Frequently Asked Questions

(last update 18/04/2023)

2023 LIFE Calls for Standard Action Projects (**SAP**)

2023 LIFE Call for Strategic (Integrated/Nature) Projects (**SIP/SNaP**)

Sub-Programmes **Nature and Biodiversity**, **Circular Economy and Quality of Life,** and **Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation**

Technical Assistance for Replication (**TA-R**)

(For generic questions on submission in IT tool

For questions specific to the Sub-Programme Clean Energy Transition (CET) please refer to the Funding & Tenders Portal FAQ section)

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1. Questions applicable to all Calls

1.1. General questions

For guidance on the Model of Grant Agreement, please refer to the Annotated Grant Agreement. The AGA — Annotated Model Grant Agreement is a user guide that aims to explain to applicants and beneficiaries the EU Model Grant Agreements (General MGA, Lump Sum MGA, Unit MGA, Operating Grants MGA and FPA) for the EU funding programmes 2021-2027.

Q.1. Who can submit a proposal?

Any public or private organisation legally registered in the European Union (including overseas countries and territories (OCTs)) or countries associated to the LIFE Programme (participating countries). The details are described in the *Call Document section on Eligibility*

Q.2. In which language should I submit my proposal?

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. Please note that the grant agreement, project management, formal reporting, key deliverables and all communication with the European Commission will have to be in English.

Q.3. Where can a LIFE project take place?

LIFE projects shall take place in an eligible country (see 1.1 Q.1). In exceptional cases, the LIFE programme can also finance activities outside the EU. Such projects need to fulfil two conditions:

1. The project leader ("Coordinator beneficiary") must be based in an eligible country (see 1.1 Q.1)

2. Applicants must prove that the activities that will be carried out outside the eligible countries are necessary to achieve EU (or non-EU eligible countries) environmental or climate objectives. They must provide strong qualitative and quantitative evidence that interventions in EU countries would not be effective or successful unless actions are also carried out in non-EU countries. The details are described in the *Call Document section on Eligibility.* For example, 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.

Q.4. What is the optimal budget for a LIFE project?

The project budget depends on the project type and the Call you apply to. Please carefully read the *Call Document section on Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements.*

For Standard Action Project, there are no specifications for project budgets. LIFE has co-funded large ambitious projects with total costs of more than €5 million several times in the past. However, proposals for small projects with total costs below €500 000 have rarely been selected in the evaluation due to the limited output and consequently a low added value.

Q.5. What is the best starting date and duration for a project?

The project starting date and duration will be fixed in the Grant Agreement. 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.

The project duration must correspond to what is necessary to complete all the project's actions and to reach all its objectives. Standard Action Projects last on average 3-5 years. Please note that the call document (section 10) may indicate a maximum project duration.

During implementation, and only under exceptional circumstances, the Agency may grant an extension of the project's duration. Experience has shown that many LIFE projects had difficulties completing all actions within the proposed project duration mostly due to unforeseen delays and difficulties. Applicants are strongly advised to build an appropriate safety margin (e.g., 6 months) into the timetable of their proposal.

Q.6. How voluminous should the project proposal be?

A proposal should be as concise and clear as possible. Applicants should avoid voluminous proposals and should not provide excessively detailed descriptions of project areas, environmental technologies, lists of species, etc. You should, however, describe all project actions in a clear and detailed way. The page limit applied to your proposal is defined in the *Call Document section on Admissibility and documents.*

Q.7. Can we receive funding from other EU programmes in addition to LIFE?

LIFE programme funding must not overlap with funding from other EU programmes. Applicants must inform the European Commission in their project proposal about any related funding that they have received from the EU budget as well as any ongoing applications for funding from the EU budget. They must also check that they are not receiving ongoing operating grants from LIFE (or other EU programmes) that could lead to double financing.

The European Commission has noticed that an increasing number of similar or same proposals are submitted to various programmes and carries out systematic checks and cross-checks. Failure to declare that the same or a similar proposal has been submitted to another programme (or worse, already even been partly financed) has serious consequences.

Q.8. Is it possible for some project beneficiaries to give up part of the share of EU contribution in favour of one or several other project beneficiaries?

The maximum amount of Union Contribution that can be requested by a specific beneficiary is the maximum set in the grant agreement. However, as specified under the *Call documents Section 13 Important,* beneficiaries can decide to distribute it differently in accordance with what they agreed in the consortium agreement.

Q.9. My project is a resubmission of an application from a previous Call, but I cannot include the reference to it in Part A (administrative forms). Where should I mention this?

If your project is a resubmission from LIFE2020 or previous project, you must state it in Part B (technical description), in section "1.1 Background and general project objectives". Please include there the code and acronym of the proposal submitted in a previous Call.

However, if the project is a resubmission from LIFE21, then you have to include it in the Part A.

Q.10. Can I delete the instructions that are redundant such as the once under "Activities" and "Milestones" when I am copying the work-package table?

No. All instructions must remain. Please do NOT delete any instructions in the document. The overall page limit has been raised to ensure equal treatment for all applicants. Removing the instructions may result in your proposal being considered inadmissible.

Q.11. Is it possible to submit parts of a LIFE project to another EU call for proposals, if it is clearly explained in section 6 of the application form?

Yes, it is possible to submit different projects to different programs even if they contain some actions that are the same. However, beneficiaries have to declare this openly. The Agency will then check if the other project was successful and then see where to cut the action and the related costs to avoid double-funding. However please note that this approach may be risky for the applicant. If the action that will be cut was a core one that largely determined the final score of the proposal, then they risk that the whole project is cancelled.

In addition, applicants should be made aware of the complications of ensuring completion at the same time, which would be under their responsibility, and the risk that we will consider their LIFE project not to have reached its objectives.

Q.12. I have three letters of support to provide. Is there a template and how can I upload them, there is only one field?

There is no template provided for the letters of support.

Please note that if you have several letters of support to upload the system only allows one file to be uploaded under the Part B and annexes upload section. So, you should merge files. Please note that the size is limited (10M). If the resulting size is too large, you should upload a file which should include a download link. You could use also the "other annexes".

Please note that the same logic applies to all the annexes that may be uploaded at the submission stage e.g., co-financing declarations, description of sites etc.

Q.13. Where can I find the "call identifier" and the "call name"?

This information is on the 1st page of the Call document; as an example:
- Call name: Nature & Biodiversity - Standard Action Projects (SAP)
- Call identifier: LIFE-2023-SAP-NAT

Q.14. Which forms should be signed at the submission level?

At the submission stage, no signed forms are expected to be uploaded in the system with the exception of "Cofinancing declaration" by third parties cofinancers when relevant.

The Grant Agreement signature and/or signature of accession forms will be done in the system only for the projects selected for funding, after the Grant Agreement Preparation. Please find more information here.

Q.15. How should we fill in the staff categories and qualifications in the participant information forms? Do we, for example, use our organizations' own titles for staff category and degrees for qualifications?

With "staff category" we mean the title of your position within your organisation/company, e.g.

"Technical Manager" or "Public Affairs Department Director". What it is important when filling that part of the form is to briefly present only "key" staff strictly linked to the core objectives and output of the project. Depending on the project, we would expect applicants to present e.g. the project manager, senior technical expert, marketing/commercial profile (when applicable), communication manager (when applicable).

Q.16. Where do I find which annexes to attach to the Part B?

Under the *section 5 Admissibility and documents*, the list of the mandatory annexes is available. However you may decide to upload optional annexes e.g. maps if you consider deemed for your proposal clarity.

In any case, when you will start to fill in your application in the Funding & Tenders Portal, you will see that the system is configured so that it shows which documents/files are mandatory annexes to Part B, and which ones optional.

Q.17. How can I estimate the staff effort in Work Package under Part B?

You need to compile your estimated amount of person-month per Work Package and per participants. As per the Model of Grant Agreement (art. 6.2) the number of annual productive days is fixed at 215 days per year per person. i.e. 17-18 days = 1 person/month.

Q.18. Do Associated partners (which are not financially involved and don't receive contribution from the EU) have to get registered in the Funding & Tender Portal and organise their own PIC number and provide their own template "Participant info"?

Associated partners need to have their own PIC and they need to be listed in the Part A; for more information, please see the section (page 99-100) of the [Annotated Grant Agreement](#). In the Participant Information form, associated partners can be:

- either included under the beneficiary they would implement the activities
- or if their involvement in the action is very important, they may provide their own form so they can include more information that would be used to assess their operational capacity (see *section 7 Financial and operational capacity and exclusion* of the Call document).

Q.19. Do we need to provide CVs?

No. Under the LIFE programme, we are not requesting CVs; please only include in the Participant information annex the essential details on the main profiles involved.

Q.20. I have tried to upload the file Tpl_detailed budget table (LIFE) and participant info (LIFE) and always get the message of error because of the presence of illegal characters. Can you help?

The system only accepts alphanumeric characters, the "_" and the ".", nothing else. Therefore, please remove the bracket symbols "(" ")" from the file naming.

Q.21. In the application instructions it says that "The milestones and deliverables for each project will be managed through the Portal Grant Management System" and in the application template it says that "For each deliverable you will have to indicate a due month by when you commit to upload it in the Portal". What about the milestones – are they to be uploaded into the Portal as well, since they are not mentioned in the second case?

Contrary to project deliverables, milestones represent significant stages or events but not "outputs"; they are control points in the project that help to chart progress. Thus, milestones are not expected to be uploaded in the Portal Grant Management System during implementation. However, please note that milestones should be reported under section 3.2 of Part B for all Work Packages.

Q.22. Is it possible to change the dissemination level of deliverables during project implementation if such a need arises? For example, from public to sensitive? Can a deliverable be public under specific conditions, i.e., becoming public only after having been accepted for publication?

Yes, it is possible to change the dissemination level of deliverables, through an amendment providing reasonable justification for doing so.

A deliverable with PUBLIC (PU) dissemination level may be published on the Funding and Ternder Portal.

If your deliverables have some degree of confidentiality, you may want to mark them with dissemination level SENSITIVE (SEN). Those deliverables will not be published.

In the system, the dissemination level goes from public (PU) to EU classified. However, please note that the dissemination levels [R-UE/EU-R — EU Classified], [C-UE/EU-C — EU Classified], [S-UE/EU-S — EU Classified] refer to Commission Decision 2015/444 of 13 March 2015 on the security rules for protecting EU classified information. Those dissemination levels should not be used for the LIFE programme.

Q.23. Is there a recommendation for the number of milestones or deliverables?

The same recommendation applies to the milestones as to the deliverables – they have to be relevant and to the point and the number depends on the need and scope of the project. Please use your own discretion in this regard.

Q.24. Can you provide more explanation on requirements for bonus points?

Firstly, bonus points can only be awarded if there is a clear link between the description provided and project activities described in the Work Packages. They are only awarded if all stringent conditions are met for the different types of bonuses (e.g.: exceptional synergies and co-benefits)

Synergies. Synergies need to be exceptional, clearly described, well developed, and justified in the proposal, included in the project tasks. The project needs to bring substantial concrete benefits to those other areas (contribute to the priorities/objectives of the other sub-programmes). These benefits need to be quantified (i.e., through KPI indicators) and their monitoring should be foreseen.

Uptake. The use of the concrete results of other projects needs to be clearly demonstrated in the intervention logic/actions and necessary to achieve project objectives. The proposal must be clear about how the results of other EU projects will be used. thMere transfer of best practices and experiences, while welcomed and encouraged in LIFE projects, is not sufficient to obtain this bonus point.

Transnationality. Implementation of the project activities in two or more countries is a precondition for receiving bonus points. The cooperation must be essential to reach the objectives. In addition, the proposal should convincingly describe the environmental / climate benefit of the activities implemented in each of the countries.

Q.25. In the application form, Part B, section 3.2 Work packages and activities, one of the mandatory deliverables listed is *exploitation plan including replication component / business plan including replication component / 'After-LIFE Conservation Plan'*. Which of these applies to which Call?

- After-LIFE Conservation Plan: all SAP nature projects (call LIFE-2023-SAP-NAT)
- Exploitation plan including replication component: ENV SAP and CLIMA SAP projects, **except** for close-to-market projects (calls LIFE-2023-SAP-ENV and LIFE-2023-SAP-CLIMA)
- Business plan including replication component: only close-to-market projects in ENV SAP, CLIMA SAP (calls LIFE-2023-SAP-ENV and LIFE-2023-SAP-CLIMA)

For more info on close-to-market projects, see Q.1 in section 2.3 or Q.21 in section 2.4.

