



**Guide for the evaluation of  
Sub-programme Environment  
LIFE project proposals 2014**

This document aims at explaining to the public the criteria and procedures that will be used for the evaluation of LIFE project proposals submitted for the 2014 Call for 'traditional projects' under the Environment sub-programme.

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## 1. GENERAL REMARKS

This evaluation guide **ONLY** concerns the selection of **LIFE pilot, demonstration, best practice, and information, awareness, and dissemination projects** within the meaning of **Article 2(a), (b), (c) and (h) of the LIFE Regulation**.

For the evaluation of LIFE Integrated Projects, Technical Assistance projects, Capacity-building Projects, Preparatory Projects, Operating Grants and Financial Instruments, please consult relevant documents available on the LIFE website.

The evaluation, selection and award procedure is carried out by the European Commission and the Executive Agency for SMEs (EASME), hereafter called 'the Contracting Authority' with the assistance of a Consortium of independent expert evaluators, hereafter called 'the Contractor'. However, the Contracting Authority remains responsible for the whole procedure, including, the awarding of the final scores, the drawing up of the list of proposals to be co-financed and the rejection of the proposals.

This document only refers to the 2014 call for proposals. As mentioned in section 5 of the Life Multiannual Work Programme 2014-2017, a streamlining of the technical methodology may occur in future call for proposals.

Only proposals received by the Contracting Authority through the online tool eProposal before the deadline of 16 October 2014, 16:00 Brussels local time and thereafter passing the Opening phase (see point 2) are registered in the LIFE ESAP (*Evaluation and Selection Award Procedure*) database.

Any information or documents submitted otherwise, or after the deadline, will not be taken into account unless explicitly requested by the Contracting Authority.

Once the registration of proposals in ESAP has been completed, the individual evaluators will have access to ESAP and may enter their comments and scores based on the contents of this document.

### ***Basic selection and evaluation principles***

#### **Projects pursuant to Article 2(a), (b), (c) and (h) of the LIFE Regulation**

The selection of **pilot, demonstration, best practice, and information, awareness, and dissemination projects** within the meaning of **Article 2(a), (b), (c) and (h) of the LIFE Regulation** follow the same technical methodology for project selection and are subject to similar eligibility and award criteria, as outlined in this document.

All evaluators, from the Contracting Authority and the Contractor alike, must base their assessment of the proposals on the provisions of this evaluation guide, using as a basis the questions established for each criterion.

Within the limits allowed for by thematic and national allocation rules of the LIFE Regulation, the principle of equal treatment between all proposals must be strictly applied throughout all phases of the evaluation process. Evaluations and scores given to each proposal must be as objective and equitable as possible. Each decision and each score given must be clearly justified in ESAP by reasoned comments.

Those Award quality criteria that are evaluated by the Contractor will always be assessed independently by at least two expert evaluators. For each assigned proposal, the responsible expert evaluator must elaborate an assessment report in ESAP. All comments in ESAP will be made in English. For each evaluation criterion, evaluators must provide substantive comments “for” and “against”, justifying the score proposed. Evaluators must ensure that all their comments are concise, complete and comprehensible and must always be directly relevant to both the proposal and the criterion applied. Evaluators must avoid vague, ambiguous assessments.

In a specific section, evaluators must prepare detailed, unambiguous and realistic suggestions for possible amendments and improvements to the project proposal. If a project is admitted to 'revision', these suggestions will become essential.

**Applicants should note that evaluators will check the information that is relevant for each step or criterion by concentrating their analysis on the specific application forms where that information should be available. For example the demonstrative or innovative character for an Environment and Resource Efficiency proposal will be checked against the information available in form B3, etc. For this reason it is very important that the relevant information is written in the right form.**

## **2. OPENING PHASE\***

Proposals will be checked for compliance with the following criteria:

1. The proposal has been submitted before the deadline of **16 October 2014, 16:00** Brussels local time.
2. The relevant LIFE 2014 application forms in eProposal have been used for preparing and submitting the proposal. Depending on the objectives of the proposal, the eProposal application forms used are those for "LIFE Nature and Biodiversity", "LIFE Environment and Resource Efficiency", "LIFE Environmental Governance and Information".

*\*The opening check will be performed through the eProposal application, not in ESAP.*

## **3. TECHNICAL SELECTION PHASE**

All proposals that were not rejected during the Opening phase are checked for their compliance with the technical selection criteria. Please refer to the "Guidelines for applicants 2014" regarding the use of eProposal and the information which must be provided.

Proposals which do not comply with one or several of the technical selection criteria listed hereafter are declared not selected and are eliminated from all further evaluation.

## 1. Generic selection criteria for the LIFE components

A proposal for a project within the meaning of Article 2(a), (b), (c), or (h) of the LIFE Regulation will not be retained for an evaluation of its merit, if the project proposal does not demonstrate that the project:

- contributes to one or several of the general objectives set out in Article 3 of the LIFE Regulation and of the applicable specific objectives in Articles 10, 11 and 12 of the LIFE Regulation,
- falls within the scope of the priority area (as set out in Article 9 of the LIFE Regulation) of the LIFE sub-programme for Environment under which the project proposal was submitted, and
- corresponds to one of the following project types as defined in Article 2 (a), (b), (c) and (h) of the LIFE Regulation:
  - "Pilot projects" are projects that apply a technique or method that has not been applied or tested before, or elsewhere, that offer potential environmental or climate advantages compared to current best practice and that can subsequently be applied on a larger scale to similar situations.
  - "Demonstration projects" are projects that put into practice, test, evaluate and disseminate actions, methodologies or approaches that are new or unknown in the specific context of the project, such as the geographical, ecological, socio-economic context, and that could be applied elsewhere in similar circumstances.
  - "Best practice projects" are projects that apply appropriate, cost-effective and state-of-the-art techniques, methods and approaches taking into account the specific context of the project.
  - "Information, awareness and dissemination projects" are projects aimed at supporting communication, dissemination of information and awareness raising in the fields of the sub-programme for Environment.

