



Programme for the Environment and Climate Action (LIFE)

Call for proposals

Strategic Nature and Integrated Projects (SNAP/SIP)
(LIFE-2021-STRAT-two-stage)

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CINEA.D – Natural Resources, Climate, Sustainable Blue Economy and Clean Energy
CINEA D.2 – LIFE Environment (Nature & Circular Economy)
CINEA.D.1 – LIFE Energy + LIFE Climate

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

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0. Introduction

This is a call for proposals for EU **action grants** in the fields of Circular Economy and Quality of Life, Nature and Biodiversity and Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation under the **Programme for Environment and Climate Action (LIFE)**.

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

- Regulation 2018/1046 ([EU Financial Regulation](#))
- the basic act (LIFE Regulation [2021/783](#)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-2021-STRAT-NAT-SNAP-two-stage - Strategic Nature Projects**
- **LIFE-2021-STRAT-ENV-SIP-two-stage - Strategic Integrated Projects - Environment**
- **LIFE-2021-STRAT-CLIMA-SIP-two-stage - Strategic Integrated Projects - Climate Action**

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

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

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

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

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).

- sub-programme Circular Economy and Quality of Life

Climate Action:

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

Nature and Biodiversity

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

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

Circular Economy and Quality of Life

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

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

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

It will contribute to the EU priorities by:

- reducing resource consumption and facilitating the transition toward a sustainable, circular, toxic-free, energy-efficient and climate-resilient economy

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

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

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 Strategic Integrated Projects (SIPs) and Strategic Nature Projects (SNAPs).

SIPs

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

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

- Circular Economy: national or regional circular economy action plans, strategies, roadmaps or similar, which are officially approved, include specific

and measurable actions, or targets, with a clear timeline and are in line with or complement the objectives of the [EU Circular Economy Action Plan](#)⁶.

- Waste: national and regional Waste Management Plans (WMPs) and/or Waste Prevention Programmes pursuant to Articles 28 and 29 of the Waste Framework Directive [2019/1004](#)⁷.
- Water: River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs) pursuant to Annex VII to the Water Framework Directive [2000/60](#)⁸, Flood Risk Management Plans (FRMPs) pursuant to the Floods Directive [2007/60](#)⁹, Marine Strategies pursuant to the Marine Strategy Framework Directive [2008/56](#)¹⁰.
- Air: Air Quality Plans pursuant to the Ambient Air Quality Directive [2008/50](#)¹¹ or National Air Pollution Control Programmes (NAPCP) pursuant to the National Emission Ceilings Directive [2016/2284](#)¹².

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

- National Energy and Climate Plans (NECP) pursuant to Regulation [2018/1999](#) on the Governance of the Energy Union and Climate Action¹³.
- National Energy Efficiency Action Plans (NEEAP).
- National or regional adaptation strategies or action plans.
- Urban or community-based action plans pioneering the transition to a climate neutral and/or climate resilient society.
- National, regional or industry-/sector-specific greenhouse gas mitigation strategies or economy roadmaps contributing to climate neutrality.

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

They should support the plan/strategy/action plan on a large territorial scale, meaning regional, multi-regional, national or transnational¹⁴.

⁶ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions; A new Circular Economy Action Plan For a cleaner and more competitive Europe (COM/2020/98 final).

⁷ 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 of the European Parliament and of the Council (OJ L 163, 20.6.2019, p. 66).

⁸ Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2000 establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy (OJ L 327, 22.12.2000, p. 1).

⁹ 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).

¹⁰ Directive 2008/56/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 June 2008 establishing a framework for community action in the field of marine environmental policy (Marine Strategy Framework Directive) (Text with EEA relevance) (OJ L 164, 25.6.2008, p. 19).

¹¹ Directive 2008/50/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 May 2008 on ambient air quality and cleaner air for Europe (OJ L 152, 11.6.2008, p. 1).

¹² Directive (EU) 2016/2284 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 December 2016 on the reduction of national emissions of certain atmospheric pollutants (OJ L 344, 17.12.2016, p.1).

¹³ Regulation (EU) 2018/1999 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2018 on the Governance of the Energy Union and Climate Action (OJ L 328, 21.12.2018, p. 1).

¹⁴ A multi-city approach or smaller territorial scale may also be acceptable for SIPs dealing with air quality management as long as the project delivers substantial impact.

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

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

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

SNAPs

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

- the Prioritised Action Frameworks (PAF) pursuant to Article 8 of the Habitats Directive [92/43](#)¹⁵ and
- other plans or strategies adopted at international, national, regional or multiregional level by nature and biodiversity authorities, that implement EU nature and/or biodiversity policy or legislation and include specific and measurable actions, or targets, with a clear timeline and budget.

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

They should support the plan/strategy/action plan on a large territorial scale, meaning regional, multi-regional, national or transnational¹⁶.

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

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

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

LIFE-2021-STRAT-NAT-SNAP-two-stage - Strategic Nature Projects

Objectives

The objective of a SNAP project is to implement:

- Prioritised Action Frameworks (PAF) and/or

¹⁵ Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (OJ L 206, 22.7.1992, p. 7).

¹⁶ A multi-city approach or smaller territorial scale may also be acceptable for SNAPs dealing with air quality management as long as the project delivers substantial impact.