The expected contents of these documents is as follows:
- **After-LIFE Conservation Plan**: document describing how the project will be continued after the end of the LIFE funding, and what actions are required to consolidate the results in order to ensure the favourable conservation status of the targeted species and / or habitats and / or biodiversity aspects. Please describe a clear strategy or mechanism to ensure that the results of the project will continue after the funding period.
- **Exploitation plan**: document which could include the 2 points below and would basically detail and present the planned activities, resources (technical and financial) through which the project results will be maintained and exploited:
  - Clear definition of the technical and human resources needed. In case of public authorities, definition of the necessary administrative and legislative acts;
  - Clear definition of the necessary financial resources and identification of the relevant financial sources
- **Business plan**: Business plan is a document that summarizes the operational and financial objectives of a business and contains detailed plans and budgets showing how the objectives are to be realized. It helps to evaluate the feasibility of a new business idea in an objective, critical, and unemotional way. It serves as the main data source and decision-making tool.

Q.26. Is there a template for the Consortium Agreement or if we should use the DESCA for Horizon Europe model?

There is no LIFE template for the consortium agreement. Beneficiaries may take inspiration in other models if they fit their consortium setting. When preparing the consortium agreement please refer to the guidance included under the Article 7 of the LIFE Model Grant Agreement (page 32-33).

Q.27. Can we have different % of EU Contribution by beneficiaries

Please note that the maximum amount of Union Contribution that can be requested by a specific beneficiary is the maximum set in the grant agreement. However, as specified under the Call documents Section '13. Important', beneficiaries can decide to distribute it differently in accordance with what they agreed in the consortium agreement.

Q.28. How can I give access to the National Contact Point (NCP)?

We want to draw your attention to the possibility to get support from your National Contact Point (https://cinea.ec.europa.eu/programmes/life/history-life/life-contacts/european-national-contact-points_en). To facilitate such support, it would be beneficial to add your National Contact Point (NCP) under the "Participants" step of the application, by clicking on "Add contact". Then, under "Project role", use the option "Contact person" and add your NCP's data.

Q. 39. Can I submit my proposal with a "to be confirmed" co-financer contribution?

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

1.2. Financial questions

For guidance on the Model of Grant Agreement, please refer to the Annotated Grant Agreement. The AGA — Annotated Model Grant Agreement is a user guide that aims to explain to applicants and beneficiaries the EU Model Grant Agreements (General MGA, Lump Sum MGA, Unit MGA, Operating Grants SGA and FPA) for the EU funding programmes 2021-2027.

Q.1. What is the maximum funding from the EU budget can we expect?

The maximum amount of EU contribution depends on the maximum funding rate applicable to the Call you select to apply to. Please carefully read the ***Call Document section on Legal and financial setup of the Grant Agreements.***

Q.2. Do applicants no longer need to detail the hourly or daily rates?

For the new LIFE programme, there is a unique default value of annual productive days, which is 215.

Q.3. Is the 2% rule for permanent/additional staff of government organisations apply to the beneficiaries of projects under this programming period 2021-2027?

The "2% rule for public bodies" does not apply anymore.

Q.4. Is it possible for a public body that the cost of personnel is higher than its financial contribution to the project? (e.g., staff € 260,000 contribution to the project € 200,000)?

The financial contribution of every partner to the project and the allocation of costs between different cost categories (including public bodies) is subject to a decision taken by the partnership itself. Nevertheless, please note that the estimated budget for the action is set out in Annex 2 (Model Grant Agreement) / Application Form, Administrative Forms, Part A, Section 3 – Budget. It contains the estimated eligible costs and contributions for the action, broken down by participant and budget category. Finally, please note that the overall project funding rate for costs will be in any case a percentage (max 60%) of the action's eligible costs.

Note that the previously applied "2 % rule" does not longer apply. See previous question on that.

Q.5. Can in-kind contribution be used as co-financing?

In-kind cannot be used as co-financing at the submission level (in the budget part A). In addition, beneficiaries are allowed to use in-kind contributions for the project implementation, however they cannot be declared as a cost.

Q.6. In the Model Grant Agreement, version 1.0, section 6.2, page 26 and 27, footnotes 18, 19 and 20 are all on the bottom of the page with number 20. Is this a mistake?

Indeed in the Model Grant Agreement uploaded under the LIFE programme, some footnotes were accidentally deleted. This will be corrected as soon as possible. Meanwhile if you are interested in the correct footnotes please cross-check them in the Horizon MGA (provided to ease reference).

Q.7. Can a public entity have affiliate?

Yes this is possible.

Q.8. Which nationalities can affiliated entities have?

Affiliated entities are bound to the same eligibility conditions than beneficiaries. For more information please see the specific section (page 96-98) of the Annotated Grant Agreement.

Q.9. Should we add any additional description on the budget in the application form (part B, section 4.4 "Budget") on top of the already mentioned "see budget table"? In the case where we define the cost for a Work Package, should we provide a breakdown of the costs into personnel, travel, subcontracting, other costs or just the overall cost for the Work Package in question? How detailed must the justifications for each cost be?

You don´t have to write anything in Section 4.4.

A justified link between the costs and descriptions included in the "Detailed Budget Table" and in the Work Packages, as detailed in Part B, should be demonstrated, without however, including unnecessary repetitions and / or details that are not pertinent for both the assessment of the overall quality of the budget and the implementation and monitoring of the proposal itself (e.g., no need to break down costs of small cost items).

The information / justifications provided under the respective sections in the "Detailed Budget Table", notably under columns "Subcontract Description" and "Justification" (for the "Other direct Costs"), should demonstrate and allow for the assessment of the cost efficiency, the value for money and the role / necessity of the cost items for the implementation of the project activities / achievement of the project objectives.

For **major cost items and items critical for achieving** the scope of the project, please include information on the quantity (e.g., of equipment planned to be purchased), their unit prices and the Work Package.

Furthermore, as stated in the instructions in the detailed budget table, for these cost items **additional lines can be added below the existing ones**, in order to provide a detailed breakdown within one cost category for a given applicant.

Q.10. Where should I include the infrastructure costs?

In Part A, in the "Budget" section, in the column "Equipment" (which includes costs for equipment, infrastructure and other assets).

Please **click in the "?" symbol that appears on top of the budget table** to see the explanations on what kind of costs/income should be included in each column.

In Part B, in the excel annex "Detailed Budget Table", in the rows "Equipment (incl. infrastructure)". Please note that you should explain there if the cost represents the full cost or the depreciation.

Q.11. Is it still possible to depreciate an industrial plant for 100% on the project if it is used after the project for the same purposes?

Yes, it is. Purchases of equipment specifically for the action[i] (or developed as part of the action tasks) may be declared as full 'capitalised costs' if they fulfil the eligibility conditions applicable to their respective cost categories (Art. 6 of the LIFE General Model Grant Agreement).

'Capitalised costs' means:

> - costs incurred in the purchase or for the development of the equipment, infrastructure or other assets and, - which are recorded under a fixed asset account of the beneficiary in compliance with international accounting standards and the beneficiary's usual cost accounting practices.

Please note that, unless exempted by the granting authority, beneficiaries must commit to continue to

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[i] action=project in LIFE 2021-2027

use and maintain after the end of the action equipment bought and eligible at full costs, for activities pursuing the action's objectives. Such equipment must be used for these purposes — for at least five years after the end of the action or until the end of its economic lifespan (i.e. until it has been fully depreciated) — whichever is earlier.

Q.12. In the Call for Proposals document, you mention the "specific cost eligibility conditions for this call" and referring to Equipment costs it states "full cost + depreciation for listed equipment". This statement is a bit confusing, what is the eligible cost for Equipments? Full cost or Cost depreciated during the execution of the project?

See previous question.

If for a given piece of equipment these conditions are not fulfilled, then you should include only the depreciation cost during the project's lifetime.

Q.13. What is the ceiling for the eligible costs in where depreciation is applied (equipment)? Is it only half of the purchase price or the full price and does the rule apply differently for public and private bodies?

By default, in the Grant Agreement it is assumed that purchase costs are fully depreciated, but provided that certain conditions are fulfilled (see previous question).

If those conditions are not fulfilled for a given piece of equipment, you should include only the depreciation cost during the project's lifetime. There is no pre-defined ceiling, and the rule applies equally to public and private bodies.

Q.14. Could you clarify the term financial contributions, the term in the budget table 3 in Part A. Does this refer to contributions from the 3rd parties? The same question applies to Co-financing declaration - does the provided template relate only to the organisations that are 3rd parties?

The column „financial contributions/ EUR" refers indeed to co-financing from third-party co-financers to provide part of the project budget that is not covered by the LIFE co-funding or other income sources listed in other columns of the budget table. Similarly, the co-financing declaration relates only to these third-party co-financers.

Q.15. From what sources and how can the beneficiaries' own contribution be funded?

Under 'own resources', applicants must enter the amount of their own resources they expect to use for the implementation of the action. 'Own resources' refer to the own resources at the disposal of a beneficiary that are not linked specifically to the action submitted for funding. Typical examples could be financial resources that a beneficiary draws directly from its commercial activity; or resources coming from the beneficiary's annual operating allocation (like a public university receiving a general annual subsidy from its national Ministry).

Under 'financial contributions', applicants must enter the amount of financial contributions they expect to receive/they already received from other sources. 'Financial contributions' refer to funding given by third parties to a beneficiary for being used specifically for the same action as the one submitted for funding (e.g., a specific nationally-funded grant/donation to a beneficiary that covers the same action).

Q.16. I understand that according to the provisions of the call document, own contribution can be salaries of volunteers? Can the own contribution be non-financial, e.g. running costs of beneficiary's activity, salaries of employees delegated to project realisation, etc.?

Own contribution is the part of the eligible costs that are financed/paid by the beneficiary himself (i.e. not through income of the project or third party co-financers or the EU grant)… so, if the eligible costs

are 100 and the EU finances 60, then the 40 remaining should be either financed by own contribution unless there are financial contributions (third party co-financers), in kind contribution or income of the project. So, in the above example, if there is no revenue expected from third party co-financers nor in kind contributions nor income of the project, then the 40 will need to be covered by "own resources" of the beneficiary himself (meaning that the beneficiary will have paid costs from his own financial resources).

The guidance you have in the online tool (clicking in the "?" that appears above the budget table in Part A) shows the following:

Income generated by the project

Please enter the expected income generated by the project (revenues).

In kind contributions

Please enter the in-kind contributions you expect to receive (i.e. non-financial resources made available free of charge by third parties) . Not applicable for Horizon Europe.

Financial contributions

Please enter the financial contributions you expect to receive.

Own resources

Please enter the amount of expected own resources used for the implementation of the action.

Volunteers are not receiving a salary so there should not be salary costs of volunteers in the accounting system. However, they can be declared as a cost in the form of unit rates and the amount will be taken into account to define the EU contribution (so the EU contribution is artificially increased).

Running costs are covered by the 7% indirect costs flat rate and are also part of the eligible cost.

Q.17. How can an entity, that considers submitting a LIFE proposal as coordinator, check its financial capacity in advance ?

The entity can do a self-check using the simulation tool under the following link: https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/funding-tenders-opportunities/display/OM/Financial+capacity+assessment.

Please take into consideration that this is only a simulation. If a formal financial capacity assessment is required, you will have to go through the formal procedure and the final decision on eventual measures to be implemented further to the outcome of the financial capacity remains with the granting authority.

Q.18. Is internal invoicing between beneficiaries allowed

Internal invoicing between beneficiaries is not allowed under the LIFE programme.

1.3.   Key Project-level Indicators (KPI)

Q.1. Are the new LIFE Programme (2021-27) KPIs the same as the previous (2014-2020)?

No, the new LIFE Regulation KPIs differ from the previous Regulation KPIs. More information on the new LIFE KPIs can be found in the Annex II of the new LIFE Regulation ("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), and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1293/2013").

Q.2. Will applicants need to submit a KPI excel file with their application, as in the previous LIFE programme calls (2014-20)?

No, the KPI excel-file of the previous LIFE Programme (2014-20), used at full proposal application stage, is no longer needed. It has been replaced by the KPI Part C Dynamic forms that applicants will need to fill in directly in Funding & tenders portal along with the rest of their application.

Q.3. Will applicants need to fill in the KPI Part C forms for Concept Notes?

No, applicants will only be requested to complete the KPI Part C form when providing Full Proposals (e.g. in Single-stage Calls or the full proposal stage of Two-stage Calls).

Q.4. I am applying with different proposals for different LIFE calls and at full proposal stage the KPI Part C forms are different for each Call. Is that normal?

Yes, depending on the Call you are applying for, at full proposal, Applicants will see different KPI Part C:

  a. All Applicants will see the mandatory KPI section. These are horizontal KPIs linked mostly to Section 1 of Annex II of the new LIFE Regulation (Output Indicators and Catalytic effect indicators) and they mostly require yes/no answers.
  b. In addition to the mandatory KPI section, and depending on the Call, Applicants may see a section with non-mandatory KPIs linked mostly to Section 2 of Annex II of the new LIFE regulation (Results indicators). This non-mandatory section may differ between Calls (e.g. CET and non-CET calls).

