LIFE Preparatory Projects

Guidelines for Applicants

&

Evaluation Guide

2017

The current guidelines and evaluation guide apply to the preparation of proposals for Preparatory projects as defined in Article 2 of the LIFE Regulation to be submitted to the Commission under the LIFE Sub-programme for Environment. They are intended to help the applicant prepare and submit the project proposal

The LIFE Orientation Document (also available on the LIFE web page) provides guidance to applicants on how to identify the most suitable LIFE sub-programme and priority area under which they could submit their proposal. This document also discusses the distinctions between LIFE and other EU direct funding programmes.

The current guidelines are part of the call for proposals application package 2017 which also includes the following documents which should be carefully read before submitting a LIFE proposal:

- Model Grant Agreement including its General Conditions

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The Technical and Financial Application Forms are contained in separate files in Word and Excel format, respectively.

1. General Information

1.1 What is LIFE?

LIFE is the European **Programme for the Environment and Climate Action**, for the period from 1 January 2014 until 31 December 2020. The legal basis for LIFE is ***Regulation 1293/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013***[1].

The LIFE Programme is structured in two sub-programmes: the sub-programme for Environment and the sub-programme for Climate Action. The overall financial envelope for the implementation of the LIFE Programme is 3,456,655,000 Euro, 75% of which is allocated to the sub-programme Environment (2,592,491,250 Euro) and 25% of which is allocated to the sub-programme Climate Action.

According to Article 17(4) of the LIFE Regulation, at least 81% of the total budget shall be allocated to projects supported by way of action grants or, where appropriate, financial instruments. The first LIFE Multiannual Work Programme covering the period 2014-2017 foresees a budget of 1,347.1 Million Euro for the sub-programme for environment and 449.2 Million Euro for the sub-programme for climate action [2].

During the period 2014-2020, the Commission will launch one call for LIFE project proposals per year.

LIFE is open to public or private bodies, actors or institutions registered in or, exceptionally, outside the European Union. Project proposals can either be submitted by a single applicant or by a partnership which includes a coordinating beneficiary (the applicant) and one or several associated beneficiaries.

1.2 What are LIFE Preparatory projects?

According to the LIFE Regulation, Preparatory projects address specific needs for the development and implementation of Union environmental or climate policy and legislation. According to the Multi-Annual Work Programme, the total budget available for Preparatory projects under the Environment sub-programme over the period 2014-2017 will be indicatively not more than 10.5 million Euro and under the Climate Action sub-programme not more than 1.45 million Euro.

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[1] Regulation (EU) No 1293/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013, published in the Official Journal L 347/185 of 20 December 2013
http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2013:347:0185:0208:EN:PDF

[2] Commission Implementing Decision (2014/203/EU) of 19 March 2014 on the adoption of the LIFE multiannual work programme for 2014-17, OJEU L116 of 17.04.2014, p.1.

1.3 Scope of LIFE Preparatory projects

Once a year the Commission makes an inventory of specific needs regarding the development and implementation of Union environmental or climate policy and legislation that need to be addressed during the following years and identifies among them the needs that could be addressed by Preparatory projects. Before launching the annual call for proposals, Member States received a draft list of the identified specific needs that could be addressed by preparatory projects and were asked to comment. Based on these comments, the final list was established as described in section 2.1.

1.4 How, where and when to submit a proposal?

LIFE applicants must submit their proposals using the forms included in this application guide and attaching all relevant documents. Applications must arrive at the following address no later than 16:00 Brussels local time on 30 June 2017:

Postal address:

LIFE 2017 – Preparatory Projects
European Commission
DG ENV – LIFE Unit (BU9 03/006)
B-1049 Brussels
Belgium

Delivery by hand is possible at the following address only:

LIFE 2017– Preparatory Projects
European Commission
DG ENV – LIFE Unit (BU9 03/006)
Avenue du Bourget 1
B-1140 Brussels (Evere)
Belgium

Note that it is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that the proposal arrives on time; any courier or postal service serves as the applicant's agent.

The proposal and all its obligatory annexes must be submitted on CD-ROM or DVD, in an electronic format, accompanied by a signed cover letter. The full title of the proposal should be clearly labelled on the CD-ROM/DVD and on the letter.

The proposal itself must be submitted as **one** *"black and white only"* pdf document, including all technical forms (i.e. A, B and C forms) and all financial forms (F forms). These forms should be scanned and submitted as a single pdf file of the original, printed, completed and signed (where applicable) A4 size paper forms. The paper forms should be retained by the applicants. Applicants should ensure that the corresponding pdf file is of a readable quality (at a maximum resolution of 300 dpi - applicants must avoid sending files scanned at a higher resolution in order to keep file sizes manageable).