- other plans or strategies adopted at international, national, multiregional or regional level by nature and biodiversity authorities, that implement EU nature and/or biodiversity policy or legislation,

through coordination of the available funding and mobilisation of additional funding and with the active engagement of all the relevant stakeholders (*see "additional conditions" further down within this topic*).

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

Scope — Activities that can be funded

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

Implementation of PAF:

As regards PAF implementation, SNAPs should support the further development, implementation and management of the Natura 2000 network, in particular via the development, testing, demonstration and application of conservation methods and practices, improving knowledge base about the nature values of the sites, raising awareness and improving administrative capacity of the beneficiaries and management authorities. These SNAPs may include Green Infrastructure¹⁷ actions if referred to in the PAF, so as to, for instance, improve the structural and functional connectivity of the Natura 2000 sites or the condition of ecosystems and the services they provide¹⁸.

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

A SNAP full proposal cannot be submitted in the absence of a PAF approved/adopted at the appropriate level and submitted to the European Commission which considered it of acceptable quality.

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

Depending on the administrative structures of the Member States, PAFs cover either an entire country or a region. This has a direct impact on the geographical scope of a SNAP as in most cases they would address the implementation of only one PAF.

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

¹⁸ https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/knowledge/ecosystem_assessment/index_en.htm

Nevertheless, applicants may find it appropriate to submit a SNAP covering territories falling under the scope of more than one PAF of the same or a neighbouring country.

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

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

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

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

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

Proposals should present comprehensive projects that will deliver on their core objective and do so in a way that also delivers benefits for other environmental and climate objectives¹⁹.

These additional benefits can include their contribution to the EU biodiversity strategy 2030 as well as the achievement of 'good environmental status' under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, and for achieving Water Framework Directive objectives like the:

- evaluation, assessment and restoration of ecosystems and their services,
- increase of the contribution of agriculture and forestry to biodiversity,

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

- reduction of the impact of fisheries and of other uses of marine and coastal natural resources on biodiversity,
- monitoring, prevention, eradication and control of invasive alien species
- monitoring and conservation of pollinating insects.

Implementation of other plans/strategies:

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

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

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

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

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

Expected impact

- After the project end (3-5 years after): catalysing full implementation of the PAF and/or other eligible plan(s)/strategy(ies)/action plan(s) as per the ones listed in "objectives".

- Significant contribution to the favourable conservation status of natural habitats and species of EU importance maintained and/or restored as per measures identified in PAF.
- Significant contribution to the reduction of pressures on habitats and species and restored degraded ecosystems as per measures identified in other than PAF targeted plan(s)/strategy(ies)/action plan(s).

Funding rate

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

Additional conditions

Ongoing and recurring activities

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

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

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

Activities aiming at establishing the targets and or measures for other strategies not targeted by SNAP

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

Participation to the Natura 2000 Biogeographical Process

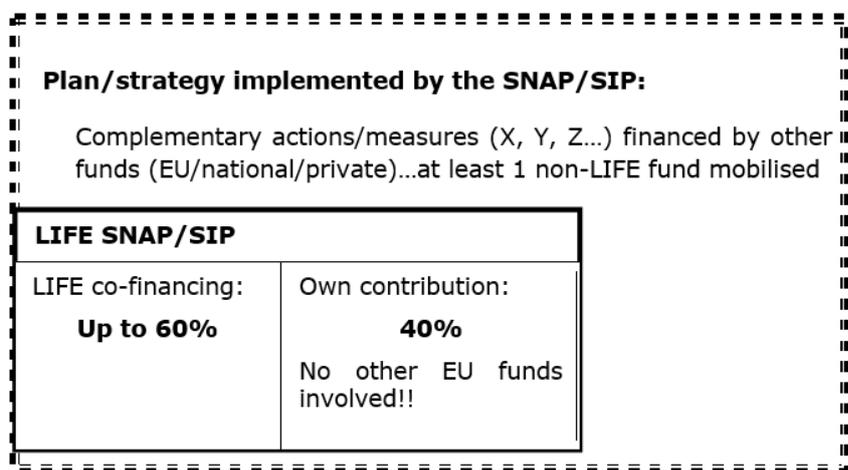
Applicants are strongly encouraged to consider how the SNAP can facilitate active participation of the Member State to the relevant biogeographical process.

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

Requirements related to complementary funds mobilisation/coordination

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

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



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

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

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

Please **check** in the [LIFE projects database](#) examples of ongoing integrated projects from the period 2014-2020 to see examples of coordinated or mobilised complementary funds.

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

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

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

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

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

- has not been granted to or spent by one of the beneficiaries of the SNAP before the launch of this call for applications. In exceptional cases and having explicit justifications from the applicants, funds granted before that date can also be accepted but under no circumstances will funds granted or spent before the launch of the LIFE2020 call (02/04/2020) be accepted; and
- has been committed/confirmed by the relevant funding source by the time of the submission of the full proposal and evidenced by **a formal letter of intent (i.e. Annex "Complementary Funding Declaration")** signed by the competent body representing the funding source **clearly confirming the availability or the actual commitment of the complementary funding**; or
- in the absence of an actual commitment/confirmation by the time of the full proposal, **a formal letter of intent** has been signed by the competent body representing the funding source referred to by the applicant, **confirming the potential eligibility of the actions proposed by the applicant** for funding from this source and indicating **the timing and likelihood of a future funding commitment**.