Q.5. I am applying for LIFE funding and the KPI Part C form includes a mandatory and a non-mandatory section. Do I have to enter data in all sections and KPIs?

No, Applicants are obliged to provide data (mostly yes/no answers) in the mandatory KPI section only. They are not obliged to report on the available non-mandatory KPIs. Applicants may provide data on these non-mandatory KPIs that they consider relevant to their proposal. However, if none of the non-mandatory KPIs are completed then evaluators may question the added-value and environmental impact of the proposal, as well as, the proposal clarity.

Q.6. I wish to report additional KPIs that are not included in the KPI Part C form. Can I do it?

Applicants may report additional KPIs through the KPI Part C form of SAP (NAT, CEQL and CLIMA) and STRAT (SIP/SNAP) Calls only. In this case, Applicants may select from the non-mandatory section menu the "Other project specific KPIs" and report the values and units they consider appropriate. For other Calls such reporting on additional KPIs, can only be done via the main proposal text.

Q.7. For the non-mandatory KPIs, do Applicants need to follow the warnings/instructions in the KPI Part C Dynamic forms (e.g. in terms of increase or reduction expected for each KPI)?

No, Applicants are not obliged to follow the warnings/instructions. However, if they do not follow the

instructions then they risk having their proposal penalised as the proposal will be appearing to be environmentally or socio-economically harmful (e.g. because they do not have a problem baseline or because they are increasing harmful emissions instead of decreasing them).

Q.8. For the non-mandatory KPIs, there are pre-set values. Could I change them?

Yes, Applicants may change pre-set values in accordance to the specificities of their proposal. However, we advise applicants to follow any warnings/instructions provided with each KPI. Please note that the description of KPIs with pre-set values, includes a mention of this pre-setting. If Applicants identify pre-set values in KPIs which do not correspond to the KPI-description, then they should feel free to ignore the pre-set values as they are probably due to a technical IT issue.

Q.9. For the non-mandatory KPIs, could applicants report on a KPI using a unit other than the units provided in the KPI Part C form?

No, Applicants should report values using the units indicated for each non-mandatory KPI. If not, then they risk having their proposal penalised due to lack of clarity. Using the comments to enter the right unit will not reduce this risk. If the Applicants cannot provide values for a non-mandatory KPI using the pre-fixed units in the KPI Part C forms then they should report on those KPIs using the "Other project specific KPIs" option or via their main proposal text only.

Q.10. What are the meanings of the "?", "+", "-" and ">" next to KPIs?

The "?" provides additional information about the corresponding KPI. The "+" indicates that you may report multiple times on the same KPI. By clicking on the "+" new entries of the corresponding KPI will appear. This is the case especially for KPIs which include a selection panel (e.g. Waste management) and hence Applicants may wish to report values on multiple elements (e.g. in Waste they may wish to report values on end-of-life batteries and end-of-life vehicles). The "-" can be used to delete one of the entries made using the "+". Once you have clicked on "+" and completed and saved the values of a KPI then the values entered will appear under the KPI header. Next to the values you will see a "-" and an ">". If you click on the "-" you will delete the entry you made. If you click on ">" you will see the full data you entered in that specific entry.

Q.11. What is the process for completing the KPI Part C dynamic form? Do I have to upload it with my application once completed?

Applicants should click on the Part C (if available) in the main proposal menu. If the KPI Part C is available for their Calls then they should fill in the KPI Part C dynamic form (mandatory and any other relevant KPIs if applicable). Once they are done with entering their data, they should save their data using the "Save data" button of the dynamic form. At this point they can also extract their KPIs in PDF format (using the "View PDF"). The PDF they will see will be automatically included by the System in their final full proposal PDF. Therefore, Applicants do not need to upload the KPI Part C PDF file as an annex to their proposal. However, Applicants should check, when submitting their full proposal, that the final full proposal PDF includes the KPI Part C data. If this is not the case, then there is a technical IT problem and applicants should upload the KPI PDF file to their proposal annexes and inform the Funding & tenders portal IT.

Q.12. Is there a limit on how many Natura 2000 sites I can select in the Context Selection Section of Part C?

Depending on the LIFE call, the non-mandatory KPI section of the Part C may include a Context Selection Section. This Context Selection allows the applicant to select Natura 2000 sites that their project plans to address. In order to avoid overloading the eGrants IT system we strongly suggest that the applicants limit the number of selected Natura 2000 sites to under 100. If they wish to include more than 100

sites then we suggest that in addition to the 100 Natura 2000 sites selected in Part C, the applicants should also provide an additional list with all the relevant Natura 2000 sites in the Part B of their application as an image or attachment. They should include a short comment in the Part B highlighting the issue.

Q.13. Could we see the list of KPIs or the actual environment through which applicants need to provide the KPIs in advance?

To help you with providing Key Project-level Indicators (KPIs) in your application you can find on the LIFE Website a list of LIFE KPIs applicable to different Calls and watch the relevant KPI video presentation that demonstrates the LIFE KPI Part C Dynamic Form environment. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b6yQFTN09kA

List of LIFE KPIs: https://cinea.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-05/eGrants%20KPIs%20short.pdf

Video demo of LIFE KPI Part C: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b6yQFTN09kA

2. Standard Action Projects (**SAP**)

2.1. Questions relevant for all SAP Calls

Q.1. Is it mandatory to have activities in several countries and if yes how many?

Under the calls for Standard Action Projects, it is not mandatory to have activities in several eligible countries (see 1.1 Q.1). However, project proposal could get bonus points in the selection process if there is sufficient evidence that the transnational cooperation will contribute to environmental, nature or climate protection.

In this context, "transnational" refers to the cooperation among EU Member States or the cooperation among Member States and eligible countries participating in the LIFE programme under article 6 of the LIFE Regulation.

Activities outside the eligible countries will not result in additional points in the proposal evaluation.

Q.2. Can we include ongoing activities in the project proposal?

No, actions that are already ongoing before the official start of the LIFE project are not eligible. You can include actions in your proposal that are significantly different from previous or ongoing activities in terms of frequency or intensity.

Exceptionally, a proposal could include actions that were undertaken and completed in the past and that would be repeated at a similar frequency or intensity during the new LIFE project. In these cases, applicants must provide evidence that such actions could not be carried out without the LIFE project.

Q.3. What do you mean by "sustainability of the project"?

LIFE projects are a considerable investment, and the European Union attaches great importance to the sustainability of these investments. Medium- and long-term sustainability means that project results are maintained after the official end of the LIFE project. Project partners must consider how the programme's investments will be secured, developed, made use of, replicated or transferred during or after the end of the project.

Applicants should outline a strategy for a successful continuation, replication and/or transfer of project results in their proposal. This includes tasks to multiply the impacts of the project's solutions and to mobilise a wider uptake reaching a critical mass, during and/or in the short or medium term after the end of the LIFE project. This goes beyond the transfer of knowledge and networking and involves putting the solutions developed or applied in the project into practice beyond the project period, elsewhere or for a different purpose.

Q.4. Does LIFE fund research in any way? Or does it only focus on technology development and best practice?

Horizon Europe is the instrument specifically targeting research. Research is not the main focus of the LIFE Programme, and should not be the main focus of a LIFE project. However, limited research aimed to improve and enhance the knowledge data underpinning the project may be carried out within a LIFE project. Research must be strictly limited and intrinsically related to the project's objectives and the applicant shall explain in detail how the proper implementation of the project relies on these research activities, showing that the existing scientific basis is insufficient, and how the additional knowledge will be used to implement the project actions. In such a case, scientific publications are considered important deliverables of the project.

Keep in mind that, in line with the definition of LIFE SAP projects, projects developing a new technology

should be implemented at an operational scale and under conditions that allow the achievement of the impacts set out in the award criterion 'Impact' (see section 9 of the corresponding Call Document).

Q.5. Could you give a definition of the income of the action?

When a project generates revenues during its lifetime, they need to be reported, to prevent the situation where the LIFE funding would result in a global positive figure when adding costs + LIFE grant + non-LIFE co-financing + revenues.

The expected project revenues should be included in the overview budget table in Form A under the column "Income generated by the project".

Q.6. In part B templates for several sections, it states "n/a for stage 1", what does this mean?
Some calls may entail a two-stage procedure, in that case, the forms with "n/a for stage 1" should not be filled in at the 1st stage.

If your call follows a single-stage process, all the sections in the forms should be filled in.

Q.1. Does the 25% rule related to the budget dedicated to concrete conservation action still apply?
The rule no longer applies; however all projects must have SMART (specific measurable achievable relevant and time-bound) objectives and results. This will enable the evaluators to understand how important and how urgent the project is. Concrete outcome-based activities are a pre-condition for prioritization of the proposals. Projects must still deliver concrete and substantial conservation benefits and impacts in order to be scored higher. Pure intellectual, academic or research projects are out of scope.

Q.2. If my project fits only in one policy priority (e.g., I plan to work only on bringing nature to agriculture land), will it have a lower priority for funding? Should I also make sure my project fits into an intervention area ("Space for nature" or "Safeguarding our species")?
A project that is focussed on a single policy priority rather than on multiple priorities will not necessarily be disadvantaged for that reason. However, applicants should keep in mind that the prioritisation of proposals has two dimensions: conservation urgency on one hand (based on the conservation status, red list status etc. of the species and habitats targeted) and policy priorities on the other hand. In order to optimize their chances of receiving funding, applicants will need to show that their proposals fall into the priorities with regard to both dimensions.

Q.3. Can the inventory of the target priority species in one of the applicant countries be included in the proposal?
It is advised that inventories for particular species are only included in the proposal if this is a necessary pre-condition for the achievement of the project's objectives for these species. Applicants are advised to argue in their proposal the reasons why the inventory is needed and include concrete conservation activities targeting the species.

Q.4. Is it possible to include activities targeting red list species or Annex IV species when working in a Natura 2000 site? Does the Standard Data Form (SDF) for that site have to be updated before the end of the project?
Project activities targeting EU red listed species or species listed in Annex IV of the Habitats Directive can take place inside a Natura 2000 site, as long as they are consistent with the conservation objectives of this site and do not contradict or undermine these objectives in any way. However, it is expected that the project's main focus is the site's conservation objectives for the species and habitats in the annexes (EU protected Natura 2000 triggering features).

Even though there is no strict requirement to report on such species in the Natura 2000 Standard Data form, Member States are encouraged to provide information on their presence in section "3.3 Other important species of flora and fauna (optional)".

Q.5. Can I include in the project budget for a visitors' center?

Visitor infrastructures are a priori not eligible. However, in exceptional cases, the creation of small-scale visitor infrastructures could be eligible if all the following criteria are fulfilled:

(i)   Such infrastructure is essential to achieve project objectives and must be clearly related to the threats/pressure addressed in the project.
(ii)   The investment in the infrastructure is limited in comparison to the overall project budget and it is cost effective.
(iii)   The investment cannot be financed by other funding instruments at regional, national or EU level. The applicant should justify in the proposal why other sources of funding cannot be used to finance this investment.

Q.6. Can my project target domestic honeybees?

No. Only wild flora and fauna and natural and semi-natural habitats may be targeted by the project.

Q.7. If a project targets 4 annex V species and only 3 are U2-. Which co-financing applies?

Certainly not 75% because not ALL species targeted are either priority species in the annexes of the Habitats Directive (i.e., asterisk species), or species in unfavorable-bad conservation status with a declining trend (U2-) in the EU- and national-level biogeographical region assessments, or species endangered or worse in the European red list.

The project may be entitled to 67% because there is a clear focus on priority species (3 out of 4) based on the U2- conservation status criterion.

Q.8. If we request 75 % co-financing but the project is then assessed to be entitled to 67 % co-financing, will our application be rejected?

The application will not be rejected but this can have an impact on the score of the award criterion 4 "Resources". In case the project is successful, the co-financing rate will need to be adjusted during the revision phase.

Q.9. In case the project is aimed at restoring EU habitats outside N2000, is it obligatory to designate the site as a N2000 site? Are there other means compliant with LIFE requirements?

Where the actions involve land acquisition and habitat restoration, the area in question should receive the most appropriate legal protection (nationally protected area, Natura 2000 etc.). For other investments that involve reducing pressures and threats (e.g. blocking of ditches or reducing nitrogen run off from agricultural land) on land which does not in itself have high natural value to justify designation but acts as a buffer zone around Natura 2000 sites and/or protected areas, a long term contractual agreement (at least 30 years) to ensure that the pressures and threats are irreversibly alleviated is required. When, for some reasons, legal protection/contractual agreements are not possible, the applicant should provide a thorough justification and clear evidence that the investment to be made is backed by an appropriate land use planning at the most relevant administrative level. Private land conservation initiatives can also be supported in this context.

