections, surveillance (including through use of satellites and drones), spot checks, intelligence-gathering, industry analysis, police investigation, data analysis and environmental audits. Follow-up and enforcement techniques can have a similarly wide coverage. Electronic complaint-handling systems, hot lines, citizen observatories and other citizen science platforms can all facilitate citizen engagement. Citizen science platforms may, amongst other things, allow competent national, regional and local authorities to engage citizens in state-of-the-environment and other forms of monitoring, while also generating more harmonised and useable data.

- Promoting effective public participation and access to justice in environmental matters⁶¹ amongst the public, NGOs, lawyers, the judiciary, public administrations or other stakeholders with a view to improving knowledge, understanding and application of effective means of public participation⁶² and/or access to justice, with a particular focus on protecting people's health and well-being and protecting the quality of the environment via the requirements of EU air, water and waste and environmental liability instruments⁶³. Projects should draw on existing modules and know-how in the area of environmental law training developed by the Commission and the Commission Notice on access to justice in environmental matters and related materials⁶⁴.

3. *BEHAVIORAL CHANGE AND AWARENESS-RAISING INITIATIVES*

The geographical scope of behavioural change and awareness-raising initiatives will be taken into account in the assessment of the European added value of proposed projects.

Raising awareness on environmental problems, EU environmental policies, tools and/or legislation among the relevant target audiences, aiming to change their perceptions and fostering the adoption of environmentally friendly behaviours and practices and/or direct citizen's engagement. Applicants need to provide substantial evidence that a change of awareness levels⁶⁵ in the field(s) addressed by the project is a crucial factor supporting correct implementation and/or future development of EU environmental policies tools and/or legislation. The awareness-raising activities should have the widest coverage relevant for the specific issue targeted⁶⁶. These activities will contribute, where applicable, to

⁶¹ See in particular, Commission Communication on Improving Access to justice environmental matters (COM(2020) 64) and the Commission Notice on access to justice in environmental matters (2017/2616, OJ C 275, 18.8.2017, p. 1-39.)

⁶² Using for example online platforms.

⁶³ The Environmental Liability Directive is relevant for access to justice.

⁶⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/environment/legal/law/training_package.htm

⁶⁵ Awareness level is defined here as the proportion of target audience who knows of the idea/term/product/concept/environmental challenge/etc. that is the subject of the proposed LIFE project's work.

⁶⁶ As a general principle, these proposals should therefore, e.g. fully target a Member State, several Member States or the entire EU, a whole market sector, a major metropolitan area.

the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development Goals. The environmental problems, EU environmental policies, tools and/or legislation targeted should be directly linked to one or more of the priorities included in:

- The European Green Deal to raise awareness on the environmental impacts to underpin the transformative changes towards more sustainable food, energy, mobility and building systems and to mainstream environmental considerations across policies and activities in line with the EGD oath to do no harm;
- The Circular Economy Action Plan to ensure waste prevention and reduction, sustainable production, sustainable products, services and business models, sustainable consumption and transformation of consumption patterns in particular in the sectors that use most resources and pose higher sustainability challenges, namely textiles, chemicals (including plastics), construction and buildings, electronics and ICT, batteries and vehicles;
- The Zero Pollution Action Plan addressing the protection of citizens from environmental pressures and risks to health as a result of Europe's zero-pollution ambition and measures for a toxic-free environment including, in particular, sustainability in the use and management of chemicals and promoting clean air.

Scope – Activities that can be funded

The present Call topic targets Standard Action Projects (SAP) aimed at achieving the objectives of the Circular Economy and Quality of Life sub-programme. SAP are defined in section 2 (Type of Action) while the general objectives of the sub-programme in section 1 ('Circular Economy and Quality of Life').

This call topic focus exclusively on environmental governance projects, other projects as defined in the related Call topic named LIFE-2023-SAP-ENV-ENVIRONMENT as well as LIFE-2023-SAP-NAT-GOV are excluded.

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

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

All LIFE proposals will have to report on their expected outputs and impacts taking into account the LIFE Key Performance indicators (KPIs). These KPIs will contribute to evaluating the impact of the LIFE proposals on an environmental but also socio-economic level (e.g. via actions impacting the local economy and population).

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

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

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

Standard Action Projects (SAPs) — 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.

3. Available budget

The estimated available call budget is **EUR 81 000 000**.