*N.B.: Projects focused on **research**<sup>1</sup> or dedicated to the construction of **large infrastructure** do not fall within the scope of the LIFE programme and are therefore **not eligible**.*

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<sup>1</sup> Proposals dealing with research may be addressed to the relevant programmes of Horizon 2020: <http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/desktop/en/opportunities/index.html>.

## **2. Technical reliability of the project participants**

A proposal can only be rejected on the basis of this criterion if there is clear evidence that any of the beneficiaries has been an unreliable manager in previous LIFE or other European Union-financed projects<sup>2</sup> and has given no proof that necessary initiatives have been taken to avoid similar problems in the future, or if there would be clear evidence that the beneficiaries do not have the technical competency to carry out the project.

## **3. Specific selection criteria for each of the LIFE priority areas**

A proposal is rejected at this stage if it does not comply with all the relevant criteria that apply to its particular priority area. Please refer to the *Guidelines for applicants 2014* for the relevant LIFE priority area for detailed descriptions of, and exceptions to, each of these criteria:

### **3 a) Criteria applicable to all LIFE Nature and Biodiversity (NAT) proposals:**

- i) For pilot, demonstration and best practice projects in the area of nature conservation and biodiversity, the share of the proposal budget allocated to concrete conservation actions is at least **25%** (a "concrete conservation action" being defined here as any action that directly improves (or slows/halts/reverses the decline of) the conservation status / ecological condition of the species, habitats, ecosystems or services targeted by the proposal). Limited exceptions are possible in view of the specific policy needs. Please refer the *Guidelines for applicants 2014 – LIFE Nature and Biodiversity* for exceptions to this rule.
- ii) For site-related conservation actions, there is sufficient evidence for the long-term sustainability of the investments through an appropriate conservation status; please refer to the *Guidelines for applicants 2014 – LIFE Nature and Biodiversity* for further details.

### **3 b) Criteria applicable to LIFE Nature proposals, only:**

- i) the proposed actions are aimed at implementing the objectives of the EU Birds and Habitats Directives and, more specifically, they concern conservation measures for species and/or habitat types that are covered by the relevant annexes of the Habitats or Birds Directive;
- ii) the proposed actions would take place on the territory of the Member States to which the Birds and Habitats Directives apply or are covered by the exceptions foreseen in section 1.6.8 of the *Guidelines for applicants 2014 – LIFE Nature and Biodiversity*.

### **3 c) Criteria applicable to LIFE Biodiversity proposals, only:**

- i) the proposed actions are related to the implementation of the Commission Communication "*Our life insurance, our natural capital: an EU biodiversity strategy to 2020*" (COM(2011) 244);
- ii) the proposed actions would take place on the Member State's territory or are covered by the exceptions foreseen in section 1.6.8 of the *Guidelines for applicants 2014 – LIFE Nature and Biodiversity*.

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<sup>2</sup> For example, in the case of multiple technical failures in fulfilling substantial obligations of previous Grant Agreements, possibly leading to project termination.

**3 d) Criteria applicable to all LIFE Environment and Resource Efficiency (ENV) proposals:**

- i) The demonstrative and/or pilot nature of the proposal should be clearly outlined in the appropriate form B2 and/or B3 in eProposal. Proposals failing to do so are declared not selected and are eliminated from all further evaluation.
- ii) the proposed actions would take place on the Member State's territory or are covered by the exceptions foreseen in section 1.6.8 of the *Guidelines for applicants 2014 – LIFE Environment and Resource Efficiency*.

**3 e) Criteria applicable to LIFE Environmental Governance and Information (GIE) proposals:**

- i) the proposed actions should enable the project to achieve its objectives in line with the thematic priorities for LIFE Environmental Governance and Information (see Application Guide). These actions must lead to a measurable impact which should be monitored during the project.
- ii) the project partnership (coordinating beneficiary and associated beneficiaries, including external assistance) has the appropriate operational capacity / experience in the specific issue addressed by the project.
- iii) the project includes activities to monitor the impact of the project actions on the main targeted audience;
- iv) the proposed actions would take place on the territory of the Member States or are covered by the exceptions foreseen in section 1.6.8 of the *Guidelines for applicants 2014 – LIFE Environmental Governance and Information*.

## 4. AWARD PHASE

All proposals that were not rejected during the Opening and Technical selection phases are admitted to an in-depth evaluation of their quality in the Award phase using the specific criteria and scoring system for projects submitted under the Environment Sub-Programme:

<b>Award Criteria</b>	<b>Minimum pass score*</b>	<b>Maximum score</b>
1. Technical coherence and quality	10	20
2. Financial coherence and quality	10	20
3. EU added value: extent and quality of the contribution to the specific objectives of the priority areas of the LIFE sub-programme for Environment	10	20
4. Contribution to the project topics	-	10
5. EU added value: multipurpose, synergies, and integration	7	15
6. EU added value: replicability and transferability	5	10
7. EU added value: transnational, green procurement, uptake	-	5
<b>Overall (pass) scores</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>100</b>

\*A project proposal has to reach at least the minimum pass score for each award criterion and also the sum of scores for criteria for which a minimum score has been fixed has to be equivalent to 55 points or more.

### **1. Technical coherence and quality**

This criterion will focus on the clarity, feasibility and sustainability of the actions proposed in the proposal. The sustainability of the project results in the medium and long term is the capacity to maintain them after project implementation. Successful sustainability presupposes a strategy including tasks to ensure the continuation of necessary project actions and the related funding after the end of the project.