The proposal must be printable on a black-and-white printer, and in an A4 format. Where proposal forms are signed, beneficiaries are strongly advised to check whether the signatures are still identifiable on a printout of the form.

Note that applicants should retain the original, signed Word and Excel files containing all of these forms, for possible use in preparation of the final grant agreements.

Additional documents/annexes, other than those required, submitted by applicants (e.g. brochures, CVs, additional information etc) will not be evaluated and therefore applicants must not include any such material in the CD-ROM/DVD.

Very important: Please note that the e-mail address specified by the applicant as the contact person's e-mail address in form A2 will be used by the Commission as the single contact point for all correspondence with the applicant during the evaluation procedure. It should therefore correspond to an e-mail account which is valid, active and checked on a daily basis throughout the duration of the evaluation procedure.

1.5 Administrative and financial information to be provided

Beneficiaries may include: (1) *public bodies*, (2) *private commercial organisations* and (3) *private non-commercial organisations* (including NGOs).

The term "public bodies" is defined as referring to national public authorities, regardless of their form of organisation – central, regional or local structure – and the various bodies, including public institutions, under their control, provided these operate on behalf of and under the responsibility of the national public authority concerned. In the case of entities registered as private law bodies wishing to be considered for the purpose of this call as equivalent to "public law bodies", they should provide evidence proving that they comply with all criteria applying to bodies governed by public law and in the event the entity stops its activities, its rights and obligations, liability and debts will be transferred to a public body. For a complete definition, please refer to form A3b ("Public body declaration"). All beneficiaries which want to be considered and treated as a public body must complete form A3b.

All coordinating beneficiaries which do not want to be treated as a public body must complete the simplified financial statement, which is provided in a separate excel file in the application package.

All applicants and associated beneficiaries must show their legal status (by completing application forms A2 or A5), and provide full information on the Member State (or third country) in which they are registered. In addition all beneficiaries must declare that they are not in any of the situations foreseen under art. 106(1) and 107 of the EU Financial

Regulation[3] (by signing the application form A3 or A4 – instructions for this are given in section 3 of these Guidelines).

Please refer to section 4.6 of this document for full details regarding the compulsory administrative documents which are required with the proposal depending on the legal status of the coordinating beneficiary.

1.6 How will LIFE Preparatory projects be selected?

The European Commission is responsible for the evaluation procedure.

The project selection procedure will be organised as follows:

- Evaluation of proposals : The Commission will verify the compliance of each proposal with the eligibility and selection criteria, and will evaluate them against the award criteria. Proposals will be ranking on the basis of the score obtained in relation to the award criteria.
- After a review phase, successful projects will be proposed for funding, within the available budget.
- Signature of the grant agreement: This is expected to occur in November of 2017.

Details of the evaluation procedure are described in section 4 of this document.

1.7 General Guidance to Applicants

The current chapter replies to some frequently asked questions on how to conceive a LIFE project proposal.

1.7.1 In which language may the proposal be submitted?

LIFE proposals may be submitted in any of the official EU languages, except Irish or Maltese. The Commission nevertheless strongly recommends that applicants fill in the technical part of the proposal in clear English.

Form B1 ("Summary description of the project") must always be submitted in English. It may **in addition** also be submitted in the language of the proposal.

1.7.2 Who may submit a proposal for a Preparatory Project?

A proposal may be submitted by any legal person registered in the European Union.

Applicants may fall into three types of beneficiaries: (1) *public bodies*, (2) *private commercial organisations* and (3) *private non-commercial organisations* (including NGOs).

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[3] Regulation (EU, EURATOM) No 966/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union and repealing Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002, OJEU L 298 of 26.10.2012, p.1.

The term "public bodies" is defined in section 1.5 of this document. The applicant must show its legal status (by completing application form A2) confirming legal registration in the EU.

Once a proposal has been accepted for co-funding, the applicant will become the **coordinating beneficiary** legally and financially responsible for the implementation of the project. The coordinating beneficiary will be the single point of contact for the Commission and will be the only beneficiary to report directly to the Commission on the project's technical and financial progress.

The coordinating beneficiary receives the EU financial contribution from the Commission and ensures its distribution as specified in the partnership agreements established with the associated beneficiaries (if any). The coordinating beneficiary must be directly involved in the technical implementation of the project and in the dissemination of the project results.