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

Topic	Topic budget	Indicative range of project budgets	Estimated number of projects to be funded
LIFE-2023-SAP-ENV-ENVIRONMENT — Circular Economy, resources from Waste, Air, Water, Soil, Noise, Chemicals, Bauhaus	EUR 74 000 000 (of which EUR 8,000,000 for Bauhaus sub-topic)	EUR 2-10 mln	31 projects
LIFE-2023-SAP-ENV-GOV — Environment governance	EUR 7 000 000	EUR 0,7 - 2 mln	7 projects

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

4. Timetable and deadlines

Timetable and deadlines(indicative)	
Call opening:	18 April 2023
<u>Deadline for submission:</u>	<u>06 September 2023 – 17:00:00 CET</u> (Brussels)

Information on evaluation results:	February 2024
GA signature:	May/June 2024

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 depending on whether the call has one or two submission stages. For stage 1 (concept note), some sections are not applicable (noted as n/a); for stage 2 (full proposal), all sections must be completed.

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

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

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

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

- Application Form Part B — contains the technical description of the project (*to be downloaded from the Portal Submission System, completed and then assembled and re-uploaded*)
- Part C (*to be filled in directly online*) containing additional project data
- **mandatory annexes and supporting documents** (*templates available to be downloaded from the Portal Submission System, completed, assembled and re-uploaded*):
 - Detailed budget table
 - Participant information
- **optional annexes:**

- Letters of support
- Cofinancing declarations
- Maps
- Description of sites
- Description of species and habitats (N/A)
- Activity Annual report (N/A)
- Other annexes (for example: Lifecycle analysis, Business plans 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 **120 pages** (Part B). Evaluators will not consider any additional pages.

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

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

6. Eligibility

Applications will only be considered eligible if their content corresponds wholly (or at least in part) to the topic description for which it is 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 or countries which are in ongoing negotiations for an association

agreement and where the agreement enters into force before grant signature ([list of participating countries](#)⁶⁷)

- 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 persons⁶⁸.

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'⁶⁹. ⚠ 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 (*see above*) may participate in the call and can sign grants if the negotiations are concluded before grant signature (with retroactive effect, if provided in the agreement).

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)*⁷⁰ and entities

⁶⁷ 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.

⁶⁸ See Article 197(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

⁶⁹ For the definitions, see Articles 187(2) and 197(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

⁷⁰ 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](#).

covered by Commission Guidelines No [2013/C 205/05](#)⁷¹). 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

n/a

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 LIFE-2023-SAP-ENV-ENVIRONMENT and LIFE-2023-SAP-ENV-GOV for grants and prizes 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.

Geographic location (target countries)

Proposals must relate to activities taking place in the eligible countries (*see above*). Activities outside the eligible countries must be necessary to achieve the EU environmental and climate objectives and ensure the effectiveness of interventions carried within the eligible countries (e.g. actions aimed at the conservation of migratory birds in wintering areas, actions implemented on a trans boundary river, or

⁷¹ Commission guidelines No [2013/C 205/05](#) on the eligibility of Israeli entities and their activities in the territories occupied by Israel since June 1967 for grants, prizes and financial instruments funded by the EU from 2014 onwards (OJEU C 205 of 19.07.2013, pp. 9-11).

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).

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 participate⁷²:

- 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 misconduct⁷³ (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- committed fraud, corruption, links to a criminal organisation, money laundering, terrorism-related crimes (including terrorism financing), child labour or human trafficking (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- shown significant deficiencies in complying with main obligations under an EU procurement contract, grant agreement, prize, expert contract, or similar (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- guilty of irregularities within the meaning of Article 1(2) of EU Regulation [2988/95](#) (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- created under a different jurisdiction with the intent to circumvent fiscal, social or other legal obligations in the country of origin or created another entity with 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 that⁷⁴:

- during the award procedure they misrepresented information required as a condition for participating or failed to supply that information

⁷² See Articles 136 and 141 of EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

⁷³ 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.

⁷⁴ See Article 141 EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

- they were previously involved in the preparation of the call and this entails a distortion of competition that cannot be remedied otherwise (conflict of interest).

8. Evaluation and award procedure


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

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

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

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

All proposals will be informed about the evaluation result (**evaluation result letter**). Successful proposals will be invited for grant preparation; the other ones will be put on the reserve list or rejected. Proposals that are below the budget threshold (i.e. passed, but not ranked high enough to receive funding) will be awarded a **Seal of Excellence**⁷⁵.

 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.

⁷⁵ 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.