The pre-operational context must be thoroughly described and there should be a clear link in the proposal between the problems and threats, the project objectives, the proposed actions and their expected results. All actions should be properly described and quantified and, if necessary, accompanied by adequate maps. The proposal must clearly describe how, where, when and by whom each action in the proposal will be undertaken.



The proposal must be drafted so as to allow the evaluators to assess to what extent the technical means and expertise of the consortium involved are adequate for implementing the project.

The time planning must be realistic and any potential difficulties must have been correctly assessed in the relevant forms.

Any actions that are not directly contributing to the achievement of the project objectives may be considered as ineligible (example: preparatory actions or studies that are not related to the project implementation, any fundamental scientific research, etc.). A removal of these actions (and of their budget) from the project shall be proposed as "Revision Comments".

Proposals may receive up to 20 points for this criterion. The pass score for this criterion is 10 points.

## ***2. Financial coherence and quality***

The proposed budget and its consistency with the actions proposed and with the applicable rules as well as the cost-effectiveness of the proposed approach will be evaluated.

The financial contributions of the beneficiaries/co-financiers, the proposed budget and the proposed project expenditures must comply with the rules and principles foreseen in the LIFE guidelines for applicants, the General Conditions of the LIFE Model Grant Agreement and the LIFE Regulation. The budget must be transparent coherent and cost-efficient, including for the management of the project.

Proposals may receive up to 20 points for this criterion. The pass score for this criterion is 10 points. A proposal would receive a score below the pass score if its financial part is poorly conceived and/or requires a considerable revision.

## ***3. EU added value: extent and quality of the contribution to the specific objectives of the priority areas of the priority areas of the LIFE sub-programme for Environment***

The extent to which each proposal contributes to one or several of the specific objectives of the priority areas of the priority areas of the LIFE sub-programme for Environment as set out in Articles 10, 11 and 12 of the LIFE Regulation and the quality of this contribution will be evaluated.

Proposals may receive up to 20 points for this criterion. The pass score for this criterion is 10 points.

## ***4. EU added value: contribution to the project topics***

The specific criteria and scoring system under the sub-programme Environment reflect the fact that, under the Environment sub-programme, thematic priorities and related project topics were defined in the LIFE Regulation and the MAWP respectively. LIFE proposals clearly falling under the project topics implementing the thematic priorities set out in Annex III for the sub-programme Environment as defined in the LIFE multiannual work programme for 2014-2017 will receive additional points under criterion 4.

Proposals may receive up to 10 points for this criterion. In the case of NAT and GIE proposals, either 0 or 10 points will be awarded, based on whether or not the project fully complies with one or more of the priority project topics for the chosen priority area. In the case of ENV proposals, 5 points will be awarded if the project fully complies with one or more of the priority project topics. An additional 5 points will be awarded if the proposal is also innovative (a Pilot Project) or is demonstrative at EU level.

There is no minimum pass score for this criterion.

#### **5. EU added value: multi-purpose, synergies, and integration**

Proposals should present high quality multi-purpose delivery mechanisms (e.g. aiming at environmental and climate benefits and capacity-building) that make it possible to achieve results in other policy areas, to create synergies with these policies and to integrate environmental and climate action objectives in them.

Therefore, proposals that, while focussing on a specific area, include a well-conceived multi-purpose delivery mechanism and improve integration of specific environmental objectives in other policy areas and create synergies with the objectives of other Union policies without compromising the objectives pursued by the LIFE Regulation, will receive higher scoring.

Also proposals showing synergies with actions financed or submitted for financing under the sub-programme for Climate Actions will be considered for higher scoring, particularly if these synergies are expected to have a positive effect on biodiversity protection.

On the other hand, proposals focussed on one priority area that might undermine environmental or climate objectives in another priority area will likely receive a lower score unless this impact is clearly explained and justified in the proposal and the possible alternatives and mitigation measures have been correctly foreseen.

Furthermore, all proposals will also be evaluated insofar as their contribution to economic and social objectives as well as any other environmental objective beyond those directly targeted by the plan.

Proposals may receive up to 15 points for this criterion. The pass score for this criterion is 7 points.

#### **6. EU added value: replicability and transferability**

Replicability and transferability is the potential of the project to be replicated and transferred during and after its implementation. Successful replication and transferability require a strategy including tasks to multiply the impacts of the projects' solutions and mobilise a wider uptake, reaching a 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.

Proposals may receive up to 10 points for this criterion. The pass score for this criterion is 5 points.

## **7. EU added value: transnational, green procurement, uptake**

Transnational: Transnational proposals shall be favoured if transnational cooperation is essential to guarantee the achievement of the project's objectives. On the basis of this criterion, additional points will be given to a proposal if there is sufficient evidence for an added value of the transnational approach.

Green procurement: Proposals that foresee a clear delivery mechanism to ensure an extensive application of green procurement concepts will receive a higher scoring.

Uptake of the results of EU Research and Innovation Programmes: Proposals that foresee to take up the results of environmental and climate-related research and innovation projects financed by Horizon 2020 or by preceding Framework Programmes will receive a higher scoring, if there is sufficient evidence for the added value of this uptake for the project.

Proposals may receive up to 5 points for this criterion: Maximum 3 for transnational, 1 for Green procurement and 1 for uptake of the results of EU Research and Innovation Programmes.

There is no minimum pass score for this criterion.

### **Conclusion of the Award phase**

On the basis of the evaluations provided by the Contractor and discussed with the Contracting. Each proposal will fall into one of the following situations:

- Any proposal that receives a final score below the pass score for any of the Award criteria for which a minimum pass level is indicated, or for which the total score is less than 55 points, will be declared "rejected in the Award phase".
- For all proposals not falling into the above situation, the total score to be awarded is calculated by summing up the final synthesis scores for the 7 Award criteria.