Section 1.5 also provides more details regarding the compulsory administrative documents which are required with the proposal depending on the legal status of the coordinating beneficiary.

1.7.3 Who may participate in a project?

In addition to the **coordinating beneficiary**, a LIFE proposal may also involve one or more associated beneficiaries and/or one or more project co-financers.

An **associated beneficiary** may be legally registered outside the European Union, provided that the coordinating beneficiary is based in the EU. Any activities to be carried out outside the EU must be necessary to achieve EU environmental objectives and to ensure the effectiveness of interventions carried out in the Member State territories to which the Treaties apply. An associated beneficiary must always contribute technically to the proposal and hence be responsible for the implementation of one or several project actions. An associated beneficiary must also contribute financially to the project. It must provide the beneficiary with all the necessary documents required for the fulfilment of its reporting obligations to the Commission.

There is no obligation to involve associated beneficiaries in a LIFE proposal. A proposal that is submitted without any other participant other than the coordinating beneficiary itself is perfectly eligible. On the other hand, a beneficiary should not hesitate to associate other beneficiaries if this would bring an added value to the project. A meaningful collaboration can be expected, for instance, when the partnership strengthens the European added value of the project and/or the transferability of its results and lessons learnt.

Each beneficiary (coordinating or associated) must bear part of the project costs and must thus contribute financially to the project budget. (The contribution may exceed the foreseen costs in case a beneficiary also want to act as co-financer.) It cannot therefore be reimbursed for 100% of the project costs that it incurs. Furthermore no beneficiary may act, in the context of the project, as a sub-contractor to another beneficiary.

The costs of an **affiliated entity to a private beneficiary** may also be eligible project costs, but only if the role of the affiliated entity is clearly described in the project application.

Costs of an affiliated entity to a public beneficiary are not eligible; the affiliated entity should become an associated beneficiary in order to participate in the project. Thus, public undertakings whose capital is publicly owned and that are considered an instrument or a technical service of a public administration, and are subject to the administration control, but are in effect separate legal entities, must become beneficiaries if a public administration intends to entrust the implementation of certain project actions to the undertaking. This is the case for example in Spain for "empresas públicas" such as TRAGSA, or EGMASA and in Greece for regional development agencies.

A **project co-financer** only contributes to the project with financial resources, has no technical responsibilities, and cannot benefit from the EU financial contribution. Furthermore, it cannot act, in the context of the project, as a sub-contractor to any of the project's beneficiaries.

However, project proposals involving business-sector co-financing will be favourably considered during the evaluation process where this co-financing contributes to the probable sustainability of the project results.

For specific tasks of a fixed duration, a proposal may also foresee the use of **subcontractors**. Subcontractors cannot act as beneficiaries or vice-versa. Subcontractors provide external services to the project beneficiaries who fully pay for the services provided. Sub-contractors should not be identified by name in the proposal unless they are considered an affiliated entity to a project beneficiary. (Note that affiliated entities to public beneficiaries MUST become associated beneficiaries to the project.)

For a more detailed description of the respective rules related to the coordinating beneficiary, associated beneficiaries and subcontractors, please refer to articles II.1, II.2, II.9 and II.10 of the General Conditions of the LIFE Model Grant Agreement.

1.7.4 What is the optimal budget for a Preparatory project?

There is no fixed minimum size for project budgets. For LIFE Preparatory Projects, maximum budget envelopes are established for each specific need. See section 2.1 for details.

1.7.5 What is the maximum rate of EU co-financing under LIFE?

The maximum EU co-financing rate for LIFE Preparatory projects is 60% of the eligible project costs.

1.7.6 How much should project beneficiaries contribute to the project budget?

The coordinating beneficiary and each associated beneficiary is expected to provide a reasonable financial contribution to the project budget. A beneficiary's financial contribution is considered as a proof of its commitment to the implementation of the project objectives – a very low financial contribution may therefore be considered as an absence or lack of commitment. A proposal may not be submitted if the financial contribution of any of the beneficiaries to the proposal budget is 0 Euro.

Moreover, where public bodies are involved as coordinating and/or associated beneficiaries in a project, the sum of their financial contributions to the project budget must exceed (by at least 2%) the sum of the salary costs charged to the project for personnel who are not considered 'additional'. For details, please refer to the General Conditions of the LIFE Model Grant Agreement.