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

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

- **one letter of intent (Annex "Complementary Funding Declaration") clearly confirming the availability or the actual commitment of the complementary funding to be mobilised**, signed by the competent body representing the funding source, **is submitted with the full proposal**;
- proof is provided of the granting of complementary funds after the launch of the LIFE2020 call (02/04/2020).

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

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

In the application, when speaking about complementary actions the primary focus should be on actions financed by funds genuinely mobilised by the SNAP itself, with a

secondary focus on complementary actions that are, if not mobilised, actively coordinated with the SNAP actions. Actions and funds neither genuinely mobilised nor actively coordinated by the IP shall only be mentioned in case they are needed for the provision of comprehensive information on the implementation of the plan.

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

Stakeholder involvement

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

Project management & coordination with complementary funds

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

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

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

Replicability & transferability

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

This goes beyond transfer of knowledge and networking, and involves putting the techniques, methods or strategies developed or applied in the project into practice

elsewhere. It may be achieved by implementing some of the SNAP actions only within a limited part of the project area and replicating those via complementary actions in the entire area covered by the project and by the plan.

Polluter pays principle & eligibility of actions

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

Land purchase

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

- (i) The land purchase must be clearly related to the objectives of the project.
- (ii) The land purchased must contribute to improving, maintaining or restoring the integrity of the Natura 2000 network.
- (iii) The purchase is the only or most cost-effective way of achieving the desired conservation outcome.
- (iv) The purchased land is reserved in the long-term for uses consistent with the objectives set out in Article 3 of the LIFE Regulation, through the most appropriate form of legal protection.
- (v) The beneficiaries must ensure that the sales contract / notary act and/or entry in the land register includes a guarantee that the land is assigned definitively (without time limitation) to nature conservation purposes. Where both possibilities exist (sales contract and land registry entry), the beneficiaries must use the option that offers the strongest long-term protection. Note that at the latest with the final report, the beneficiaries will have to submit a copy of the sales contract and/or entry in the land register including the above mentioned guarantee. Should they fail to provide such documents, the corresponding land purchase costs and associated costs will be considered ineligible. For countries where it would be illegal to include such a guarantee in both the land register and in the sale contract, the granting authority may accept an equivalent guarantee, provided it offers the same legal level of protection in the long term.
- (vi) The land must be purchased by one of the project beneficiaries who is either a well-established private organisation (e.g. nature conservation NGO or other) or a public body with nature conservation responsibility, and must remain in its ownership after the end of the project.
- (vii) The proposal must demonstrate that each beneficiary that will carry out land purchase has the necessary competence and experience in land purchase for nature conservation, and that the planned target is realistic within the time framework of the project.
- (viii) If the purchasing body is a private organisation, its statutes must include a provision that, in case of dissolution, the land will be transferred to another legal body primarily active in the field of nature conservation (e.g. another conservation NGO or appropriate public body).
- (ix) Evidence must be provided in the proposal that the purchase price is consistent with the current market prices for the type of land and the region

concerned.

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

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

The same conditions for land purchase listed above apply here, as and where appropriate, to these types of payments. The applicant must address each of these conditions in the proposal, explaining how each condition is met or will be met during the project. The duration of a lease must be sufficient to guarantee the durability of the conservation investment (e.g. 30 years or longer). See also the General Conditions of the [Model Grant Agreement](#)²⁰.

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

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

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

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

LIFE-2021-STRAT-ENV-SIP-two-stage - Strategic Integrated Projects - Environment

Objectives

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

²⁰ The Model Grant Agreement that will be used (and all other relevant templates and guidance documents) can be found on [Portal Reference Documents](#).

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

Scope — Activities that can be funded

Circular Economy SIPs:

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

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

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

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

Waste SIPs:

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

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

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

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

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

Water SIPs

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

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

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

SIPs should implement a chosen set of measures identified as necessary in the RBMP in a whole river basin or large sub-catchment.

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

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

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

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

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

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

These SIPs shall support the targeted implementation of measures identified in the flood risk management plans established in Member States, focused on prevention, protection and preparedness pursuant to the Directive on the assessment and management of flood risks.

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

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

- the expected level of implementation of the target FRMPs as a direct consequence of the actions foreseen in the SIP or through the complementary actions financed by other means mobilized in parallel to the SIP;
- the impact of the project in terms of addressing significant flood risks; and
- how the SIP will help delivery of the Floods Directive outside the scope of the SIP - transferability of results especially in terms of the coordination of flood risk management practices with the objectives of the Water Framework Directive, but also coordination in transboundary river basins, including with third countries.

Considerations relevant only to water SIPs targeting Marine Strategies²¹:

These SIPs shall support the targeted implementation of measures or actions that need to be taken in order to achieve or maintain good environmental status in the marine waters of each Member State. These measures or actions should be identified within the Member States' Marine Strategies that have been established pursuant to the Marine Strategy Framework Directive.

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

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

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

Air Quality SIPs

SIPs falling under the thematic priority area of Air shall be designed to support the application, development, testing and demonstration of integrated approaches for the implementation and monitoring of local and regional AQPs as defined by Directive 2008/50/EC with the ultimate goal of contributing to the National Air Pollution Reduction Programmes.