See the Call Document Section 2 "Additional conditions" for more details.

Q.10. To what extent is it required to provide precise measurements in case of habitat restoration?

Evaluators will assess the technical and financial qualities of the proposal regarding the clarity of the description of the proposed measures and cost-effectiveness of the proposal. It is therefore in the interest of the applicant to be as clear as possible in this respect.

Q.11. Is it required to mainly target Natura2000 sites in a project where there are only a few protected areas due to the limitations of an urban setting?

As indicated in the LIFE Regulation, the implementation of EU nature legislation is a key policy priority for the program. However, there is no requirement to include Natura 2000 sites in the given proposal.

Q.12. In nature projects is large infrastructure such as eco-ducts or fish passes eligible?

Investments in infrastructure that is essential to achieve conservation objectives of the projects can be eligible and there is no financial ceiling for such investments. The following conditions need to be met:

    (iv)   The entity that directly owns or will own the infrastructure assets should be part of the project partnership.

(v)   It is proven that the investment cannot be financed by other EU, national or regional funds.

(vi)   If the infrastructure acts as a migration corridor (e.g., eco-ducts, fish passes) evidence needs to be provided that is indispensable to ensure connectivity and movement of species.

(vii)   It is located inside Natura 2000. In case it is located outside Natura 2000, the long-term conservation purpose of the infrastructure must be guaranteed in the most appropriate way (e.g., land use planning, contractual agreements).

See the Call Document Section 2 "Additional conditions" for more details.

Q.1. What are close-to-market projects and are there specific requirements for them?

Close-to-market projects are Standard Action Projects (SAP) whose aim is not only delivering improved environmental solutions, but also making sure that such solutions are widely taken up by society in general and, more particularly, by the economy through an explicit market-oriented approach.

There are no specific requirements as to who the coordinating beneficiary should be, however the inclusion in the consortium of at least one company that can guarantee the implementation of a market approach is expected (although not formally required).

There are specific requirements for close-to-market projects indicated in the instructions contained in the Standard Application Forms (e.g.: target production capacity should be industrial/commercial scale already during the project), so pay particular attention to those specific requirements.

As for all SAPs projects also close-to-market project must include a compulsory work package called 'Sustainability, replication and exploitation of project results' in which typically all the activities aimed at reaching the market will be included as well as the mandatory deliverable Business plan including replication.

Q.2. Are best practices allowed and if yes under which conditions? Do innovative projects get more points? Where are the definitions?

The definitions of 'Best practice' and 'Innovative techniques, methods and approaches' are part of the SAPs definition to be found in section 2 of the call documents: [*SAPs represent the 'traditional LIFE projects' aimed to:*

- *develop, demonstrate and promote innovative techniques, methods and approaches 'Innovative techniques, methods and approaches' means solutions which are new when compared to the state of the art at Member State and sector level and which are implemented at an operational scale and under conditions that allow the achievement of the impacts set out in the award criterion 'Impact' first paragraph.*
- *contribute to the knowledge base and to the application of best practice 'Best practice' means solutions, techniques, methods and approaches which are appropriate, cost-effective and state of the art (at Member State and sector level), and which are implemented at an operational scale and under conditions that allow the achievement of the impacts set out in the award criterion 'Impact' first paragraph. ...*]

So, SAPs that implement best practice are allowed, but only if they can be considered as such when compared to the state of the art at Members state level or in a specific sector. In other words, a solution that can be considered a best practice at regional level, but not at national level, because more advanced best practices are implemented in other regions in the same Member State, will not be eligible.

Similarly, we consider a SAPs innovative when the project is implementing a solution that can be considered new at national level or in its application in a specific sector (e.g.: a technology known and applied in France in the context of waste management which has never been used in France in the wastewater management sector).

The description of the state of the art at national level is then crucial to determine if the project can be, at least, regarded as a best practice and therefore eligible for the call.

Formally no additional points are awarded to innovative SAPs as opposed to best practice ones.

However, some of the priority topics described under section 2 of the call document require the implementation of innovative solutions. In those cases, proposals that do not comply with this requirement will score lower in Award criterion 1 (Relevance) that, among other things, requires to assess the 'Extent to which the proposal is in line with the description included in the call for proposals, including, where relevant, its specific priorities'.

Q.3. Can you give examples for a 2 year and 10-year project relating to the starting and ending Technical Readiness Level (TRL)?

The Call does not prescribe certain TRLs. What you should keep in mind is that a LIFE project should allow the delivery of sufficiently credible and ambitious environmental benefits, within the lifetime of the project and/or shortly after its end.

Q.4. Are land purchases eligible for Circular Economy and Quality of Life projects?

Yes, they are. However only when fulfilling the conditions specified in Art. 6.2 - D.2 "Eligible and ineligible costs and contributions" of the [LIFE General Model Grant Agreement](#). Applicant must address each of these conditions in the 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.

Q.5. Does the circular economy & quality of life programme fund research activities, construction and analysis of pilot project, and the patent of the innovation?

See Q&A "Does LIFE fund research in any way?" in section 2.1 regarding the funding of research activities.

In line with the definition of LIFE SAP projects, projects developing a new technology should be implemented at an operational scale and under conditions that allow the achievement of the impacts set out in the award criterion 'Impact' (see section 9 of the corresponding Call Document). In this sense, construction and analysis of a pilot project, and the patent of the innovation, are costs which are typically eligible for funding as long as they comply with the cost eligibility conditions specified in Art. 6 of the [LIFE General Model Grant Agreement](#).

Q.6. SAP-ENV-GOV: Since this category is new, what are the most crucial issues that a proposal must cover in order to be eligible?

SAP-ENV-GOV includes all topics specifically related to environment *(other than nature and biodiversity)* and circular economy, which in the past were embedded in the broader LIFE Governance&Information (GIE) call. To be eligible under SAP-ENV-GOV, a proposal must target at least one of the three sub-topics and related Circular Economy&Quality of Life priorities explicitly indicated in the call document (1. support to public administration decision making process and voluntary approaches, 2. environmental compliance assurance and access to justice, 3. behavioural change and awareness raising), as well as complying with the eligibility and award criteria described in the call document common to SAP-ENV-Environment. As per SAP Environment, attention will therefore be given to Key Performance Indicators and project sustainability as well.

Q.7. LIFE-2023-SAP-ENV-ENVIRONMENT: This call has a very practical approach. Can political decision-making be addressed in this call? Can politics be a target group?

Yes, LIFE projects experience shows they traditionally have political impact helping to shape the decision-making process of the environmental issue targeted. Politics and decision-makers can

therefore be a target group. However, this is considered as a complement to core project technical actions. If your project idea concerns activities targeting political decision-making as main action, it is advisable to apply under LIFE-SAP-ENV-GOV or LIFE-SAP-NAT-GOV depending on the topic addressed. Please refer to the call documents for further information.

Q.8. SAP-ENV-GOV: Are capacity-building projects for public administrations and/or other environmental governance projects also intended to achieve direct environmental benefits (e.g. results on water quality for projects implementing River Basin or Flood risk Management Plans)? Are specific KPIs mandatory?

Project proposals submitted under SAP-ENV-GOV shall compulsorily fill in Key Performance Indicators (section C of the application form). There are no specific indicators for environmental governance. However, it is possible to add specific one using the option "other". It is strongly advisable that not only behavioural change and awareness raising KPIs are reported, but also direct and/or indirect environmental benefits (e.g., reduction of air, water pollutants, use of chemicals, etc) are included where applicable to the possible extent.

Q.9. LIFE SAP ENV: Can my project target environmental education/awareness issues?

Yes, please have a look at the dedicated sub-topic and corresponding Circular Economy & Quality of Life priorities under LIFE-SAP-ENV-GOV.

Q.10. CLIMA Transport topics and Circular Economy & Quality of Life AIR transport topics are often similar. Any suggestions to choose the right one?

An approach to selecting the right sub-programme could be the one based on the environmental problem primarily targeted in the specific context of the project. If the main problem is bad air quality in a specific area/city targeted by the project, then the project has a relevant "air quality" objective and air pollutants (e.g., PM, NOx, etc.) represent the main indicators to describe the impacts. In this case, co-benefits related to GHGs mitigation can be quantified too. Vice versa, if the project targets, for example, a strategy to mitigate climate change in specific sector (e.g., the automotive industry), the primary indicator is CO2eq. reduced/avoided: in this case CLIMA topic might better fit the purpose of the project and air pollution reduction represents a co-benefit.

Q.11. Does LIFE offer support/advice for Business plan development?

The support for development / preparation of the Business plan is eligible.

2.4. Questions relevant only for SAP Climate Action

Q.1. If the project focuses fully one of the areas of intervention but no one of the bullet points, may it equally be considered aligned with the priorities?

Yes, if the project complies with one designated scope it will be assessed as complying with the priorities. The areas of intervention (bullet points) are given as examples, they are non-exhaustive.

Q.2. CCA priorities 1&2&6: may adaptation strategies, solutions and decision support systems focus on determined climate-related threats, or should they be holistic?

Adaptation strategies, solutions and decision support systems can be focused on determined climate-related threats. However, it should be noted that Award Criteria 1 "Relevance" will assess the extent to which proposals offer co-benefits and promote synergies with other policy areas.

Q.3. We want to prevent water runoff by placing adaptation measures. Also, we touch protected habitats and species. How can we underscore this to opt to an additional 7%?

If the main objective of your project is to introduce adaptation measures to increase resilience to water-related risks, you may apply under Climate Adaptation topic. All Standard Action Projects (SAPs) in the CLIMA sub-programme have a maximum 60% funding rate. Sub-programme LIFE Nature & Biodiversity offers under certain conditions a higher co-financing rate (67% and 75%). For further details, please check the call documents of LIFE CLIMA and LIFE Nature & Biodiversity.

Q.4. CCM - Are conditions elaborated on p. 17 of the call (4 bullet points on how project should contribute to objectives) cumulative?

Catalogue of objectives does not have the cumulative character. This inclusive approach helps to gather projects, which contribute to key call objectives from different points of views / approaches / types of projects. Therefore, it is not necessary to tick all of the boxes, but of course achieving as many as possible will help to gain more points on the evaluation.

Q.5. Does LIFE offer support/advice for Business plan development?

The support for development / preparation of the Business plan is eligible.

Q.6. We would like to submit a proposal focused on forest management - should we submit it under Climate Adaptation or Climate Mitigation?

Forestry projects are eligible under both CCA and CCM and an action can have impact on both climate change adaptation and mitigation. Under CCM, the main actions focus on decreasing GHG emissions and increasing Carbon sequestration (and those impacts need to be measured), meanwhile adaptation projects improve forest resilience and different types of indicators (such as the area of the more resilient forest) are measured.

Q.7. CLIMA intervention area Natural carbon sinks - Are projects related to sea management practices encouraged? The call seems very focused on land and relation to the CAP.

Scope 4 of LIFE-2023-SAP-CLIMA-CCM - Climate Change Mitigation covers

"The development of land and sea management practices which have an impact on emissions and removals of emissions, conservation and enhancement of natural carbon sinks". Thus, sea management practices are included, although this type of action is not explicitly listed amongst the areas of intervention. The list of areas of intervention is considered only indicative.

Q.8. CCM - For peatlands restoration, concrete actions can be very expensive even for small sites - how can we justify the cost-efficiency?

As in any project, you have to provide as much information as possible to describe the project actions and their costs, the impact of the project, how the project results will be sustained etc. The proposals are evaluated by external experts who are aware of the costs of different types of work and on the basis of information provided, they will evaluate "the value for money"of the proposals.

Q.9. CCM: what are the specificities of #3 "Increase the generation (...) of renewable energy (...)" compared to the Clean Energy Transition sub programme?

This possible area of intervention is deliberately open to follow the bottom-up approach of LIFE SAP CLIMA call. Applicants may consider the following information when choosing between Clima Action and Clean Energy Transition Subprograms:
- Durable goods such as equipment, infrastructure and prototype are traditionally eligible under LIFE SAP CLIMA (depreciation or even full costs if some conditions are respected). Therefore, the development, installation and test of technology related to renewable energy would fit under LIFE SAP CLIMA call.
- Transnationality: under LIFE SAP CLIMA there is no condition of transnational partnership. A proposal can be submitted by one applicant coming from one country. Bonus points for transnationally may be awarded but it is not a requirement.

Q.10. Under the CCM priority on the Energy Intensive Industries (EII), are EII defined somewhere? Is there a limited list of EII?