9. Award criteria

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

1. Relevance (0-20 points)

- Relevance of the contribution to one or several of the specific objectives of the LIFE Programme and the targeted sub-programme
- Extent to which the proposal is in line with the description included in the call for proposals, including, where relevant, its specific priorities
- 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
- Quality of the measures for the exploitation of project results
- Potential for the project results to be replicated in the same or other sectors or places, or to be up-scaled by public or private actors or through mobilising larger investments or financial resources (catalytic potential).

3. Quality (0-20 points)

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

4. Resources (0-20 points)

- Composition of the project team - in terms of expertise, skills and responsibilities and appropriateness of the management structure
- Appropriateness of the budget and resources and their consistency with the work plan
- Transparency of the budget, i.e. the cost items should be sufficiently described
- 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

Bonus points:

- **Bonus 1:** The proposal offers exceptional synergies and promotes significant co-benefits between LIFE sub-programmes. (2 points).

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

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

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

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

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

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 24 and 120 months indicatively (extensions are possible, if duly justified and through an amendment).

Milestones and deliverables

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

Form of grant, funding rate and maximum grant amount

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

Project budget (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 cost⁷⁶: Yes
 - volunteers unit cost⁷⁷: Yes (without indirect costs)
- travel and subsistence unit cost⁷⁸: 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 or action; annex 5))
- other cost categories:
 - costs for financial support to third parties: allowed for grants and prizes; maximum total amount for financial support to third parties EUR 100.000; maximum amount per third party EUR 20.000.
 - 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)

⁷⁶ Commission [Decision](#) of 20 October 2020 authorising the use of unit costs for the personnel costs of the owners of small and medium-sized enterprises and beneficiaries that are natural persons not receiving a salary for the work carried out by themselves under an action or work programme (C(2020)7115).

⁷⁷ 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).

⁷⁸ 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).

- VAT: non-deductible VAT is eligible (but please note that since 2013 VAT paid by beneficiaries that are public bodies acting as public authority is NOT eligible)
- other:
 - in-kind contributions for free are allowed, but cost-neutral, i.e. they cannot be declared as cost
 - kick-off meeting: costs for kick-off meeting organised by the granting authority are eligible (travel costs for maximum 2 persons, return ticket to Brussels and accommodation for one night) only if the meeting takes place after the project starting date set out in the Grant Agreement; the starting date can be changed through an amendment, if needed
 - project websites: communication costs for presenting the project on the participants' websites or social media accounts are eligible; costs for separate project websites are not eligible unless duly justified by the project objectives
 - common information and dissemination activities: foresee resources to increase synergies between, and the visibility of LIFE and EU supported actions
 - other ineligible costs: No

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

Reporting and payment arrangements

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


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

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

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

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

All payments will be made to the coordinator.

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

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

Prefinancing guarantees

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

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

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

Prefinancing guarantees are formally NOT linked to individual consortium members, which means that you are free to organise how to provide the guarantee amount (*by one or several beneficiaries, for the overall amount or several guarantees for partial amounts, by the beneficiary concerned or by another beneficiary, etc*). It is however important that the requested amount is covered and that the guarantee(s) are sent to us 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):


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

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

Contact

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

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

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

13. Important

IMPORTANT

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

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

- **Coordinator** — In multi-beneficiary grants, the beneficiaries participate as consortium (group of beneficiaries). They will have to choose a coordinator, who will take care of the project management and coordination and will represent the consortium towards the granting authority. In mono-beneficiary grants, the single beneficiary will automatically be coordinator.
- **Affiliated entities** — Applicants may participate with affiliated entities (i.e. entities linked to a beneficiary which participate in the action with similar rights and obligations as the beneficiaries, but do not sign the grant and therefore do not become beneficiaries themselves). They will get a part of the grant money and must therefore comply with all the call conditions and be validated (just like beneficiaries); but they do not count towards the minimum eligibility criteria for consortium composition (if any).
- **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).
- **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.
- **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).
- **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 a 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 one of them (or it will be rejected).
- **Resubmission** — Proposals may be changed and re-submitted until the deadline for submission.
- **Rejection** — By submitting the application, all applicants accept the call conditions set out in this this Call Document (and the documents it refers to). Proposals that do not comply with all the call conditions will be **rejected**. This applies also to applicants: All applicants need to fulfil the criteria; if any one of them doesn't, they must be replaced or the entire proposal will be rejected.
- **Cancellation** — There may be circumstances which may require the cancellation of the call. In this case, you will be informed via a call or topic update. Please note that cancellations are without entitlement to compensation.
- **Language** — You can submit your proposal in any official EU language (project abstract/summary should however always be in English). For reasons of efficiency, we strongly advise you to use English for the entire application.

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

This includes:

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

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

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