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

In case the Air SIP is based on one or more regional AQPs, the LIFE SIP projects should include coordination and cooperation between all local administrations and regional administrations concerned.

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

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

The proposals should therefore address the following aspects:

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

Expected impact

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

Funding rate

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

Additional conditions

Requirements related to complementary funds mobilisation/coordination

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

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

LIFE SNAP/SIP	
LIFE co-financing: Up to 60%	Own contribution: 40% No other EU funds involved!!

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

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

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

Please **check** in the [LIFE projects database](#) examples of ongoing integrated projects from the period 2014-2020 to see examples of coordinated or mobilised complementary funds.

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

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

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

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

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

- has not been granted to or spent by one of the beneficiaries of the SIP before the launch of this call for applications. In exceptional cases and having explicit justifications from the applicants, funds granted before that date can also be accepted but under no circumstances will funds granted or spent before the launch of the LIFE2020 call (02/04/2020) be accepted; and
- has been committed/confirmed by the relevant funding source by the time of the submission of the full proposal and evidenced by **a formal letter of intent (i.e. Annex “Complementary Funding Declaration”)** signed by the competent body representing the funding source **clearly confirming the availability or the actual commitment of the complementary funding**; or
- in the absence of an actual commitment/confirmation by the time of the full proposal, **a formal letter of intent** has been signed by the competent body representing the funding source referred to by the applicant, **confirming the potential eligibility of the actions proposed by the applicant** for funding from this source and indicating **the timing and likelihood of a future funding commitment**.

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

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

- **one letter of intent (Annex “Complementary Funding Declaration”)** **clearly confirming the availability or the actual commitment of the complementary funding to be mobilised**, signed by the competent body representing the funding source, **is submitted with the full proposal**;
- proof is provided of the granting of complementary funds after the launch of the LIFE2020 call (02/04/2020).

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

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

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

Attention: during the SIP other LIFE projects may be part of the complementary actions contributing to the plan’s implementation. LIFE funding for these projects will

not be however considered as “mobilised” for the purpose of meeting eligibility criteria.

Stakeholder involvement

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

Project management & coordination with complementary funds

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

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

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

Replicability & transferability

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

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

Polluter pays principle & eligibility of actions

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

Land purchase

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

- (xii) The land purchase must be clearly related to the objectives of the project.
- (xiii) The land purchased must contribute to improving, maintaining or restoring the integrity of the Natura 2000 network.
- (xiv) The purchase is the only or most cost-effective way of achieving the desired conservation outcome.
- (xv) The purchased land is reserved in the long-term for uses consistent with the objectives set out in Article 3 of the LIFE Regulation, through the most appropriate form of legal protection.
- (xvi) The beneficiaries must ensure that the sales contract / notary act and/or entry in the land register includes a guarantee that the land is assigned definitively (without time limitation) to nature conservation purposes. Where both possibilities exist (sales contract and land registry entry), the beneficiaries must use the option that offers the strongest long-term protection. Note that at the latest with the final report, the beneficiaries will have to submit a copy of the sales contract and/or entry in the land register including the above mentioned guarantee. Should they fail to provide such documents, the corresponding land purchase costs and associated costs will be considered ineligible. For countries where it would be illegal to include such a guarantee in both the land register and in the sale contract, the granting authority may accept an equivalent guarantee, provided it offers the same legal level of protection in the long term.
- (xvii) The land must be purchased by one of the project beneficiaries who is either a well-established private organisation (e.g. nature conservation NGO or other) or a public body with nature conservation responsibility, and must remain in its ownership after the end of the project.
- (xviii) The proposal must demonstrate that each beneficiary that will carry out land purchase has the necessary competence and experience in land purchase for nature conservation, and that the planned target is realistic within the time framework of the project.
- (xix) If the purchasing body is a private organisation, its statutes must include a provision that, in case of dissolution, the land will be transferred to another legal body primarily active in the field of nature conservation (e.g. another conservation NGO or appropriate public body).
- (xx) Evidence must be provided in the proposal that the purchase price is consistent with the current market prices for the type of land and the region concerned.
- (xxi) Evidence must be provided that the land purchased was not owned by a public authority in the 24 months prior to the project application date.
- (xxii) The purchased land must be the subject, during the project, of specific

restoration and/or active management or restrictions of use that go beyond legal obligations and existing restrictions that could not be imposed without purchasing the land. The purchase of land that is in excellent conservation status (i.e. that requires no restoration or specific management or restrictions of use) is only eligible if strategic to the objectives of the project.

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

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

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

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

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

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

LIFE-2021-STRAT-CLIMA-SIP-two-stage - Strategic Integrated Projects - Climate Action

Objectives

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

1. National Energy and Climate Plans (NECP, Regulation on the governance of the energy union and climate action (EU)2018/1999).
2. National Energy Efficiency Action Plans (NEEAP).
3. National or regional adaptation strategies or action plans.

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

4. Urban or community-based action plans pioneering the transition to a low carbon and/or climate resilient society.
5. National, regional or industry-/sector-specific greenhouse gas mitigation strategies or low carbon economy roadmaps.

Scope – Activities that can be funded

Climate change adaptation SIPs:

SIPs falling under this category aim to implement climate change adaptation strategies or plans addressing specific climate change vulnerabilities (e.g. coastal areas, drought or flood prone areas) or vulnerable sectors (e.g. water, agriculture, forestry, public health), using ecosystem-based approaches where relevant.