The priority on energy intensive industries remains the same as in previous years. There is no defined list, but we consider industries with high energy consumption and with high saving potentials as EII. This includes for instance steel, aluminium, glass, ceramics, cement and chemical industries. This does not limit it to big industries, on the contrary, we would like to target SMEs which have high energy consumption, and which could have a transformative impact in their respective sectors.

Q.11. CCM: Is it possible to submit a project focusing on reduction of GHG and air pollution at the same time?

Yes, a project under EII can target reduction of GHG of an industrial process but have additional impact on reducing air pollution. This approach will allow proposal to 'offer co-benefits and promote synergies with other policy areas relevant for achieving environment and climate policy objectives' (Award Criteria - relevance).

Q.12. CLIMA Transport topics and Circular Economy & Quality of Life AIR transport topics are often similar. Any suggestions to choose the right one?

An approach to selecting the right sub-programme could be the one based on the environmental problem primarily targeted in the specific context of the project. If the main problem is bad air quality in a specific area/city targeted by the project, then the project has a relevant "air quality" objective and air pollutants (e.g., PM, NOx, etc.) represent the main indicators to describe the impacts. In this case, co-benefits related to GHGs mitigation can be quantified too. Vice versa, if the project targets, for example, a strategy to mitigate climate change in specific sector (e.g., the automotive industry), the primary indicator is CO2eq. reduced/avoided: in this case Clima topic might better fit the purpose of the project and air pollution reduction represents a co-benefit.

Q.13. As stated in the call, projects should start at TRL 4-5 and end at TRL 8-9. It means that we are considering very long projects. Is this really the objective of LIFE programme?

Projects with TRL lower than 4-5 are below the scope of LIFE SAP CLIMA call. A project can also start at

a higher TRL than 4-5. In any case, the maximum length of a project is 10 years as stated in the call document (section 10).

Q.14. CLIMA GOV: producing measurable results for this kind of project seems difficult, is there any example from past projects showing how to get measurable impact?

GOV projects direct impacts are generally increased level of awareness, of knowledge, changed consumption patterns, enhanced coordination of institutions or plans, mainstreaming of climate objectives into the different policies, better monitoring or enforcement. You can demonstrate these impacts via surveys, changed consumption patterns, new legislation or strategies and plans adopted/implemented. Climate and environmental impacts are generally indirect for GOV projects and are visible usually in the medium term after the end of the project.

Q.15. Does LIFE programme support development of tools, decision support services or studies to increase climate-resilience?

Yes, it does, mainly in the GOV topic. Project developing tools or studies need to include concrete actions that these tools are implemented, or studies are used in policy making/monitoring during the duration of the project.

Q.16. May we use a part of the LIFE funding to support another entity developing a local initiative? What are the conditions?

It is allowed for grants and prizes. 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, citizens groups, individual farmers) in the implementation or development of local initiatives that will contribute to the project's objectives. Maximum total amount for financial support to third parties EUR 100.000; maximum amount per third party EUR 20.000. The application must clearly specify why financial support to third parties is needed, the criteria and procedures for giving financial support, 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.

Q.17. I want to develop a project that enhances capacities for energy efficiency. Should I apply under the LIFE CET or CLIMA Governance and Information?

Generally, LIFE CET requirements are more prescriptive in terms of topics, scale, and partnership. LIFE GOV follows a more bottom-up approach and allows more flexibility in terms of actions to be proposed, scale of the project (even local actions are eligible). There are also differences in the funding rates. In any case, please check the call documents of both sub-programmes to see where your idea fits best.

Q.18. Does CLIMA-GOV have equipment and infrastructure eligible costs?

Yes, it does, but such investments are rather limited and exceptional in the CLIMA-GOV topic.

Q.19. CLIMA GOV&INFO: how large is the total budget that the EU will award? And approximately how many projects are expected to share this budget?

For call 2023, the CLIMA GOV topic has an indicative budget of 8 million euros. Based on the experience of the previous calls, around 5 projects are likely to get funded.

Q.20. Are water projects eligible under Climate change governance and information?

Water related projects are eligible under Climate Change Governance and Information. Depending on its specificities, you may build your project within relevant scopes such as 1. Support to the operation of the European Climate Pact, 2. Incentivising behavioural, mainstream emission reduction and resource and energy efficiency actions, 3. Awareness-raising activities addressing adaptation and

mitigation needs.

Q.21. What are close-to-market projects and are there specific requirements for them?

Close-to-market projects are Standard Action Projects (SAP) whose aim is not only delivering improved environmental solutions, but also making sure that such solutions are widely taken up by society in general and, more particularly, by the economy through an explicit market-oriented approach.

There are no specific requirements as to who the coordinating beneficiary should be, however the inclusion in the consortium of at least one company that can guarantee the implementation of a market approach is expected (although not formally required).

There are specific requirements for close-to-market projects indicated in the instructions contained in the Standard Application Forms (e.g.: target production capacity should be industrial/commercial scale already during the project), so pay particular attention to those specific requirements.

As for all SAPs projects also close-to-market project must include a compulsory work package called 'Sustainability, replication and exploitation of project results' in which typically all the activities aimed at reaching the market will be included as well as the mandatory deliverable Business plan including replication.

3. Strategic (Integrated/Nature) Projects (**SIP/SNaP**)

> **Please note that there will be a Call for proposals on Strategic Nature Projects (SNaPs) in 2024, there will be no call for SNaPs in 2023.**

Q.1. Who can provide assistance and information on Strategic Integrated and Nature Projects (SIPs/SNaPs) in my country?

The LIFE National Contact Points can provide guidance to applicants. In order to enhance the chances of successful applications and in particular to avoid unintentional competition among projects having similar targets, potential applicants are encouraged to make use of this assistance.

Furthermore, the LIFE Units in DG Environment and CINEA may also be contacted to provide guidance on the potential project concepts. Please write to CINEA-LIFE-ENQUIRIES@ec.europa.eu .

Furthermore, technical assistance grants can help prepare the strategic projects proposals.

3.1.   Stage 1 (concept note)

Q.2. Are SNaP/SIP projects allowed to address more than one plan?

Yes, they are allowed. A single SIP may target more than one plan. The requirement is that at least one of the plans or strategies targeted should be among those in the list of eligible plans and strategies as listed in Chapter 2 of the Call document, and the project should aim at its full implementation in coordination/mobilising other funds besides LIFE.

Q.3. We are working on a proposal that is aimed at implementing more than one eligible plan/strategy, but the online proposal allows the upload of only 1 pdf file. How can we upload or make available all the targeted plan/strategies?

Indeed there is a IT limitation whereby only 1 pdf file can be uploaded as targeted plan(s), so we propose 2 solutions:

- • Either you make an index and merge that index plus the targeted plans/strategies into 1 pdf, and submit that,
- • Or you upload a pdf that includes a download link for all the targeted plans/strategies.

The first option would be preferred, so we have already the plans/strategies uploaded in eGrants, but the second would be acceptable too.

Q.4. All participants of my consortium belong to the same EU Member State, and I am receiving the following yellow alert "Call requires at least 2 participant(s) from different EU Member States and Associated Countries, currently you have 1". Can we submit the proposal, or do we need at least 1 participant from another EU Member State or Associated Country?

This is a bug in the submission system. The only requirement is to have 2 or more participants from an eligible country (see list of eligible countries in Chapter 6 of the Call document) in the consortium, but they can all perfectly belong to the same country.

Please ignore that warning if you have 2 or more participants from an eligible country.

Q.5. Is it mandatory to have several beneficiaries in a SIP/SNaP consortium? Can we include additional beneficiaries/affiliates/associated partners in Stage 2 that were not foreseen yet in Stage 1? Is it possible to modify the role (coordinator/beneficiary/affiliate/associated partner) of a stakeholder between Stage 1 and Stage 2?

The minimum number of beneficiaries is two, and one of them should be the authority responsible for the implementation of the targeted plan/strategy/action plan. See also the question below.

You can include additional beneficiaries/affiliates/associated partners in Stage 2, and also modify the role of a stakeholder between stages 1 and 2.

But those changes should be well justified in your application in stage 2.

Q.6. In the section 3.2 "Stakeholder input", the instructions mention "Annex Letters of support to demonstrate the type and level of commitment already secured (if any)", but in the page 44 of the Call for Proposals document, the Letters of Support are only applicable in Stage 2. Do we have to include the ones we have in Stage 1?

Do not include letters of support in stage 1.

Q.7. Budget breakdown: in former LIFE Integrated Projects calls, the Stage 1 proposal (former Concept Note) indicated a total project budget without making any difference between Cost Categories or Beneficiaries. Does it still apply in the same way or is it needed to provide a breakdown?

In stage 1 you will have to complete the table "3 - Budget" in Form A, providing, per beneficiary, an estimate of the total budget per cost category. See the table in page 9 of https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/life/temp-form/af/af_life-sip-snap_en.pdf.

Q.8. Can Part B of the Concept Note application template exceed the 45-page limit?

No. When uploading your Part B of the concept note application form, any pages beyond that limit will not be visible to the evaluators (so they are lost).

Q.9. According to the call document "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". However, in my Member State there are different authorities that are responsible for the elaboration of the Plan/Strategy, and several actors that are responsible for its implementation. How should we approach it?

Please note that the call document emphasizes the implementation of the plan as the objective (not the elaboration). Therefore, the project should be designed with this long-term objective in mind and both the concept note / full proposal should clearly explain which authority or authorities are responsible for the full implementation and what are the roles of other authorities and stakeholders in the implementation of the plan. That share of responsibilities should be also adequately reflected in the project partnership. While there can be only one coordinator, other actors responsible for the implementation of parts of a Plan should ideally be involved as beneficiaries.

On the related note, please pay attention to the following eligibility criterion listed in section 9 of the Call document: *involvement of key stakeholders.* It is important to consider when preparing the project application and intervention logic in order to make sure that all the stakeholders that are instrumental for the implementation of the plans are involved in the project.

Q.10. In the Call for Proposals document, you mention the "Financial and operational capacity" assessment of applicants. Are Financial and Operational Capacity assessed in Stage 1 proposals? In case yes, how is it done?

In terms of financial capacity, no check is done at stage 1. In terms of operational capacity, the only checks done at stage 1 is a "rough" assessment of the consortium, to see first if the competent authority to implement the targeted plan/strategy is included, and to see if the entities most relevant for the implementation of the work packages are as well included.

Q.11. What does the 'large territorial coverage' foreseen for SIP/SNaPs mean in practice in the case of waste management plans? Could the SIP/SNaP be implemented in some separate provinces, or should it be a geographically uniform/continuous area?

It is up to the applicant to decide upon their choice of regions or provinces to be covered by the SIP/SNaP but they should fall within the area covered by the plan(s) targeted by the project.

Q.12. If the partners of the SIP/SNaP are preparing also LIFE standard action project (SAP) applications as well as Horizon Europe projects, parallel to the SIP/SNaP one, will this synergy contribute to a positive evaluation of the SIP/SNaP? Is mentioning the complementarity between a SIP/SNaP and a SAP one necessary or not? Where and how should it be reported in stage 1 (concept note)?

Synergy with other EU funds is encouraged for SIP/SNaP proposals. While of course it is good to ensure complementarity between a LIFE SIP/SNaP and a running/future LIFE SAP project, it is primarily the complementarity with actions financed by other EU funds (including Horizon Europe funds, regional development funds, etc.) that would be positively evaluated.

In stage 1 the information should be indicated in Part B of the concept note, under '5. Complementary Funding'.

Q.13. For national-scale plans: what would be considered as complementary measures for such a large scale?

In general, a complementary measure is any measure not included within the SNaP/SIP that contributes to the plan(s) implementation.

For example, for a SIP targeting air quality plan at national scale, a complementary measure could be the replacement at national scale, making use of national or EU Funds other than LIFE, of old boilers by new, less polluting ones. Or for a SIP targeting river basin management plans covering a whole country, complementary measures may include, for example, the removal of all hydro morphological barriers or the creation and restoration of wetlands.

To see more examples please check the websites of ongoing integrated projects, you can find them in the LIFE project database, https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/life/publicWebsite/search.

Q.14. Can the concept note refer to an environmental or climate plan or strategy or roadmap that has not yet been agreed with the EC or not yet adopted?

As indicated in the Call document, if the formal adoption has not taken place at the time of the submission of the Concept Note, the applicant should explain the status of the adoption and demonstrate that this adoption will take place before deadline for submission of the full SIP/SNaP proposal.

Q.15. According to the call document, the SIP/SNaP should aim towards the full implementation of the targeted plan or strategy. However, given the broad scope of the Strategy that we intend to target, it is more realistic to focus only on part of the Strategy. Is it allowed?

Indeed, the long-term objective for any SIP/SNaP should be the full implementation of a targeted Strategy / Plan. This is why Integrated Projects have been introduced - to catalyse full implementation of plans and strategies and to help Member States to achieve this ambitious task.