## **5. ADMISSIBILITY AND EXCLUSION PHASE**

All proposals that were not rejected at the end of the Opening, Technical selection and Award phases AND that are furthermore eligible to be listed on the ranking list (see point 7) are checked for their compliance with the following general eligibility criteria:

All proposals in this Phase are furthermore checked for their compliance with the following admissibility and exclusion criteria (see section 12 of the current guide for the detailed list of questions):

1. Where relevant, the **signed declarations** (forms **A3, A4, A6, A8**) listed below are uploaded in the relevant eProposal sections (see application guide for instructions). Failure to deliver these declarations or to clearly

indicate the financial contribution (forms **A3, A4 and A6**) may lead to an exclusion of the proposal from all further evaluation. Signing the forms A3 and A4 also confirms that the beneficiaries are not in one of the situations referred to in Articles 106(1) and 107 of the **Financial Regulation (Commission Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 966/2012 of 25 October 2012)**.<sup>3</sup>

- The scanned and uploaded (in eProposal) application forms **A3, A4** (only if there is one or more associated beneficiaries) and **A6** (only if there is one or more co-financiers) bear dated signatures with the status and full name of the signatory clearly in evidence on the document. If the status of the co-financier commitment at this stage is 'not fully confirmed', the declaration must explain the current status of the commitment.
  - For *LIFE Nature and Biodiversity* proposals, if required (see Application Guide), a complete and uploaded (in eProposal) form **A8** with a dated signature should be provided from the competent nature conservation authority of the Member State where the proposal is submitted (and from all participating Member States in the case of multi-national proposals).
2. Form B1 (Summary description of the project) is completed in English. The other application forms may, however, be completed in any official EU language, except Maltese and Irish.
  3. The coordinating beneficiary is legally registered in the EU.

**In case LIFE proposals do not fully comply with all the above criteria (e.g. mandatory signatures / dates of signatures on are missing) the Contracting Authority will first send a message via eProposal to the coordinating beneficiary indicating which forms are missing.**

The coordinating beneficiary will have **5 working days** to reply and provide, through eProposal, the missing or incomplete documents and forms. In exceptional circumstances, the Contracting Authority may extend the deadline.

A copy of all formal communication will be sent to the relevant national LIFE contact point indicated on the LIFE website.

**By the end of this process, all LIFE proposals that do not fully comply with all the above criteria are declared *inadmissible* and are eliminated from all further evaluation.**

## **6. FINANCIAL SELECTION PHASE**

All proposals that were not rejected at the end of the Opening, Technical selection, Award and Admissibility and Exclusion phases are checked for their compliance with the financial selection criteria. Proposals which do not comply with one or several of the financial selection criteria listed hereafter are declared not selected.

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<sup>3</sup> O.J. L298 of 26.10.2012

## Step A:

All applicants (coordinating beneficiaries) other than public bodies, must provide, as annexes to their proposal, evidence that they comply with the financial selection criterion set out in Article 202 of the Rules of Application of the Financial Regulation (Commission Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1268/2012 of 29 October 2012), namely that "the applicant has stable and sufficient sources of funding to maintain his activity throughout the period during which the action is being carried out". Therefore, coordinating beneficiaries other than public bodies have to provide the following administrative and financial documents as annexes to their LIFE proposal. It should be noted that these annexes will be required by the Contracting Authority irrespective of whether they are obligatory or not for the particular type of organisation, according to national legislation, in the coordinating beneficiary's Member State:

- A. The "LIFE Simplified Financial Statement", provided as a separate Excel file with the LIFE Application Package. The financial table in this statement must be completed and annexed (uploaded) to the proposal as an Excel file.
- B. The most recent balance sheet and profit and loss account. This document must be annexed to the LIFE proposal as a scanned pdf file, printable in A4 paper format. If the applicant does not yet have a balance sheet and profit and loss account, because the organisation has been only recently created, it must provide a management/business plan (for at least 12 months in the future) with the financial data prepared in accordance with the standard required under national legislation.
- C. Where the total EU contribution requested in the application exceeds EUR 750,000, an audit report produced by an approved external auditor shall be submitted. That report shall certify the accounts for the last financial year available. This document can only be delivered by a professionally qualified auditor who is independent from the applicant's organisation. Persons responsible for carrying out independent audits of accounting documents must be listed in the registers held by Member States of auditors approved by them to carry out statutory audits of accounting documents.

The above-mentioned audit shall be carried out in accordance with the International Auditing Standards and Codes of Ethics.

The audit document must be annexed to the LIFE proposal as a scanned .pdf file, printable in A4 paper format. In the case of a newly created organisation, the auditor's certificate provided must be based on a management/business plan where the financial data are presented in accordance with relevant national provisions.

An applicant (coordinating beneficiary) that declared itself as being a public body (in application form A2) must provide as a financial annex the "Public body declaration", fully completed, with a dated signature. This annex is available as a separate word file with the LIFE application package.

**In case LIFE proposals are missing one or more mandatory financial annexes the Contracting Authority will first send a message via eProposal to the coordinating beneficiary indicating the annexes that are missing.**

**The Contracting Authority will also use this period to request the necessary financial annexes and/or supporting documentation in cases where it has doubt as to the status of any public body.**

**The coordinating beneficiary will have 5 working days to reply and provide, through eProposal, the missing or incomplete annexes. In exceptional circumstances, the Contracting Authority may extend the deadline.**

By the end of this process, all LIFE proposals that do not fully comply with all the above criteria are declared inadmissible and are eliminated from all further evaluation.

**Step B:**

The purpose of the financial check is to verify that: *"The applicant must have stable and sufficient sources of funding to maintain his activity throughout the period during which the action is being carried out ... and to participate in its funding"*.