Synergies with other environmental and climate policies (e.g. between climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction, biodiversity and water policy) should be a central theme of adaptation projects and should be promoted, wherever relevant. The EU value added will also be assessed with regard to the project's contribution to meeting climate resilience objectives, the level of mainstreaming into different sectors, and the involvement of a broad range of stakeholders.

SIPs are expected to implement a chosen set of actions in the corresponding adaptation strategy or plan to be financed by LIFE. Measures funded via the LIFE programme should complement measures funded from national sources or from other relevant EU funding programmes, in order to implement an overarching adaptation strategy or plan.

Applicants should demonstrate how and to what extent the project will implement the strategy, plan or roadmap. The project therefore should include actions to help mobilise complementary funds that can finance actions beyond the scope and timeframe of what is funded by LIFE, like measures to integrate climate considerations in private investment decisions.

This means in practice that the application/SIP shall include

- (1) a combination of actions that contribute directly to the implementation of measures – and achievement of targets – of the SIP foreseen to be financed by LIFE; and
- (2) horizontal actions that facilitate the implementation of the overall strategy or plan, such as capacity-building.

The submission of a climate change adaptation SIP Concept Note or full proposal requires that the national or regional adaptation strategy/plan in question is approved/adopted at the appropriate level.

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

- the expected level of implementation of the adaptation strategy/ plan as a direct consequence of the actions foreseen in the SIP or through the complementary actions financed by other means mobilised in parallel to the SIP,
- the geographical area covered by measures and the number of citizens reached under the adaptation strategy or action plan,

- the expected improvement of climate resilience, compared to a reference scenario or baseline, in a region and in economic sectors through actions funded under LIFE and complementary projects,
- the expected improvement of climate resilience or the reduction of vulnerabilities identified in the EU Adaptation Strategy,
- the expected increase in the number of countries/regions/cities applying integrated approaches with support of the SIP or replicating the results from the SIP,
- the contribution to strengthening climate change adaptation management and governance, including the level of involvement and commitment of the relevant competent authorities and stakeholders at local, regional and national level,
- the contribution to mainstreaming climate change action into different sectors.

Urban climate change mitigation and/or adaptation SIPs:

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

- the implementation of urban adaptation and/or mitigation strategies and action plans, such as those linked to the Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy²³
- developing and deploying innovative adaptation solutions in urban areas, including in the **water, energy and construction sectors**, promoting and developing **blue and green infrastructure**, contributing to **nature conservation and biodiversity objectives in urban areas**; and implementing **public-private partnerships** on climate change resilience.
- the implementation of urban or rural low-emission strategies, including transport, energy efficiency of public and private buildings, district heating, low-emission city lighting.

Urban action plans contributing at the same time to climate change mitigation and adaptation objectives are highly encouraged.

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

The applicants should demonstrate how the project aims at the implementation of the strategy, plan or roadmap. To this effect the project should include actions that may facilitate the mobilisation and use of other complementary funds that can finance the implementation of actions or measures beyond those supported by the SIP – both as regards scope and timeframe. This includes measures to integrate climate considerations in private investment decisions. This means in practice that the application/SIP shall include

- (1) a combination of actions that contribute directly to the implementation of measures – and achievement of targets – of the SIP foreseen to be financed by LIFE; and

²³ <https://www.covenantofmayors.eu/>

(2) horizontal actions that facilitate the implementation of the overall strategy, plan or roadmap, such as capacity-building .

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

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

Climate change mitigation SIPs:

SIPs falling under the area of climate change mitigation shall support the implementation of greenhouse gas mitigation strategies, action plans or low carbon economy roadmaps and concern specific municipalities or regions (e.g. as announced in the Global Covenant of Mayors), industrial or agricultural (by analysing land use on a regional scale, in a social and economic context) sectors, or other economic sectors (e.g. maritime transport, aviation) by introducing technology and services based approaches in a sustainable and innovative way.

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

- the EU ETS;
- Effort Sharing Regulation (EU) 842/2018 for sectors not covered by the EU ETS;
- the LULUCF Decision (EU) 529/2013 and the LULUCF Regulation (EU) 841/2018;
- the revised RES Directive (EU) 2018/2001;
- the Regulation on fluorinated greenhouse gases (EU) 517/2014;
- the EU initiatives on sustainable finance, including uptake of the taxonomy climate benchmarks.

By developing breakthrough solutions and processes, integrated projects should aim at achieving sectoral mitigation strategies and targets as outlined in a Member State's

National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP), and/or pathways and milestones, mitigation actions underlying the EU climate neutrality/long-term strategy²⁴.

SIPs to be financed by LIFE are expected to implement a chosen set of actions supporting the NECP, underlying the EU 2050 long-term strategy on climate neutrality. Measures funded via the LIFE programme should complement measures funded from national sources or measures funded from other relevant Union funding programmes in order to implement the mitigation strategy, plan or roadmap described in the NECP, underlying the EU 2050 climate neutrality strategy. The applicants should demonstrate how the project aims at the implementation of the strategy, plan or roadmap. To this effect the project should include actions that may facilitate the mobilisation and use of other complementary funds that can finance the implementation of actions or measures beyond those supported by the LIFE SIP – both as regards scope and timeframe. This includes measures to integrate climate considerations in private investment decisions. This means in practice that the application/SIP shall include

(1) a combination of actions that contribute directly to the implementation of measures – and achievement of targets – of the SIP foreseen to be financed by LIFE; and

(2) horizontal actions that facilitate the implementation of the overall strategy, plan or roadmap described in the NECP, underlying the EU climate neutrality strategy, such as capacity-building.