1.7.7 What is the optimal starting date and duration for a project?

The earliest possible starting date for projects is **1 December 2017**. Any costs incurred before the project's starting date will not be considered eligible and cannot be included in the project budget.

There is no pre-determined project duration for a LIFE project. Generally speaking, the project duration must correspond to what is necessary to complete all of the project's actions and to reach all its objectives. A Preparatory project would be expected to last between 2 and 3 years.

The experience of the previous LIFE programme has shown that many projects had difficulties completing all actions within the proposed project duration, mostly due to unforeseen delays and difficulties encountered during the project. Beneficiaries are therefore strongly advised to build an appropriate safety margin (e.g. 6 months) into the timetable of their proposal.

Beneficiaries should also be aware that a project that has completed all of its actions prior to the expected end date can submit its final report ahead of schedule and receive its final payment before the official project end date mentioned in the grant agreement.

1.7.8 Where can a LIFE Preparatory project take place?

LIFE projects shall take place in the territory of the European Union Member States. The LIFE Programme may also finance activities outside the EU and in overseas countries and territories (OCTs), provided that the coordinating beneficiary is based in the EU and strong evidence is provided that the activities to be carried out outside the EU are necessary to achieve EU environmental objectives and to ensure the effectiveness of interventions carried out in the Member State territories to which the Treaties apply.

The eligibility criteria formulated in European Commission notice Nr.2013/C-205/05 (OJEU C-205 of 19/07/2013, pp. 9-11), concerning the eligibility of Israeli entities and their activities in the territories occupied by Israel since June 1967 for grants, prizes and financial instruments funded by the EU from 2014 onwards, shall apply for all actions under this call for proposals, including with respect to third parties referred to in Article 137 of the EU's Financial Regulation.

1.7.9 Who should be in charge of the project management?

It is expected that the project management is carried out by the staff of the coordinating beneficiary. However, on the basis of an appropriate justification it may be carried out by a sub-contractor under the direct control of the coordinating beneficiary. Any other arrangements for the project management would have to be adequately explained and justified. It is also **strongly advised** that each project has a full-time project manager.

While there is no obligation to include in the proposal budget any costs related to the project management, the proposal should nevertheless clearly describe who will be in charge of the project management, how much personnel and time will be devoted to this task and how and by whom decisions on the project will be made during the project period (i.e. how and by whom the project management will be controlled).

1.7.10 To which extent are salary costs of public staff eligible for LIFE co-funding?

Please refer to section 3.2 'Form F1 – Direct personnel costs'.

1.7.11 How much outsourcing of project activities is allowed?

The beneficiaries should have the financial and operational capacity and competency to carry out the proposed project activities. It is therefore expected that the share of the project budget allocated to external assistance should remain below 35%. Higher shares may only be accepted if an adequate justification for this is provided in the project proposal.

If a beneficiary is a public body, any outsourcing must be awarded in accordance with the applicable rules on public tendering and in conformity with EU Directives on public tendering procedures.

For amounts exceeding 130,000 Euro, private beneficiaries must invite competitive tenders from potential subcontractors and award the contract to the bid offering best value for money; in doing so they shall observe the principles of transparency and equal treatment and shall take care to avoid any conflicts of interest.

Furthermore, it should be recalled that all expenditure in LIFE projects must respect the principle of sound financial management.

Green procurement: all beneficiaries (public and private) are strongly invited to carefully consider the possibility to "green" their procurement activities. The European Commission has established a toolkit for this purpose. More information can be found at http://ec.europa.eu/environment/gpp/toolkit_en.htm

1.7.12 Under which conditions does LIFE favour transnational projects?

The LIFE Regulation indicates that, while selecting the projects to be co-funded, the Commission shall have special regard to transnational projects, when transnational cooperation is essential to guarantee environmental or climate protection.

1.7.13 How voluminous should a LIFE proposal be?

A proposal should be as concise and clear as possible. Clear and detailed descriptions should, however, be provided for all project actions. Maps should be annexed wherever this would be useful to clarify the location of the proposed actions.

Brochures, CVs and similar documents should not be submitted and will be ignored if provided.

1.7.14 Can ongoing activities be included in the project?

Actions already ongoing before the start of the project are not eligible.

Where actions to be undertaken in the project are significantly different from previous or ongoing activities in terms of frequency or intensity they are not considered ongoing.

Exceptionally, in case of actions that were undertaken and completed in the past and that are proposed to be repeated at a similar frequency or intensity during the project, the applicant must provide evidence that such actions would not have been carried out in the absence of the LIFE project.