With the limited budget of the SIP/SNaP it is not possible to fully implement most of the strategies within LIFE budget only. That is why the complementary actions are very important and that is why many of the SIPs/SNaPs funded so far focus on removing obstacles for the implementation of the full strategy (by capacity building, preparation of management plans, stakeholder engagement etc.) rather than focusing on one theme of the strategy.

However, it is also possible to conceive a SIP/SNaP that focuses on one element of the strategy and uses it as a vehicle to achieve the remaining objectives of that strategy. When that is the case, the concept note should clearly justify such an approach and convince the evaluators that, even with this narrower focus, the full plan will be eventually implemented.

Q.16. We have a wide-ranging Plan/Strategy in our Member State, covering different sectors. Would it be appropriate to have a SIP/SNaP with one or two concrete actions relating to each of those areas? And then, complementary actions relating to each area? Or might that be considered insufficiently coherent for a SIP/SNaP?

The key objective of a SIP/SNaP is the full implementation of a Strategy/Plan. So, if your strategy covers several sectors, we would like to see in your application how the strategy will be implemented for each sector, either through actions included in the SIP/SNaP or through complementary actions. This does not mean that the SIP/SNaP itself will cover all actions foreseen in the plan and we understand that most of the actions will be implemented through complementary funding.

You could also consider the availability of funding for complementary activities. For activities in some sectors, it might be easier to mobilise complementary funding, while for others this might be more difficult, and you may even choose to cover more actions from these sectors from the SIP/SNaP (LIFEfunded) if needed. So, in that sense, the weight in the SIP/SNaP might be, but does not have to be, equally distributed among all the sectors covered in the strategy depending on the specific context of your Member State.

Q.17. We wish to apply for a Climate Change Mitigation SIP. While preparing to address Climate Mitigation aspects as per Call document, however we are noticing that for the project to be more successful, a small number of actions related to climate adaptation should also feature. Would such actions be eligible for LIFE SIP funding?

If the adaptation actions are in the plan or strategy your SIP would be addressing, then it is all right to have these actions in the project (or possibly covered by complementary measures).

Also, if those actions are related to the project, i.e., for example they would improve the project or without them the project would be less effective, then it is all right to have those actions proposed. However, a clear justification would need to be provided, so evaluators can understand what the added value is of having those actions included and how they support project objectives.

Q.18. What is the difference between strategies and roadmaps in the case of Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation SIPs targeting national, regional or industry-/sector-specific greenhouse gas mitigation strategies or economy roadmaps?

The Communication on the 2050 Roadmap for a competitive low-carbon economy encourages industrial sectors to develop low carbon roadmaps, analysing how particular industries can contribute to reaching EU's 2050 climate change mitigation and adaptation targets. These are the roadmaps to implement with SIPs. Examples of sectoral roadmaps, which exist under the 2050 Roadmap that could be implemented under LIFE Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation SIPs, include:

   a. ceramic industry roadmap
   b. chemical industry roadmap
   c. steel industry roadmap.

Contrary to plans or strategies such as an adaptation strategy or a river basin management plan that are led and will be adopted by public authorities, industrial low-carbon Roadmaps will be adopted by industry itself. Moreover SIPs implementing such roadmaps are encouraged pursuant to the Union act "Communication on the 2050 Roadmap" whereas for example a SIP implementing a river basin management plan under the Environment sub-programme is a plan required by specific Union environmental legislation.

Q.19. Will a part of the EU contribution be transferred in the beginning of the project? If so, will it be transferred to the coordinator or directly to each beneficiary?

All the payments are made to the coordinator who is then responsible for distributing the financial resources among the beneficiaries as required.

First pre-financing payment to the coordinator (20% of the grant) will be made within 30 calendar days from the entry into force of the Grant Agreement (or from the moment when we receive the financial guarantee if that is applicable).

Q.20. What is the distribution of EU payments during the life of the project of a SNaP/SIP?

First pre-financing 20% after grant agreement signature, then an interim payment of actual costs incurred 3 months after the end of each phase, with the limitation that the sum of all payments before final report stage cannot surpass 80% of the maximum LIFE grant. Finally, a payment of the balance at project end.

Q.21. Can cascading grants (financial support to third parties) be included in the SIP/SNAP? Can you please clarify the following sentence from the guidelines: "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".

The cascading grants are possible eligible costs under LIFE in the following format: EUR 60 000 per third party up to the ceiling of EUR 200 000 for all the grants. This means that 6 such grants for EUR 30 000 could be considered as eligible costs or possibly 10 grants for EUR 20 000 or any other configuration that will allow you to respect the limit of EUR 60 000 per grant without exceeding the total cost of EUR 200 000 for the sum of all of them.

In exceptional cases an amount higher than EUR 60 000 for a given third party might be accepted, upon proof that the objective of the action (project) would otherwise be impossible or overly difficult to

achieve.

If the cascading grants that are envisaged do not meet the above mentioned criteria, they cannot be considered as eligible project costs. In such case the applicant could perhaps consider if they could be covered under SIP-SNaP complementary measures.

Q.22. Is there a maximum budget difference allowed between the budget at the concept note stage and the final proposal for a SIP/SNaP project?

There is no fixed amount or % difference, but as an orientation, if the difference in the total budget surpasses 10%, then a deeper scrutiny will be made during the evaluation of these changes. Situations to avoid can for example be:

i. Budget substantially reduced due to a substantial reduction in the project ambition, you can expect that this will be flagged by evaluators and penalised in award criterion 2 (Impact).
ii. Budget substantially increased but project ambition remains similar to concept note stage, thus reducing its value for money.

In general, in case of budget changes, the value for money will be assessed, comparing it to the one at concept note stage.

For SNaPs, please see estimates of the budget allocated so SNaPs per Member State, for SNaPs, in the Multiannual Work Programme, pages 19-20. Usually we also indicate the average (expected) budget in the evaluation results notification letter sent to applicants that pass the concept note stage.

Q.23. Can you confirm that in concept note we have to limit the numbers of deliverables to 10 - 15 for the entire project?

No, there is no such limit. In particular:
- At concept note stage, in section 3 (Implementation) of the application form (Part B), you should only complete sections 3.1 (work plan) and 3.2 (stakeholder input), providing a broad picture of the work plan and its work packages, listing only key deliverables/outcomes of each work package (applicants could face page limit issues otherwise).
- At full proposal stage (stage 2), you will have to complete as well the rest of subsections of section 3, in particular the detailed description of each work package, which includes, regarding milestones and deliverables, the instruction that, for a given work package, you should limit the number of deliverables to maximum 10 - 15 for the entire project.

Q.24. KPI reporting: do we need to include complementary measures in SIPs/SNaPs?

During project lifetime the SIP/SNAP beneficiaries will need to report 3 times (shortly after the start, at mid-term and at final report stage). Beneficiaries will need to report on impacts coming not only from LIFE funding but also from complementary funding, distinguishing between them whenever possible.

3.2. Stage 2 (full proposal)

Please read carefully the Q&A of stage 1 (concept note), as many are also relevant for stage 2 (full proposal).

General topics

Q.1. Do I understand well that under award criterion "Impact" only the direct impact of the LIFE SIP/SNaP will be considered during the assessment of the full project proposal?

No. The impact will be measured by evaluating several factors. For each type of SIP/SNaP, these factors include the expected level of implementation of the targeted plan/strategy/roadmap as a direct consequence of the actions foreseen in the SIP/SNaP or through the complementary actions financed by other means mobilized in parallel to the SIP/SNaP. However, both the direct impact of the SIP/SNaP itself and the indirect impact resulting from actions catalysed by the SIP/SNaP project will be considered. For instance, for SNaP applications targeting PAFs, the evaluation will take into account the overall expected improvement of the conservation status of species and habitats, or for water SIPs, the overall impact in terms of addressing significant unaddressed pressures or improvements towards WFD good status/potential.

Q.2. Can we submit a SIP/SNaP full proposal application if the targeted plan/strategy/action plan has not yet been approved?

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

Exception: if the new plan targeted is not yet adopted but there is a previous version of it in force (e.g. a plan which came into force in 2015 and is still applicable until the new one replaces it), please provide both the current plan in force and the latest draft of the new one. In this case, please explain the situation with the plans in Part B of your application form so it can be considered and assessed properly.

Q.3. If a consortium member is an institution responsible for the management of the Natura 2000 network in our country, is it necessary to enclose an A8 form, which is required in the case of the implementation of measures in Natura 2000 areas?

We understand, when you mention „A8 form", which does not exist as such any more in the Call 2023, that you refer to the annex „Complementary Funding Declaration". As stated in the Call document:

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 LIFE2021 call (13/07/2021).

Q.4. Related the starting date of the project, we´re considering December 2023 according to the guidelines. Is this correct or is preferable to indicate any other starting date?

The proposed starting date, notably December 2023, is reasonable. As stated in section 10 of the Call document, the project starting date and duration will be fixed in the Grant Agreement and normally the starting date will be after grant signature, which is indeed expected in November-December 2023.

Thus, ideally, we would suggest to set a starting date within January 2024.

Nevertheless, retroactive starting date can be granted exceptionally for duly justified reasons — but never earlier than the proposal submission date.

Q.5. Is there at this stage a possibility to increase the scope of a SIP/SNaP project to enable the fullest possible implementation of the targeted plan, which consequently lead to increasing the requested amount of EU funding from about EUR 20 million to the maximum amount allocated to our country, i.e., EUR 30 million?

You can increase scope and budget, but please take into account the following:

- The additional activities have to clearly target the implementation of the targeted plan.

- The value for money should be well justified.

- In general, you have to justify well these substantial changes. The changes made should not be such that, if the concept note would have been presented with these changes, it would have failed.

- In the past, LIFE proposals (traditional projects) were allowed to increase max 10% the budget from the concept note to the full proposal stage, and if such threshold was surpassed and the proposal was selected, the grant would be reduced to that threshold. Even if there might be a little bit more flexibility for the SIPs/SNaPs depending on the available budget, number and quality of proposals received, your proposal, if successful, might need a reduction of the grant requested in the grant agreement preparation phase if you increase the budget as you propose. Please take that into account while submitting your proposal.

- In any case before submitting your proposal it is highly recommended to discuss with all the concerned potential SNaP applicants (other authorities responsible for the implementation of the targeted plan, relevant line Ministries etc) the most effective use of national allocation in 2021-2027. LIFE National Contact Points could play a key role in facilitating such discussions.

Q.6. Is it allowed to add partners in stage 2 of the application process?

Yes, the consortium may be strengthened with additional beneficiaries, if well-justified and considered necessary for the achievement of the project's objectives.

Financial topics

Q.7. Can the consortium or a single partner's budget either increase or decrease in stage 2 of the application process?

For the overall project budget please see Q.22 in section 3.1 .

Reasonable and well-justified changes in the beneficiaries' budgets may be accepted.

Q.8. How should the transfer of a part of the LIFE contribution from a beneficiary to another be inserted within the budget table? For example, the private beneficiary X realizes activities for € 100,000. It takes € 60,000 of EC contribution and invests € 10,000 of his own co-financing. The coordinating beneficiary Y, a public body, intends to transfer € 30,000 of its EC contribution, to which it is entitled for the implementation of the activities under its responsibility, to beneficiary X, in order to cover the cost of the actions carried out by beneficiary X (€ 100,000).

The allocation of costs, financial contributions, own resources, etc. between the beneficiaries, should be inserted in the Application Form under the Administrative Forms, Part A, Section 3 – Budget (as well as under the mandatory annex "detailed budget table"). How the latter will be allocated between the beneficiaries is subject to a decision taken by the partnership itself, considering the type of tasks that each partner will be responsible for, their capacity (technical and financial), etc. Nevertheless, the funding rate for costs will be a percentage (max 60%) of the action's eligible costs. Please also note

that if required by the granting authority, any arrangements between the partners must be set out in a written consortium agreement between the beneficiaries (Article 7, Model Grant Agreement, page 32).

Please see also "Section 13 – Important" in the Call Document and specifically the parts "Consortium Agreement" and "Balanced Project Budget".

Complementary actions and funding topics

Q.9. The definition of the "Associated Partners" provided in the Call Document is "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". Is complementary funding "mobilised" by "Associated Partners" eligible to demonstrate "Complementary Funding" for the SIP/SNaP?

Complementary funding mobilised by associated partners is eligible to demonstrate mobilisation of complementary funding, as long as the said funds are not allocated to cover the 40% of project costs not covered by the LIFE grant.

Q.10. What is the earliest acceptable starting date for a complementary project?

Complementary actions are by definition outside of your strategic project, that is, they are not funded by the project budget, although they contribute to the implementation of the same plan/strategy targeted by the strategic project.

There is no "earliest starting date" threshold for them.