The Contracting Authority will utilise all the information at its disposal to assess whether the applicant and the associated beneficiaries fulfil the selection and the exclusion criteria. On the basis of Article 202 of the Rules of Application of the Financial Regulation<sup>4</sup>, a proposal will be rejected if the evaluator has strong evidence showing that it falls into any of the following situations:

- if there is information available to indicate that the coordinating beneficiary and/or one of its associated beneficiaries, contrary to the declaration for exclusion, are in one of the situations referred to in art. 106(1) and 107 of the Financial Regulation<sup>5</sup>;
- the results of audits carried out by European Union Institutions in relation to the coordinating beneficiary and/ or one of its associated beneficiaries have clearly shown their inability to comply with the administrative rules regulating European Union grants and in particular those applicable to LIFE;
- the coordinating beneficiary has an unpaid debt owed to the Contracting Authority at the time of the submission of its application. The Contracting Authority will make this assessment based on a consultation of its "early warning system".

For private commercial and private non-commercial organisations:

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<sup>4</sup> Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 1268/2012 of 29 October 2012 on the rules of application of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union, OJEU L362 of 31.12.2012, p.1.

<sup>5</sup> Regulation (EU, EURATOM) No 966/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union and repealing Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002, OJEU L 298 of 25.10.2012, p.1.

- the auditor's report or auditor-certified balance sheet and profit and loss account provided with the project proposal has not given an "unqualified opinion" about the coordinating beneficiary's financial viability<sup>6</sup>;
- on the basis of the financial viability test, it is concluded that the coordinating beneficiary does not have the financial capacity to cover its share of co-financing within the proposed project period;
- on the basis of the financial viability test, it is concluded that the coordinating beneficiary does not have the capacity to manage the financial amounts provided for in the proposal budget within the proposed project period;

The financial viability of the coordinating beneficiary and its capacity to manage large EU grants are assessed on the basis of the financial information provided.

The financial viability check will also be used to assess whether a financial guarantee would be required to cover fully or partially the EU pre-financing payment to the project. In particular a financial guarantee will be always requested in the following cases:

1) Proposals from **private commercial organisations** if less than 2 of the following criteria are respected:

1. the ratio "total grant requested divided by the number of project years" / "shareholders' equity" is lower than 1
2. the ratio "current assets" / "current liabilities" is higher than 1
3. the ratio "total debts" / "total assets" is lower than 0.8
4. there is a positive operational profit

2) Proposals from **private non-commercial organisations (NGOs)** if none of the following 3 criteria are respected:

1. the ratio "total grant requested divided by the number of project years" / "subsidies" is lower than 1
2. the ratio "current assets" / "current liabilities" is higher than 1
3. the ratio "total debts" / "total assets" is lower than 0.8

Proposals will be rejected when none of the criteria are respected and the ratios diverge significantly from the thresholds indicated above.

## **7. ESTABLISHMENT OF THE RANKING LIST OF PROPOSALS TO BE ADMITTED TO THE REVISION PHASE**

Following the conclusion of the Award phase, the Contracting Authority will establish a short and a reserve list representing up to 130% of the available budget. The proposals will be ranked by their total score and taking into account, in order of priority, the following conditions set out in the LIFE Regulation:

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<sup>6</sup> i.e. a statement that the auditor has carried out the task in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards and without restriction as to the scope of the work necessary to express his opinion, that the financial statements audited were drawn up in accordance with appropriate or generally accepted accounting principles, and that they give a true and fair view of the organisation's financial situation and the results of the operation.

- A. "At least 55 % of the budgetary resources allocated to projects supported by way of action grants under the sub-programme for Environment shall be dedicated to projects supporting the conservation of nature and biodiversity". (Article 9(3)). Note that the 55% rule is calculated taking into account also the evaluation results for Integrated Projects, Preparatory Projects, Capacity Building and Technical Assistance Projects (please consult relevant documents available on the LIFE website) in order to ensure that overall the 55-45% balance will be respected.
- B. "The Commission shall, for the duration of the first multiannual work programme, ensure geographical balance for projects other than integrated projects submitted under the sub-programme for Environment, by proportionately distributing funds among all Member States according to indicative national allocations established in accordance with the criteria set out in Annex I. Where indicative national allocations are not applicable, projects shall be selected exclusively on the basis of merit". (Article 19(4))<sup>7</sup>
- C. "The Commission shall have special regard to transnational projects where transnational cooperation is essential to guarantee environmental protection and climate objectives, and shall endeavour to ensure that at least 15 % of the budgetary resources dedicated to projects are allocated to transnational projects. The Commission shall consider the award of funding to transnational projects even in cases where the indicative national allocation balance of one or more Member States participating in those transnational projects has been exceeded". (Article 19(7))

The following table summarises the indicative national allocation (in Euro) per Member State for the period 2014-2017. The **four year indicative national allocations** have been calculated using the percentages established in the LIFE multiannual work programme for 2014-2017 and the expected 2014-2017 budget:

Member State	Allocation 2014-2017 (EUR)
AT	14,794,402
BE	16,450,424
BG	24,332,993
CY	10,607,005
CZ	16,258,612
DE	86,692,353
DK	12,892,175
EE	9,577,921
EL	26,195,332
ES	74,765,085

<sup>7</sup> Please also note that "If the sum of co-financing that is necessary for funding projects, other than integrated projects, that are submitted by a Member State, and that are on the list compiled by the Commission at the end of the selection procedure is less than the indicative allocation for that Member State, the Commission shall, subject to the conditions laid down in paragraphs 1 and 2 being met, use the balance of that indicative national allocation to co-finance those projects submitted by other Member States, excluding projects in OCTs, that make the greatest contribution to the achievement of the general objectives set out in Article 3." (Article 19(6))