The submission of a climate change mitigation SIP Concept Note or a full proposal requires that the transnational, national, regional or industry/sector strategy/action plan/roadmap in question is approved/adopted at the appropriate level and appropriately related to the NECP, in line with the EU 2050 climate neutrality strategy.

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

- the expected level of implementation of the mitigation strategy/ plan/ roadmap described in the NECP, EU 2050 climate neutrality strategy as a direct consequence of the actions foreseen in the SIP or through the complementary actions financed by other means mobilised in parallel to the SIP,
- the geographical area covered by measures and the number of citizens reached under the mitigation strategy or action plan,
- the expected decrease in GHG emissions in a region or economic sector,
- the increased number of innovative technologies, systems and instruments and/or best practice solutions for reduction of greenhouse gas emissions,
- the expected increase in the number of countries/regions/sectors applying integrated approaches with support of the SIP or replicating the results from the SIP,
- the contribution to strengthening climate change mitigation management and governance, including the level of direct involvement and commitment of the relevant competent authorities and stakeholders at local, regional and national level,

²⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/strategies/2050_en

- the contribution to mainstreaming climate change action into different policy areas.

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

Expected impact

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

Funding rate

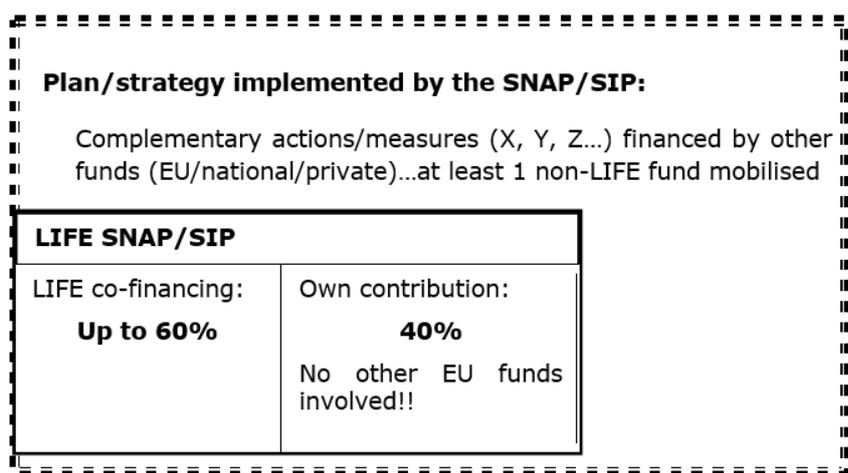
Strategic Integrated Projects (SIPs) — maximum 60% funding rate.

Additional conditions

Requirements related to complementary funds mobilisation/coordination

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

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



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

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

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

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

Please **check** in the [LIFE projects database](#) examples of ongoing integrated projects from the period 2014-2020 to see examples of coordinated or mobilised complementary funds.

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

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

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

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

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

- has not been granted to or spent by one of the beneficiaries of the SIP before the launch of this call for applications. In exceptional cases and having explicit justifications from the applicants, funds granted before that date can also be accepted but under no circumstances will funds granted or spent before the launch of the LIFE2020 call (02/04/2020) be accepted; and
- has been committed/confirmed by the relevant funding source by the time of the submission of the full proposal and evidenced by **a formal letter of intent (i.e. Annex "Complementary Funding Declaration")** signed by the competent body representing the funding source **clearly confirming the availability or the actual commitment of the complementary funding**; or
- in the absence of an actual commitment/confirmation by the time of the full proposal, **a formal letter of intent** has been signed by the competent body representing the funding source referred to by the applicant, **confirming the potential eligibility of the actions proposed by the applicant** for funding from this source and indicating **the timing and likelihood of a future funding commitment**.

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

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

- **one letter of intent (Annex “Complementary Funding Declaration”) clearly confirming the availability or the actual commitment of the complementary funding to be mobilised**, signed by the competent body representing the funding source, **is submitted with the full proposal**;
- proof is provided of the granting of complementary funds after the launch of the LIFE2020 call (02/04/2020).

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

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

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

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

Stakeholder involvement

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

Project management & coordination with complementary funds

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

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

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

Replicability & transferability

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

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

Polluter pays principle & eligibility of actions

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

Land purchase

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

- (xxiii) The land purchase must be clearly related to the objectives of the project.
- (xxiv) The land purchased must contribute to improving, maintaining or restoring the integrity of the Natura 2000 network.
- (xxv) The purchase is the only or most cost-effective way of achieving the desired conservation outcome.
- (xxvi) The purchased land is reserved in the long-term for uses consistent with the objectives set out in Article 3 of the LIFE Regulation, through the most appropriate form of legal protection.
- (xxvii) The beneficiaries must ensure that the sales contract / notary act and/or entry in the land register includes a guarantee that the land is assigned

definitively (without time limitation) to nature conservation purposes. Where both possibilities exist (sales contract and land registry entry), the beneficiaries must use the option that offers the strongest long-term protection. Note that at the latest with the final report, the beneficiaries will have to submit a copy of the sales contract and/or entry in the land register including the above mentioned guarantee. Should they fail to provide such documents, the corresponding land purchase costs and associated costs will be considered ineligible. For countries where it would be illegal to include such a guarantee in both the land register and in the sale contract, the granting authority may accept an equivalent guarantee, provided it offers the same legal level of protection in the long term.