However, please note that to ensure the eligibility of your proposal, and specifically complementary funds mobilisation, 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 previous Call (see exact date in the Call document, chapter 2, section "additional conditions", in the part where complementary funds mobilisation/coordination is mentioned).

Q.11. In our country, the Competent Body of some Funds that are expected to be mobilized as complementary funds (e.g., EAFRD) have not yet been identified. How can we fill in the "Complementary Funding Declaration" form? Who can we entrust to fill in and sign the form?

There are specific conditions for complementary funding to be considered mobilised and specific conditions – related to complementary funding – for the proposal to be eligible (see previous questions, and section 2 of the Call document).

Please note that the Authorities that are currently in charge of these funds should fill in and sign the respective forms, otherwise these funds cannot be regarded as formally "mobilised".

Also note that in any case the minimum eligibility requirements set out in the Call document must be respected (i.e., identify a Complementary Fund with a Management Body in place that can sign the Complementary Funding Declaration).

Implementation, monitoring and KPIs

Q.12. Since the project will be implemented in two phases (Phase 1 lasting 3 years and Phase 2 lasting 4 years), how precisely do we need to plan the activities of Phase 2 at the application stage? Will there be a possibility to perform an amendment later on during the implementation of the project? If not, how detailed should the plan for Phase 2 be? Can deliverables and/or milestones be specified later on by the end of Phase 1?

Due to the extended time horizon and the related uncertainty when planning tasks and outputs well ahead, the details provided for the 2nd phase can be lower (e.g., an indicative plan of tasks and budget). However, overall, phase 2 should provide a consistent picture of what, how, when and by whom is intended to be done in this respect, including deliverables, milestones, and measurable results and impact that would allow for the assessment of the quality of the overall strategy and the respective tasks.

As mentioned in the application template, you should provide detailed information for the first phase of the project, while for subsequent ones the level of detail can be lower: "*For the first phase of the project tasks should be described in detail. Tasks in later phases of your project may include fewer details, but overall you still need to demonstrate how the WP objectives will be achieved through the implementation of all phases.*"

When the end of a phase arrives, an assessment will be done of the work plan, to see if an amendment is required to either provide a more detailed work plan for the following phase(s), and/or adjust it.

Q.13. As part of the invitation letter our SNaP concept note received the following feedback: "it is not clear how these [activities in the project] will translate into concrete actions on the ground that will improve environment-related concerns", "the proposal fails to detail concrete conservation-related impacts - instead of e.g., governance, etc." as well as "it is not clear if the project would go concretely beyond methodology development, awareness building, and improved understanding, etc.". The consortium has struggled with how to interpret this input, as it seems to refer more to the scope of SAP project than to the scope of SNaP projects and to interchange results and impacts. The scope of a SNaP states that the project should support implementation of the chosen strategy 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.**

The project covers all of the above. While it is clear that the impact of a SNaP project should include significant reduction in pressures and contribution to favourable status of species and habitats, the scope indicates that these impacts are in many cases indirect, i.e., they represent effects activities, actions and results of the project have on the environment and on society, as opposed to representing direct results of the project itself.

Does the project need to focus on concrete conservation action on the ground (as implied by the feedback), or can it focus on securing the prerequisites for effective conservation actions?

The SNaP should aim at the **full implementation of the targeted PAF** and, together with the complementary measures needed to achieve full implementation, remove all remaining administrative, financial, structural and other barriers for its implementation. Further to the general objectives of SNaPs, the proposal should 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 unfavourable conservation status; and
- the expected improvement in 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).

To this end, the proposal should ensure that all measures, including any concrete conservation-related measures listed in the targeted PAF, will be either implemented / financed by the project itself or through complementary actions, during or after the project duration. For those measures that will be implemented post-project, it should be clear how (a mechanism should be in place during the project duration, or a convincing strategy should be detailed) they will be achieved.

Although mainly referring to the Concept Note phase, please see also the Q.15. in section 3.1.

Q.14. For the mandatory work package for Sustainability, replication and exploitation of project results, how precise this WP should be, considering that tasks will be implemented 10 or more years to come, and all costs and engaged funds will be planned with high uncertainty?

The scope of your strategy for sustaining and exploiting the project's results shall be discussed in sections 2.2 "Sustainability and exploitation of project results", and 2.3 "Catalytic potential: Replication and upscaling" of the application form. The guidance provided in the application form outlines the matters which should be considered and addressed by the strategy.

The mandatory work package "Sustainability, replication, and exploitation of project results" within section 3.2 "Work packages and activities" shall reflect the translation of the strategy into concrete actions. Due to the extended time horizon and the related uncertainty, this can only be an indicative plan and budget. However, it should provide a consistent picture of what, how, when and by whom is intended to be done in this respect, including clear deliverables, milestones, and measurable results and impact that would allow for the assessment of the quality of the overall strategy and the respective tasks.

As mentioned in the application template, you should provide detailed information for the first phase of the project, while for subsequent ones the level of detail can be lower: "*For the first phase of the project tasks should be described in detail. Tasks in later phases of your project may include fewer details, but overall you still need to demonstrate how the WP objectives will be achieved through the implementation of all phases.*".

Q.15. What are the monitoring requirements during the implementation of the project? Will they be performed annually?

Annual monitoring visits will take place throughout the project duration, except for the first year, during which 2 monitoring visits will take place, to facilitate a smooth start.

Q.16. The SNaP project we are proposing expects to have impacts on countless habitats and species in 5 different regions. How can we fill in the part of the KPIs relating to the impacts on biodiversity-species and biodiversity-habitat?

It is understood that reporting in detail the project's performance (results and impacts) for all targeted habitats and species is not a feasible option both during the preparation of the proposal and for its project management and monitoring purposes. There are several acceptable options, e.g., merging and
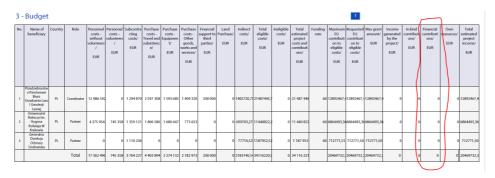
presenting the information per region, presenting a summary of the impacts per region, etc. Whereas, these options should be acceptable, please note that the proposal should in any case demonstrate how and to what extent the targeted plans will be implemented (using quantified approaches (e.g., for the targeted habitats and species, where possible and relevant) linked with measures / targets already identified in these plans. In other words, the applicants should ensure that the necessary data that would allow for the evaluation of its impact will be available / provided with the submission of the proposal.

Annexes / Attachments

Q.17. Do letters of support need to be drawn up only on your proposed annex, i.e., "Co-financing declarations"? Can we enclose them drawn up on our own templates?

Co-financing declarations and letters of support are 2 different things:

- Co-financing declarations have as purpose to confirm the commitment of third party cofinancers to provide part of the 40% of the project budget that is not covered by the LIFE co-funding (60%). At least in your stage 1 application form you didn´t foresee any such co-financing (column "financial contributions" in red below)

- Letters of support should not refer to co-financing of the project budget, but to any other kind of commitment support by a third party/stakeholder and can have any format.

4. Technical Assistance for Replication (TA-R)

Q.1 How do I use the mandatory SAP and OAG application form in the TA-R Call?

The following sections of Part B of the call application form are not applicable for this TA-R call and therefore do not need to be completed:
- 1.1 Background and general project objectives: specific instructions For Nature and Biodiversity and For Circular Economy and Quality of Life
- 1.4 Concept and methodology: specific instructions For Clean Energy Transition and For Circular Economy and Quality of Life
- 6. Declarations: Higher funding rate

All other sections should be completed.

5. Operating grants (OG)

Q.1. When is the call for LIFE operating grants launched? When is the deadline for the submission of proposals?

There is no open call for framework partnership agreement (FPA) in 2023. The specific grant agreement (SGA) restricted Call will be launched in mid-May as an invitation letter for framework partners only, with a deadline on 21 September. Only organisations that signed a framework partnership agreement in 2022 covering financial years 2022, 2023 and 2024 can apply for funding in 2023 through this SGA Call. A provisional timeline for the SGA Call and evaluation can be found here [2022 operating grants for non-profit-making entities (europa.eu)](europa.eu)

Q.2. Will there be a session on operating grants at the EU LIFE Info day?

There will be no session about LIFE operating grants during the calls' info-day as this year's Call is not public.

Q.3. What is the timeline for the LIFE operating grants evaluation and grant agreements? Will it be like the timeline of past years?

We will launch the evaluation process in September and aim at notifying the applicants of evaluation results by November 2023, to sign the grant agreements at the latest in the first quarter of 2024.

Q.4. What are the highest and lowest amounts for grants?

The maximum amount that may be awarded by the EU per year is EUR 700,000 per non-profit entity and 70% of the total eligible expenditure. For organisations that have been awarded an operating grant during the previous financial year, the maximum amount is NOT ANYMORE limited to the one requested in 2022. There is no minimum amount.

Q.5. What is the difference between Framework Partnership Agreement (FPA) and Specific Grant Agreement (SGA)?

The FPA includes a multi-annual strategic plan, while the SGA focusses on the objectives, activities and outcomes extracted from the FPA work plan, plus a detailed budget.

Q.6. Can proposals be submitted in other languages than English?

It is recommended to fill in the technical part of the proposal in English, although proposals may be submitted in any of the official EU languages. Note that the grant agreement, project management files, communication with CINEA and formal reporting will have to be in English.

Q.7. Can the reports from the auditors that must be submitted in the Participant Register for financial capacity assessment be presented in other languages than English?

Yes, all EU languages are accepted, but if English versions are available, please attach them to the application as well. Audit reports can be submitted as certified copies. A translation does not have to be by a certified translator.

Q.8. What is the budget for the current period?

The currently available indicative budget is 15M€ for financial year 2023.

Q.9. Is financial support to third parties allowed? There is a field in the application form part B: Financial support to third parties (if applicable)

No, direct financial support to third parties is not applicable for operating grants, as indicated in the Call section Eligible activities. Please leave that section empty. Subcontracting is allowed, provided that the procurement rules are respected (in particular best value for money and no conflict of interest). The purchasing conditions of your organisation are the main reference for procurement.

Q.10. Can members be funded? What about subcontracting for members?

The LIFE operating grant is a mono-beneficiary grant. Only the applicant NGO, if selected, will become the beneficiary of the grant and can claim the costs related to the approved work programme. Therefore, costs incurred by entities affiliated to the NGO or its members are not eligible. If in certain circumstances, the beneficiary NGO is sub-contracting tasks to its member(s) to implement a limited part of its work programme, this would need to be sufficiently justified. In particular, the procurement rules must be respected: the contract must be awarded to the bid offering best value for money or the lowest price, avoiding conflicts of interests, and this should be allowed / foreseen in its procurement procedure (see also model framework partnership agreement).

Q.11. Can we include activities that are not linked to environmental / climate policies?

Such activities are not relevant to the objectives of this call, therefore in principle they should not be inserted in the proposal.

Q.12. Is it possible for an NGO to apply for both the LIFE NGO Operating grant and the LIFE action grants?

It is certainly possible for a beneficiary of an NGO operating grant to apply for an action grant. However, please note that in principle, the NGO receiving an operating grant shall not claim overheads under action grants. Nevertheless, there could be some exceptions subject to conditions (e.g., some project-specific overheads not claimed under an operating grant) to be further verified with the service responsible of the action grant. See Q/A below.

Q.13. If the NGO is also the beneficiary of an action grant, can it claim overheads for that project?

Where the operating grant covers only part of the usual activity of the beneficiary, indirect costs under the LIFE action grant may be considered eligible if the beneficiary is able to demonstrate clearly that the operating grant does not cover any costs (including overheads) that may be claimed under the action grant. To demonstrate this, the beneficiary must:
   a. use analytical cost accounting that allows to separate all costs (including overheads) attributable to the operating grant and the action grant. For that purpose, the beneficiary must use reliable accounting codes and allocation keys to ensure that the allocation of the costs is done in a fair, objective and realistic way.
   b. record separately: all costs incurred for the operating grants (i.e., personnel, general running costs and other operating costs linked to the part of its usual annual activities), and all costs incurred for the action grants (including the actual indirect costs linked to the action).

Q.14. How do we deal with activities that overlap with the work programme of an action grant?

Activities cannot be funded twice; therefore, you must ensure that they are planned and declared only once (either in the operating grant or in the action grant agreement and reports).

Q.15. Will the percentage of EU funding requested make a difference in the evaluation?

There are two instances where the requested rate of EU funding is taken into account:

a. in the assessment of the proposal against award criterion 3 (Resources), particularly the "appropriateness of the budget and resources and their consistency with the work plan";

b. in case of dependence of the NGO from the operating grant, to determine how the NGO is addressing this dependence.