FI	19,587,370
FR	78,519,640
HR	20,219,269
HU	19,378,112
IE	11,458,751
IT	67,633,582
LT	8,161,876
LU	8,410,108
LV	7,698,323
MT	7,174,698
NL	23,578,781
PL	51,048,570
PT	20,085,627
RO	34,386,660
SE	24,846,796
SI	14,838,061
SK	17,231,744
UK	74,254,393

In determining the final allocations available for "traditional" projects, the Contracting Authority will take into account grants already awarded for Preparatory, Technical Assistance and Capacity Building projects;

For setting up the "**short and reserve list**" of proposals under the LIFE sub-programme for Environment, the following additional rules will be applied:

- Any proposal specifically supporting the conservation of nature and biodiversity objectives under the priority area Nature and Biodiversity and under Environmental Governance and Information will be taken into account for the 55% threshold for "nature and biodiversity" including any proposal submitted under LIFE Environmental Governance and Information that would primarily target a nature or biodiversity issue. These proposals will be tagged as "Nature" proposals.
- For each proposal, the Member States to which the EU financial contribution will be allocated must be clearly identifiable in the proposal. For the accounting of national allocation the EU financial contribution of each beneficiary counts towards its country.
- As foreseen in the LIFE regulation, a transnational proposal where at least one participating Member State has not yet consumed its indicative national allocation will NOT be excluded from qualitative ranking.

In cases of proposals with equal scores in the list, priority will be given to proposals with the highest requested European Union contribution.

The short list of proposals will account for a maximum of 100% of the available budget, while the reserve list will cover an additional 30%.

## 8. AWARD DECISION AND INFORMING THE LIFE COMMITTEE

After the formal endorsement (Award Decision) of the Contracting Authority of the selection results, applicants will be officially informed about the results of the evaluation of their proposals and, where appropriate, about the reasons for rejection. The LIFE Committee will be also informed about the results.

The proposals listed in the "short list" will thereafter enter into the revision phase.

## 9. REVISION PHASE

The aim of the revision phase is to clarify, for the proposals listed on the award list, all open questions regarding feasibility, cost-effectiveness and eligibility of individual actions, compliance with the LIFE Regulation and the General Conditions of the LIFE Model Grant Agreement.

During the revision phase, the Contracting Authority may ask the applicant to provide further details about particular aspects of the proposal and/or to introduce modifications or improvements to the original proposal. The coordinating beneficiary may also be asked to delete certain actions and/or to reduce the project budget, the EU financial contribution and/or the EU co-financing rate to the project.

The applicant will have 15 **calendar days** to reply to the questions and a further 15 **calendar days** to introduce the requested modifications or improvements to its proposal. In exceptional circumstances, the Contracting Authority may extend the deadline.

The Contracting Authority will send all revision questions and instructions via eProposal (see also guidelines for the use of the eProposal Mailbox on the eProposal website) to the coordinating beneficiary.

**Applicants shall not introduce any modifications to their proposal other than those requested by the Contracting Authority.**

It should be noted here that a revision letter sent out to an applicant with questions or requests for modifying the proposal does not entail, on behalf of the Contracting Authority, any commitment to a definitive funding of the proposal. Furthermore, on the basis of the replies received, the Contracting Authority may still decide to reduce the project budget or even exclude a project from financing.

By the end of the revision phase, all projects retained are expected to be fully coherent and in line with all technical and financial requirements of the LIFE Regulation and the Grant Agreement. An applicant who has successfully completed the revision process will be asked to provide one **ORIGINAL** paper version of the final revised proposal, with all original signatures and stamps on the relevant forms and annexes and two additional paper copies of that final revised proposal. At this stage, all commitments from associated beneficiaries/co-financers **must be fully confirmed** in the relevant forms.

Applicants should not introduce any modifications at all to the revised proposal after the conclusion of the revision phase unless explicitly asked by the Contracting Authority.

## **10. USE OF THE RESERVE LIST**

As a result of the revision process or due to the withdrawal of one or several short-listed proposals, LIFE co-financing budget may become available for reserve-listed proposals.

In that case, a new Award decision will be taken listing the proposals to be financed from the reserve list. These proposals will be identified by order of their ranking and conditional to respecting the earmarking of 55% LIFE co-financing for proposals tagged as "Nature". This means that in the case where the reductions resulting from the revision process or withdrawals would reduce the total annual LIFE co-financing below 55%, the proposal(s) to be selected from the reserve list will be proposals tagged as "Nature" to the point where the obligatory 55% earmarking has been reached.

The selected proposals will then enter into the revision process to ensure their full conformity with the conditions for co-financing by LIFE.

This process may be carried out several times in order to fully use the available annual LIFE budget.

## **11. SIGNATURE OF GRANT AGREEMENTS**

The Contracting Authority will prepare the Grant Agreement that will be signed by the Coordinating Beneficiary and Contracting Authority.

## 12. DETAILED EVALUATION FORMS FOR ENVIRONMENT PROPOSALS

### Opening phase\*

<b>Opening criteria</b>	
1. The Proposal was submitted through the eProposal tool by the set deadline?	<b>Yes / No</b>
2. Have the relevant LIFE 2014 application forms in eProposal been used?	<b>Yes / No</b>

\*The opening check will be performed through the eProposal application, not in ESAP.