1.7.15 What are the requirements related to long-term sustainability of the project and its actions?

LIFE projects represent a considerable investment, and the European Union attaches great importance to the long term sustainability of these investments. It is obligatory that throughout the duration of the project, the beneficiaries consider how these investments will be secured, maintained, developed and made use of or replicated after the end of the project. This should be built into the proposal.

1.7.16 What is the relationship between LIFE funding and other EU funding programmes?

According to Article 8 of the LIFE Regulation, support from the LIFE Programme should be "complementary to other financial instruments of the Union" and overlap between the LIFE Programme and other Union policies and funding programmes should be avoided. These include, amongst others, the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme, the European Fisheries Fund and the Horizon 2020 Programme.

The beneficiaries must inform the Commission about any related funding they have received from the EU budget, as well as any related ongoing applications for funding from the EU budget. The beneficiaries must also check that they are not receiving on-going operating grants from LIFE (or other EU programmes) which would lead to double financing.

Research activities

Whereas EU funding for research activities is provided under Horizon 2020 – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2014–2020)[4], 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.

1.7.17 Do I need to worry about the project's "carbon footprint"?

You should aim to keep the "carbon footprint" of your project as low as is reasonably possible. Details of efforts to be made to reduce CO_2 emissions during a project's life shall be included in the description of the project. However, you should be aware that project expenses for offsetting greenhouse gas emissions will not be considered as eligible costs.

1.8 Personal Data Protection Clause

The personal data supplied with your proposal, notably the name, address and other contact information of the beneficiaries will be transferred to a database called Butler, which will be made available to the EU Institutions and agencies and to an external monitoring team under contract to the Commission, who are bound by a confidentiality agreement. Butler is used exclusively to manage LIFE projects.

A summary of each project, including the name and contact information of the coordinating beneficiary, will be placed on the LIFE website and made available to the general public. At a certain point the coordinating beneficiary will be invited to check the accuracy of this summary.

The Commission, or its contractors may also use the personal data of unsuccessful applicants for follow up actions in connection with future applications.

Throughout this process, Regulation (EC) n° 45/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2000 "on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data by the Community institutions and bodies and on the free movement of such data" will be respected by the Commission and its contractors. You will notably have the right to access data concerning you in our possession and to request corrections.

[4] Regulation (EU) No 1290/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 laying down the rules for participation and dissemination in "Horizon 2020 - the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2014-2020)" and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1906/2006 (OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 81).

Submission of a proposal implies that you accept that the personal data contained in your proposal is made available as described above. It will not be used in any other way or for any other purposes than those described above.

1.9 Useful links

LIFE Regulation: Regulation (EU) No 1293/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 published in the Official Journal L 347/185 OF 20 December 2013:

http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.L_.2013.347.01.0185.01.ENG

LIFE Multi-annual Workprogramme 2014-2017:

http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ:JOL_2014_116_R_0001

Financial Regulation:

http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32012R0966

2. Guidance concerning LIFE 2017 Preparatory Projects

2.1 Specific Needs Identified for 2017

Under the 2017 call, proposals may be submitted only to address the following specific needs:

1) Priority Objective: "Halting and reversing biodiversity loss (total 1,250 000 €)

1.1 Providing support for Integrating Ecosystem Services and their assessment with LIFE and other EU funding projects

The proposed project: The project would aim at applying the analytical framework for mapping and assessing ecosystems and their services in LIFE projects as well as in projects funded under Cohesion and Rural Development funds and gaining lessons learnt from these developments in LIFE and Cohesion projects, and under relevant Rural Development measures. Work should be based on the methodological reports delivered by the MAES Working Group under Action 5 of the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020 and related work.

The specific needs addressed: A key aspect of the EU Biodiversity Strategy is to maintain, enhance and restore ecosystems and their services. The Commission is assisting EU Member States in mapping and assessing the state of ecosystems and their services within the MAES Working Group, which is overseen by the Coordination Group on Biodiversity and Nature (CGBN) Work is also underway on the development of natural capital accounting system at EU level, building on and contributing to international activities on Natural Capital accounting. There is a need to apply and improve this work also in connection with LIFE Nature and Biodiversity projects contributing directly or indirectly to the protection of ecosystems and the multiple services they provide by testing the methodology "on the ground". Local experiences from LIFE and other projects can also provide important information and feed into the further refinement of the methodology at the macro level.
This project would then address the need of "bridging the gap", "building synergies" and "assuring the applicability" between work being developed by MAES and INCA on the one hand and with LIFE and Cohesion projects, and Rural Development measures on the other hand. This would be in particular relevant to: applying approaches to project cycles and reporting objectives (indicators), approaches to the evaluation of ecosystem condition, approaches to quantifying ecosystem services, approaches for the estimation of values of ecosystem services either in monetary (exchange and welfare values) or in nonmonetary terms. Also of importance is the development of lessons learnt from of how such information can help guide decision making at local level, while also be relevant for the regional, national or EU scale.