Q.16. How shall we structure the proposal for the SGA, by theme or by type of activity?

This can be done at your best convenience; however, you are advised to follow the same structure as the FPA proposal.

Q.17. If the 2023 SGA is signed in Q1/Q2 of 2024, are activities implemented since January 2024 eligible for funding?

Yes, if the NGO's financial year starts in January. The operating grants cover the same period as the NGO's financial year.

Q.18. Is it possible to carry out activities outside the applicant's country?

Yes, but activities planned outside the EU countries are only eligible for funding if they provide direct added value in one or more of the EU Member States for the implementation, updating or development of EU environmental and/or climate legislation (including clean energy transition).

Q.19. Are there any changes concerning the budget for LIFE operating grants compared to previous years' calls?

Yes, a major simplification has been introduced in the budget: the flat-rate financing. Only actual personnel costs are declared in the budget. A flat rate of 50% is applied to total eligible direct personnel costs to calculate the other eligible costs. Therefore, the total eligible costs can be calculated as 1.50 x the eligible staff costs of each NGO. Beneficiaries will only have to declare staff costs, not other costs (travel, subcontracting, equipment, rental, etc.). Therefore, the beneficiaries of operating grants have to keep supporting documents for personal costs only in terms of cost categories (accounting records re. staff costs, payslips, timesheets, etc...) and on the implementation of the project.

Q.20. As part C concerns KPIs, could you perhaps explain how this will be linked to the reporting?

At application stage: Part C KPIs must be filled in by NGO applicants in e-Grants. For the financed NGOs, in case your proposal is selected: no KPI reporting is needed during the execution of the project. It will be requested at the final report stage.

Q.21. When copying WP 2 in order to create additional WPs, can we delete the instructions in all additionally copied WPs?

Please, do not remove/delete the instructions, you must keep them in.

Q.22. In the SGA part B template, it is stated: "for each deliverable you will have to indicate a due month by when you commit to upload it in the Portal [...]". Is this also applicable for the Operating Grants?

Yes, this is also applicable to operating grants. You will be asked to submit the deliverables at the time they are due in the F&T portal.

Q.23. We would need additional pages to properly fill in the SGA application form (part B). Would it be possible to get an extension on the number of pages?

In the F&T portal, applications must stick to the maximum number of pages indicated in the call for proposals. Please note that if you try to upload part B (as pdf) with a higher number of pages, the

system will delete the additional pages. In case it is needed, you can add annexes, but the most relevant information should be found in part B.

Q.24. Since the total eligible costs will be calculated as staff cost +50% for other costs, how will the auditing procedure be adapted? What would be the required documents to be maintained for justification of the costs incurred: e.g., timesheets, invoices?

Since we have moved to reimbursement based on staff costs, only supporting documents related to these costs should be kept (accounting records re. staff costs, payslips, timesheets, etc...). The 50% flat rate will cover all other costs (travel, equipment, rental, external assistance, etc.) and no supporting documents are needed for those.

Q.25. In the SGA application forms, the contract number of the linked FPA is requested. What number should be inserted?

When applying for the FPA, you will get an ID number similar to the following one: SEP-210770600. Of course, the numbers will be different as they are unique to each proposal. Please include the 9 digits of the FPA application (without "SEP") in that field of the SGA application.

Q.27. In section 2 of the application form Part B of the SGA, we are requested to provide a list of deliverables associated to each WP and to specify their dissemination level. What is the difference between the given options?

In the portal, the dissemination level of deliverables stems from public (PU) to EU classified. However, please note that the dissemination levels [R-UE/EU-R — EU Classified], [C-UE/EU-C — EU Classified], [S-UE/EU-S — EU Classified] refer to Commission Decision 2015/444 of 13 March 2015 on the security rules for protecting EU classified information. Those dissemination levels should not be used for the LIFE programme.

A deliverable with PUBLIC (PU) dissemination level may be published on the Funding and Ternder Portal.

If your deliverables have some degree of confidentiality, you may want to mark them with dissemination level SENSITIVE (SEN). Those deliverables will not be published.

Q.28. In the description of every Work Package do we have to include a summary (concise overview) of all activities included in the work package?

You don't have to include a summary before the description of activities. For each activity (T.1, T.2, etc.) you should give a description that includes means, outputs, results, etc. The activities can be further detailed in the SGA application.

Q.29. Is it possible to organize the WPs by theme or type of activity instead of policy areas?

Work packages don't necessarily have to correspond to policy areas. They may be organised by type of activity as well, at your best convenience. However, you should endeavour to use the same approach as for the FPA application (now your FPA work plan).

Q.30. In section 2.2. 'Work Packages and activities - Channels and means should we include a list of the structures (e.g., our network) and instruments (e.g., social media, website) and specify how we will use them, or describe the process of how the activity will be implemented?

This depends on the activity: for the advocacy activities, for example, you will describe the channels (e.g. participation in expert groups, in public consultations, etc.) while for the communication activities you can present the different tools and media (newsletters, articles on newspapers, social media, etc.)

and you should as well describe how the activity will be implemented to reach the proposed objectives.

Q.31. Can we modify the given structure of the application template and adapt it to our own WP? Or must we respect the default tasks in the WP?

In the template work package 1 is organizational development for all applicants. WP2 and the following are on all other activities, which are generally policy-related. Then you can structure the tasks in each WP, including WP1, as you prefer.

Q.32. Can natural persons "working under direct contract other than employment contract" be hired through (their own) consulting company or are they considered as subcontractors? In fact, very often those consultants who perform tasks equivalent to employees have their own companies for fiscal and legal reasons.

The organisation can employ consultants who have their own "company" (via a specific work contract), however, in order to consider these costs as "personnel", these consultants have to be self--employed and their company form be a sole-trader/sole person one (i.e. does not legally separate the natural person from it as S.A. or LTD does for example). In all other cases where a consultants' company has a different form, the costs are for subcontracting (external assistance) and the basic criteria of value for money and absence of conflict of interest should be fulfilled.

Q.33. How shall we fill in form B of the application as regards HR activities, salary policy, finance procedures update, travel policy update, etc.?

You can structure the proposal as you prefer, however you should present the salary policy, finance procedures update, travel policy update in the organisational development section (according to the needs of the organisation).

Q.34. Would it be acceptable if during the implementation of the work plan, we deviate from the commitment we have made in the document (for example we delay or swap the actions which we were planning to take in the mentioned years? E.g., we complete an action planned for 2024 in 2023 and complete an action for 2023 in 2024)?

There is some flexibility, as long as the actions are completed within the FPA timeframe, but no flexibility on the budget (i.e., the budget of each year should be fully spent during that year and can't be transferred. Therefore, you should aim to plan as realistically as possible and to adjust the SGA plan every year.

Q.35. What is meant by ongoing activity (page 21 of the Call)? Is an activity built on actions of previous years regarded as an ongoing activity?

No, this would not be regarded as an ongoing activity. An on-going activity is an activity for which implementation has already started, not an activity that builds on previous activities.

Q.36. Is the total amount of flat-rate costs calculated in the final report? Do these costs need to be reported item by item in the final report?

It is calculated for the provisional budget at the time of the grant preparation and calculated for the final payment on the basis of the final approved personnel costs. The costs included in the flat rate do not need to be itemised.

Q.37. Do the financial contributions by third parties include the contributions from private donors (private foundations, individuals, corporates, etc.) for which we don't have signed contracts yet? Can we include contributions that we expect from third parties even if we are not yet 100% sure it will be secured?

Yes, you should include the expected co-funding, even if it is not fully secured yet. This will be corrected within each year's SGA budget.

Q.39. Income generated by the activities: is this commercial activities' income? Are EU tenders included in this category?

This includes commercial activities but not EU funding.

Q.40. What is the allowed variance between the amounts that we submit in the individual SGAs? To what extent are we tied to the amount we mention in the "requested grant amount"? Is there a maximum variation percentage?

The individual yearly SGA requested funding should be limited to 1/3 of the total FPA requested funding, otherwise we might incur in insufficient funding for all NGOs or, on the contrary, in an excess of the committed budget that will be lost for the next year. Therefore, we ask you to plan carefully the requested EU funding, although some approximation is inevitable.

Q.41. Are we obliged to request the amount of 50% of non-staff costs or could we increase staff costs versus non-staff costs?

No, that is not possible. The flat rate, which will have to cover all the non-staff costs, is calculated as 50% of staff costs for all beneficiaries.

Q.42. How do we report non-staff costs? Do we need to show evidence of the expenses incurred?

You will not have to report on non-staff costs and no evidence other than staff related evidence (e.g., timesheets, payrolls) will be requested.

Q.43. Is there a level of flexibility whereby we can transfer up to 20% between budget categories as had been the case with previous LIFE OGs (Operating Grants)?

The logic has changed as there is only one cost category (staff) both at proposal and at report level, therefore there will be no need neither for reporting on other cost categories nor for budget transfers. The final grant will be calculated based on eligible costs, which will be in all cases staff costs + 50% of staff costs. Non-staff costs will not be reported, nor verified.

Q.44. When will the next FPA Call be launched?

The FPA call is multi-annual, therefore there will be no FPA calls until 2024. The restricted calls for annual SGAs are launched every year and they will target only selected FPA partners. Thus, if your organisation is not taking part in the SGA Call this year, it will have to wait for the next FPA call, that will take place 2024.

Q.45. How can we correlate Tasks into Deliverables (outputs/outcomes) if the number of Tasks far exceeds the limit on the number of deliverables (10-15)?

If the given limitations seem too restrictive, you can exceed the number of deliverables, and this will have no impact on the assessment of your application.

Q.47. How do we proceed with salary calculation?

Please see below (extract from the model grant agreement):

'LIFE OG NGO personnel costs are eligible if they fulfil the general eligibility conditions and are related to personnel working for the beneficiary under an employment contract (or equivalent appointing act) and assigned to the work programme-related activities. They must be limited to salaries, social security contributions, taxes and other costs linked to the remuneration, if they arise from national law or the employment contract (or equivalent appointing act) and be calculated on the basis of the costs actually incurred, in accordance with the following method: {daily rate for the person multiplied by number of day-equivalents worked on the action (rounded up or down to the nearest half-day)}. The daily rate must be calculated as: {annual personnel costs for the person divided by 215} The number of day-equivalents declared for a person must be identifiable and verifiable. The total number of day-equivalents declared in EU grants, for a person for a year, cannot be higher than 215'.

If a person is not working full time, the 215 days will be calculated pro-rata the work time factor (e.g.: for 50% it will be 107.5 instead of 215). If time is recorded in hours, those should be converted to day equivalents in line with the guidance in the Annotated Grant Agreement.

Q.48. Are you planning to publish any call for proposals in the near future (in addition to those published with a deadline of 28 September? If so, when?

The next open call for proposals for LIFE operating grants will be launched in 2024. The present SGA restricted call aims at funding framework partners (organisations that have signed an FPA in 2022) for financial year 2024.

Q.49. If we are involved in an action grant, should the WPs mention the activities that we will undertake in the framework of the other EU-funded actions? Or should there be a strict separation?

In the work plan for operating grants, you should include only activities that are eligible for operating grants, therefore other activities funded by other grants should not be included. However, if some new eligible activities will build up on a project funded by another programme or strand, the project can be mentioned but a clear separation must be operated, to avoid double funding.

Q.50. Do we have to submit staff CVs with our application?

No. CVs will be requested only in case of doubt during the evaluation process.

Q.51. Our organisation is an NGO, our main objectives are in the environmental field, and we would like to submit a proposal. Can you advise us for the submission of an application?

You will find the relevant information to apply for funding here: https://cinea.ec.europa.eu/life/life-calls-proposals_en
As an NGO, you may wish to apply for either action grants (projects) or operating grants for non-profit making entities. Please check carefully the eligibility criteria before you apply, to verify the compliance of your organisation with the Calls' requirements.

Q.52. As our organisation is currently using approximately 80% of the Operating Grant to cover staff costs, can personnel costs also be covered by the flat rate? What happens if we do not spend all of the flat rate for other costs?

If your organisation's eligible costs are constituted of staff costs to such a large extent, the flat rate will certainly be to the advantage of the organisation. In fact, from now on the eligible costs will be calculated as personnel costs x 1.5. The flat rate will be calculated as 50% of the total personnel costs

and will cover all other costs (including rental, travel & subsistence, equipment & depreciation, subcontracting and other direct costs). This flat rate will not be reported nor verified. However, please note that personnel costs will be scrutinized during the evaluation, the monitoring and final report assessment (after each annual SGA) and subject to supporting evidence for payments, such as payrolls and timesheets.

Q.53. Do we need to fill in the Milestones section in the SGA Proposal template?

The milestones section does not have to be filled in as it is not mandatory for operating grants. Please just provide deliverables in each WP.