### Technical selection phase

<b>Generic question for all of the LIFE components</b>	
1. Does the proposal fall within the meaning of Article 2(a), (b), (c), or (h) of the LIFE Regulation?	<b>Yes / No</b>
2. Is it a project focused on research or dedicated to the construction of large infrastructure and therefore ineligible for Life programme?	<b>Yes / No</b>
<b>Technical reliability of the project participants</b>	
1. Are the beneficiaries technically reliable?	<b>Yes / No</b>
<b>Specific questions for each of the LIFE components</b>	
<b>1a. Criteria applicable to all LIFE Nature and Biodiversity proposals</b>	
1. Is at least 25% of the proposal budget allocated to concrete conservation actions (or, alternatively, does the proposal fall into any of the exceptions as indicated in sections 2.4.1 of the <i>Guidelines for applicants 2014 – LIFE Nature and Biodiversity</i> ?	<b>Yes / No/ n.a.</b>
2. For site-related actions, is the long-term sustainability of the project investments ensured through an appropriate conservation status?	<b>Yes / No / n.a.</b>
<b>1b. Criteria applicable to LIFE Nature proposals only</b>	
1. Are the proposed actions aimed at implementing the objectives of the EU Birds and Habitats Directives and, more specifically, do they concern conservation measures for species and/or habitat types that are covered by the relevant annexes of the Habitats or Birds Directive?	<b>Yes / No</b>
4. Are the proposed actions taking place on the territory of the EU Member states to which the EU Birds and Habitats Directives apply or are covered by the exceptions foreseen in section 1.6.8 of the <i>Guidelines for applicants 2014 – LIFE Nature and Biodiversity</i> ?	<b>Yes / No</b>
<b>1c. Criteria applicable to LIFE Biodiversity proposals only</b>	
1. Are the proposed actions related to the objectives of the Communication "Our life insurance, our natural capital: an EU biodiversity strategy to 2020 (COM(2011) 244)"?	<b>Yes / No</b>
3. Are the actions taking place on the EU Member states territory or are covered by the exceptions foreseen in section 1.6.8 of the <i>Guidelines for applicants 2014 – LIFE Nature and Biodiversity</i> ?	<b>Yes / No</b>
<b>2. Criteria applicable to all LIFE Environment and Resource Efficiency</b>	
1. Is the demonstrative and/or pilot character of the proposal clearly outlined in the appropriate form B2 and/or B3 in eProposal? Are the proposed actions pilot or demonstration measures related to any of the "priority areas of action" set out in the guidelines for applicants for <i>LIFE Environment and Resource Efficiency</i> ?	<b>Yes / No</b>

2. Are the actions taking place on the EU Member States territory or are covered by the exceptions foreseen in section 1.6.8 of the <i>Guidelines for applicants 2014 – LIFE Environment Policy and Governance</i> ?	<b>Yes / No</b>
<b>3. Criteria applicable to all LIFE Environmental Governance and Information</b>	
1. Are the proposed actions able to achieve its objectives in line with the thematic priorities for LIFE Environmental Governance and Information?	<b>Yes / No</b>
2. Does the project partnership (coordinating beneficiary and associated beneficiaries, including external assistance) have the appropriate operational capacity / experience in the specific environmental issue addressed by the proposal?	<b>Yes / No</b>
3. Does the project include activities to monitor the impact of the proposal's actions?	<b>Yes / No</b>
4. Are the actions taking place on the EU Member states territory or are covered by the exceptions foreseen in section 1.6.8 of the <i>Guidelines for applicants 2014 – LIFE Governance and Information</i> ?	<b>Yes / No</b>

## **Award phase**

### **1. Technical coherence and quality**

In evaluating this criterion, the following points should be taken into account:

1. Is the pre-operational context well described (problems and threats, status of preparatory activities, authorisations, permits, etc.)?
2. Is there a clear logical link between threats and problems, objectives, actions and expected results?
3. Do the actions clearly state how, where, when and by whom they will be undertaken? Are they properly described and quantified, and is there sufficient information to assess their eligibility? Are adequate maps provided, if relevant?
4. Are the expected results of the project properly described and quantified (environmental impacts, replication impacts, monitoring indicators for the project)? Are indicators included to assess the progress of the project?
5. Is the budget justified and coherent and are costs adequate to the actions and means proposed? I.e. is the project cost-efficient and does the project represent value for money?
6. Are the project operational and management structures well organised and controlled by the beneficiary? Are the necessary means proposed (equipment, personnel, etc.) for a correct implementation?
7. Is the partnership appropriate / sufficient / competent / coherent for the objectives and actions of the project?
8. Are deliverables, milestones and time planning comprehensive, realistic and coherent with the expected results? Have implementation risks and contingent measures been identified? Are the lists of deliverable products and milestones comprehensive and coherent with the expected results?
9. Is a realistic strategy and action plan in place to assure that project results will be maintained or improved in the medium/long term and actions will continue? Are actions foreseen to ensure funding of such activities after project ends? Is the time planning realistic (duration of preparatory actions and permit procedures; unfavourable weather conditions, etc.)?
10. Are potential difficulties correctly assessed (feasibility of the actions, potential risks, etc.) and has sufficient preparation been undertaken to pre-empt these, for example through prior stakeholder consultation, a contingency plan, etc.? Are there still any permits, authorisations or EIAs required prior to the project implementation, or are they already available?
11. In case land purchase is foreseen in the proposal, to what extent has the applicant taken into account the land purchase criteria mentioned in the LIFE guidelines for applicants?
12. Is only a minimal effort of technical revision needed?

### **2. Financial coherence and quality**

In evaluating this criterion, the following points should be taken into account:

1. To what extent do all beneficiaries provide an adequate financial contribution to the project budget?
2. To what extent is the budget balanced (income – excluding any in kind contribution – equals expenditure)?
3. Is the requested EU-co-financing rate consistent with the rules for maximum co-financing rates, as indicated in Article 20 of the LIFE Regulation?
4. Are the personnel costs proposed on form F1 reasonable and sufficiently detailed?
5. Are the travel and subsistence costs on form F2 reasonable, sufficiently detailed and correctly allocated?