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

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

The same conditions for land purchase listed above apply here, as and where appropriate, to these types of payments. The applicant must address each of these conditions in the proposal, explaining how each condition is met or will be met during the project. The duration of a lease must be sufficient to guarantee the durability of the conservation investment (e.g. 30 years or longer). See also the General Conditions of the [Model Grant Agreement](#)²⁵.

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

²⁵ The Model Grant Agreement that will be used (and all other relevant templates and guidance documents) can be found on [Portal Reference Documents](#).

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

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

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

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

3. Available budget

The available call budget is **EUR 157 800 000**.

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

Topic	Topic budget	Indicative range of project budgets	Indicative number of projects to be funded	Indicative expected project duration
LIFE-2021-STRAT-NAT-SNAP-two-stage - Strategic Nature Projects	EUR 70 million	EUR 15 – 50 million	2 - 7 projects	60 - 120 months
LIFE-2021-STRAT-ENV-SIP-two-stage - Strategic Integrated Projects - Environment	EUR 52.8 million	EUR 10-30 million	3 - 6 projects	60 - 120 months
LIFE-2021-STRAT-CLIMA-SIP-two-stage - Strategic Integrated Projects - Climate Action	EUR 35 million	EUR 10-30 million	2 - 4 projects	60 - 120 months

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

4. Timetable and deadlines

Timetable and deadlines(indicative)	
Call opening:	13 July 2021
<u>Deadline for submission (concept note):</u>	<u>19 October 2021 – 17:00:00 CET</u> (Brussels)
Information on evaluation results (concept note):	End November – Beginning December 2021
Consultation i.e. Q&A phase:	December 2021 - March 2022
<u>Deadline for submission:</u>	<u>07 April 2022 – 17:00:00 CET</u> (Brussels)
Information on evaluation results:	June - July 2022
GA signature:	November-December 2022

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).

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

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

- Application Form Part A — contains administrative information about the participants (future coordinator, beneficiaries and affiliated entities) and the summarised budget for the project (*to be filled in directly online*)
- Application Form Part B — contains the technical description of the project (*to be downloaded from the Portal Submission System, completed and then assembled and re-uploaded*)
- Part C (*to be filled in directly online*) containing additional project data (*not applicable at stage 1*)
- **mandatory annexes and supporting documents** (*to be uploaded*):
 - for stage 1:
 - detailed budget table: **not applicable**
 - CVs of core project team: **not applicable**
 - activity reports of last year: **not applicable**
 - list of previous projects: **not applicable**
 - targeted plan/strategy/action plan
 - implementation overview for the plan/strategy/action plan
 - complementary funding plan.
 - for stage 2:
 - detailed budget table (*mandatory excel template available in the Submission System*)
 - CVs of core project team: **not applicable**
 - activity reports of last year: **not applicable**
 - list of previous projects: **not applicable**
 - participant information
 - targeted plan/strategy/action plan

- implementation overview for the plan/strategy/action plan
- complementary funding plan
- complementary funding declarations (at least one).
- **optional annexes:**
 - for stage 1: **not applicable**
 - for stage 2:
 - letters of support
 - co-financing declarations

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

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

Your application must be **readable, accessible and printable**.

Proposals are limited to maximum **45 pages** (Part B) at **stage 1** and **200 pages** (Part B) at **stage 2**. Evaluators will not consider any additional pages.

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

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

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

6. Eligibility

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

Eligible participants (eligible countries)

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

- be legal entities (public or private bodies)
- be established in one of the eligible countries, i.e.:
 - EU Member States (including overseas countries and territories (OCTs))
 - non-EU countries:
 - listed EEA countries and countries associated to the LIFE Programme ([participating countries](#)) or countries which are in ongoing negotiations for an association agreement and where the agreement enters into force before grant signature
- 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 persons²⁶.

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

Associations and interest groupings — Entities composed of members may participate as 'sole beneficiaries' or 'beneficiaries without legal personality'²⁷. ⚠ Please note that if the action will be implemented by the members, they should also participate (either as beneficiaries or as affiliated entities, otherwise their costs will NOT be eligible).

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

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

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)*²⁸ and entities covered by *Commission Guidelines No [2013/C 205/05](#)*²⁹). 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).

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

Consortium composition

Proposals must be submitted by:

for all topics of this Call:

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

Eligible activities

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

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

Financial support to third parties is allowed in all topics of this Call for grants and prizes under the following conditions:

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

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

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

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

²⁸ Please note that the EU Official Journal contains the official list and, in case of conflict, its content prevails over that of the [EU Sanctions Map](#).

²⁹ 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).

Geographic location (target countries)

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

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

Furthermore, the objectives of Non-EU eligible countries cannot be in contrast with those of the EU.