6. Are the costs for external assistance on form F3 reasonable, sufficiently detailed and correctly allocated? If relevant, is the information provided consistent with rules for public tendering?
7. Where costs for external assistance exceed 35% of the total project budget, has a coherent explanation been provided to justify this high level of sub-contracting?
8. Where relevant, are the costs for durable goods on form F4a, F4b and F4c reasonable, sufficiently detailed and correctly allocated? If relevant, are the depreciation rules correctly applied?
9. Where relevant, are the costs for land purchase, lease and one off compensation payments on form F5 reasonable and sufficiently detailed? In case of land purchase, has a letter been added from the competent authority or from a registered notary, confirming that the price per hectare is not above the average for this type of land and location? (if not, such a document needs to be provided during revision)
10. Are the costs for Consumables on form F6 reasonable, sufficiently detailed and correctly allocated?
11. Are the "other costs" on form F7 reasonable, sufficiently detailed and correctly allocated?
12. Are the overhead costs on Form F8 and Report R1 consistent with the maximum threshold of 7% of total eligible direct costs (excluding land purchase costs)?
13. Does the proposed budget exclude ineligible costs as contained in the General Conditions of the LIFE Model Grant Agreement?
14. In cases of civil servant salary costs, has the "+2%" rule been taken into account?
15. Will costs be tendered wherever required and/or possible? Are costs reasonable with respect to national conditions? Are the project management costs reasonable given the project's size and ambitions?
16. Is only a minimal effort of financial revision needed?

### **3. EU added value: extent and quality of the contribution to the specific objectives of the priority areas of the LIFE sub-programme for Environment**

In evaluating this criterion, the following points should be taken into account:

1. To what extent is the problem targeted by the proposal of European importance, taking into account the thematic priorities of Annex III of the LIFE regulation and the objectives of European environmental policy and legislation?
2. To what extent does the proposal contribute to the implementation, updating and development of European Union Environmental policy and legislation, including the integration of the environment into other policies?
3. To what extent does the proposal show that other EU funding sources have been considered in the preparation of the proposal?
4. Where relevant, has the proposal considered obtaining other funding sources in the future?
5. Is there a risk that some of the actions are obligatory compensation measures for other projects (Article 6 of the Habitats Directive), or that some of the co-financing might come from obligatory compensation payments from other projects (Article 6 of the Habitats Directive)?
6. Is there any indication that the proposal includes actions that would be financed anyway, i.e. even in case no LIFE funding would be made available for these actions?

### **4 Contribution to the project topics**

In evaluating this criterion, the following point should be taken into account:

1. For "NAT" and "GIE" priority areas: Does the project fully comply with one or more of the priority project topics for the chosen priority area?

2. For "ENV" priority areas: Does the project fully comply with one or more of the priority project topics for the chosen priority area? If so, is the proposal also innovative (a Pilot Project) or demonstrative at EU level?

### **5 EU added value: multipurpose, synergies, and integration**

In evaluating this criterion, the following points should be taken into account:

1. Does the project aim at integrating specific environmental objectives into other policy areas and Union policies and creating synergies?
2. To what extent are stakeholders consulted or involved in the project?
3. To what extent the project represents an uptake of results of other Framework programmes?

### **6 EU added value: replicability and transferability**

In evaluating this criterion, the following points should be taken into account:

1. To what extent does the proposal include monitoring, assessment and evaluation measures for the proposed actions and for the purpose of disseminating the project results and lessons learnt? Are monitoring and assessment activities appropriate and well-designed for this purpose?
2. To what extent does the proposal include communication, experience-sharing, networking and dissemination activities? Are all obligatory communication requirements covered? Are these activities appropriate and well-designed for the purpose of communicating and disseminating the results and lessons learnt?
3. To what extent will the project replicate and transfer results during and after its implementation?
4. Is the proposed approach sufficiently ambitious and realistic in order to reach an adequate scale?
5. To what extent is the project expected to generate findings that are widely applicable?

### **7 EU added value: transnational, green procurement, uptake**

In evaluating this criterion, the following points should be taken into account:

1. To what extent is transnational cooperation foreseen in the project with multi country partnership and/or international scope of the project actions?
2. To what extent is green procurement used during the project and/or promoted?
3. To what extent is the project's "carbon footprint" taken into account in its implementation and management?

## **Admissibility and exclusion phase**

### **Admissibility selection criteria**

1. Are the application forms A3, A4, A6 and A8 (where relevant) uploaded in the eProposal tool, signed and dated?	<b>Yes / No</b>
2. Has a summary in English been provided on form B1?	<b>Yes / No</b>
3. Have the proposal forms been completed in an official EU language?	<b>Yes / No</b>
4. Is the coordinating beneficiary legally registered in the EU?	<b>Yes / No</b>



**Financial selection phase**

<b>Financial selection criteria</b>	
<p>1. Have the following mandatory annexes been uploaded in the eProposal application in the requested electronic format?</p> <p>For coordinating beneficiaries that are not public bodies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the "LIFE Simplified Financial Statement"</li> <li>• most recent balance sheet and profit and loss account (or if the applicant has been only recently created, it must provide a management/ business plan for at least 12 months in the future)</li> <li>• where the EU contribution requested exceeds 750,000 €, an auditor's certificate</li> </ul> <p>For coordinating beneficiaries that are public bodies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the "Public body declaration" completed and with dated signature</li> </ul>	<b>Yes / No</b>
2. Have all beneficiaries completed the declaration that they are not in one of the situations listed in Articles 106 (1) and 107 of the Financial Regulation?	<b>Yes / No</b>
3. According to the information available, is the coordinating beneficiary financially sound (based on profit and loss account, balance sheet, audit report) – where applicable?	<b>Yes / No</b>
4. According to the information available, does the coordinating beneficiary have the capacity to finance the project and/or to manage the financial amounts provided for in the proposed budget, within the proposed project period?	<b>Yes / No</b>
5. Do all beneficiaries contribute financially to the proposal budget?	<b>Yes / No</b>
6. Are all beneficiaries absent from the Contracting Authority 's Early Warning System?	<b>Yes / No</b>