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 participate³⁰:

- 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 misconduct³¹ (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- committed fraud, corruption, links to a criminal organisation, money laundering, terrorism-related crimes (including terrorism financing), child labour or human trafficking (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- shown significant deficiencies in complying with main obligations under an EU procurement contract, grant agreement, prize, expert contract, or similar (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- guilty of irregularities within the meaning of Article 1(2) of Regulation No [2988/95](#) (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- created under a different jurisdiction with the intent to circumvent fiscal, social or other legal obligations in the country of origin or created another entity with this purpose (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant).

Applicants will also be refused if it turns out that³²:

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

³⁰ See Articles 136 and 141 of EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

³¹ 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.

³² 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 a **two-stage submission procedure**.

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

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

For SIP/SNAP calls, in case of lack of budget to finance all the proposals that reached the minimum threshold, priority will be given to the proposals from Member States which do not have yet a SIP or SNAP project financed under the specific sub-programme.

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, proposals with the highest score under the criterion 'Impact' will be financed.

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

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

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

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

9. Award criteria

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

For stage 1:

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

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

2. Territorial coverage (Yes/No)

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

3. Coordination of complementary funds (Yes/No)

- The activities will mobilise complementary funding from at least one EU, national or private funding source and take into consideration other relevant EU, national or private funding.
- The funding is complementary to the SIP/SNAP and used to support and implement complementary activities necessary for the implementation of the targeted plan/strategy/action plan.
- Mechanisms for the coordination of the complementary funding are clearly defined.

4. Involvement of key stakeholders (Yes/No)

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

No maximum points: Each criterion will be assessed as to whether it is fulfilled or not.

For stage 2:

1. Relevance (0-20 points)

- Relevance of the contribution to one or several of the specific objectives of the LIFE Programme and the targeted sub-programme.
- Extent to which the proposal is in line with the topic description of the call for proposals.
- Concept and methodology: soundness of the overall intervention logic.
- Extent to which the proposal offers co-benefits and promotes synergies with other policy areas relevant for achieving environment and climate policy objectives.

2. Impact (0-20 points)

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

3. Quality (0-20 points)

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

4. Resources (0-20 points)

- Composition of the 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.

5. Complementary funding (0-20 points)

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

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

Maximum points (stage 2): 100 points.

Individual thresholds per criterion (stage 2): 10 points.

Overall threshold (stage 2): 55 points.

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

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

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

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

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

Starting date and project duration

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

Project duration: between 60 and 120 months indicatively (extensions are possible, if duly justified and through an amendment).

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*).

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*).

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 cost³³: Yes
 - volunteers unit cost³⁴: Yes (without indirect costs)
- travel and subsistence unit cost³⁵: No (only actual costs)
- equipment costs: full cost + depreciation for listed equipment
- 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 200 000]; maximum amount per third party EUR 60 000, unless a higher amount is required because the objective of the action would otherwise be impossible or overly difficult to achieve and this is duly justified in the Application Form
- land purchase costs: subject to the conditions specified in Art. 6.2 - D.2 Eligible and ineligible costs and contributions of the LIFE General Model Grant Agreement. The applicant must address each of these conditions in his proposal, explaining how each one is met or will be met during the project. Such conditions refer, for example, to the contribution to the integrity of the Natura 2000 network, to the guarantee that in the long term the land will be used consistently with the specific objectives of the LIFE Programme, to the fact that land purchase is the only or most cost-effective way of achieving the desired conservation outcome etc.
- indirect cost flat-rate: 7% of the eligible direct costs (categories A-D, except volunteers costs and exempted specific cost categories (land purchase), if any)

³³ Commission [Decision](#) of 20 October 2020 authorising the use of unit costs for the personnel costs of the owners of small and medium-sized enterprises and beneficiaries that are natural persons not receiving a salary for the work carried out by themselves under an action or work programme (C(2020)7715).

³⁴ 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).

³⁵ 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 kickoff meeting organised by the granting authority are eligible (travel costs for maximum 2 persons, return ticket to Brussels and accommodation for one night) only if the meeting takes place after the project starting date set out in the Grant Agreement; the starting date can be changed through an amendment, if needed
 - project websites: communication costs for presenting the project on the participants' websites or social media accounts are eligible; costs for *separate* project websites are in principle not eligible unless duly justified by the project objectives
 - common information and dissemination activities: foresee resources to increase synergies between, and the visibility of LIFE and EU supported actions
 - other ineligible costs: No

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

Reporting and payment arrangements

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

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

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

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

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

All payments will be made to the coordinator.

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

Please also note that you are responsible for keeping records 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 EULogin account, you can [register your organisation](#) in the Participant Register. When your registration is finalised, you will receive a 9-digit participant identification code (PIC).

b) submit the proposal

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

Submit your proposal in 4 parts, as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

12. Help

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

- [Online Manual](#)
- FAQs on the Topic page (for call-specific questions in open calls; not applicable for actions by invitation)
- [Portal FAQ](#) (for general questions).
- [SIP/SNAPs FAQ](#) (for SIP/SNAP-specific questions)
- [LIFE Info Days](#)

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

Contact

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

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

 Please:

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

13. Important



IMPORTANT

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

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

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

- **Balanced project budget** — Grant applications must ensure a balanced project budget and sufficient other resources to implement the project successfully (*e.g. own contributions, income generated by the action, financial contributions from third parties, etc*). You may be requested to lower your estimated costs, if they are ineligible (including excessive).
- **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](#).