For more information see:
http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/knowledge/ecosystem_assessment/index_en.htm
http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/capital_accounting/index_en.htm

The Commission expects to award at most ONE grant in this area, with a maximum EU contribution of 250,000 Euro.

1.2 Providing support to improve knowledge and capacity amongst Natura 2000 site mangers across the EU

The proposed project: The project would support the development of a targeted set of mechanism amongst public and private Natura 2000 site managers across the European Union territory, aimed at improving their capacities and competencies in terms of management Natura 2000 sites. It will avail of innovative approaches, including use of digital technologies. It is addressed to organisations representing or federating Natura 2000 site managers at national or supra-national level within the European Union. Such organisations are uniquely placed to initiate, organise and implement the necessary measures, given their prior experience in setting up capacity building, training and exchange networks for site managers.

The specific need addressed: The Natura 2000 network of sites established under the EU Nature Directives covers ca. 18% of the land area of the Member States, and almost 6% of their marine territories. Taking into account that the network of sites is now largely completed, the attention is increasingly focussing on effective management of the sites, to ensure their contribution towards maintaining or restoring favourable conservation status of the species and habitats for which the sites are designated as well as to promoting their multiple benefits to society. Effectively managing Natura 2000 sites requires dedicated management structures with a large range of specific competencies and management capacities (technical, administrative, scientific, social, etc.), all of which are essential to deliver the objectives of the EU Nature Directives. The degree to which effective site management structures are currently in place is however variable across different parts of the EU, both in terms of stability of financial and institutional resources, and in terms of experience and knowledge of site managers. Several recent processes at EU level (in particular in the frame of the Fitness Check of the EU Nature directives and through exchanges in the Biogeographic seminars) identified a significant need for further improving knowledge, sharing of expertise and good practice as well and strengthening the capacity of site managers. Possible mechanism for achieving these objectives include focused training and capacity building activities, e.g. through training centres in or across Member States, structural exchanges and set-up of information networks for site managers, twinning programmes, etc. There are increasing opportunities to use innovative approaches, including new digital technologies, to achieve these objectives.

The Commission expects to award at most ONE grant in this area, with a maximum EU contribution of 500.000 Euro.

1.3 Providing support for tailoring innovative private land conservation tools to the national and regional contexts in the EU Member States

The proposed project: The project would be addressed to organisations representing private landowner interests. Such organisations are uniquely placed to initiate the necessary measures, given their high level of credibility, relevance and legitimacy amongst their constituencies. The final output of the project, which would need to be based on an intensive consultative process involving both landowners and national authorities, should be the development of tailor-made and ready-to-use tools for private land conservation, adapted to the specific context of at least half of the 28 EU Member States.

Applicants are explicitly encouraged to insert project actions ensuring a close collaboration and networking with similar projects, as well as an inclusion of pilot or demonstration measures on individual land properties or groups of properties.

The specific need addressed: The Natura 2000 network of sites established under the EU Nature Directives, covering ca. 18% of the land area of the Member States, provides a good setting for land stewardship activities. The regulatory requirements linked to Natura 2000, linked to the need for avoiding deterioration and maintaining or restore species and habitats to a favourable conservation status, are considered essential to achieve the objectives of the network, but can also conflict with competing land use interests on private lands. According to several recent Commission studies, the wider use of certain innovative tools for private land conservation (e.g. safe harbour agreements, covenants, conservation easements, private protected areas, fiscal benefits, land swaps, etc.) would have great potential to further reduce such conflicts, and help to accomplish the EU biodiversity conservation objectives on private lands. There is also increasing evidence that, compared to the more traditional regulatory or direct compensation approaches which are widely being used, such tools would have a higher acceptance amongst private landowner constituencies.

However, many of these new tools are not yet widely known within the EU Member States and amongst landowners. Furthermore, considering the large variety of legal frameworks and socio-economic and cultural settings throughout the Member States, these tools might still require further adaptations to specific national or regional contexts, before they can be applied. There would be an obvious value in an early and pro-active involvement of private landowners and public authorities in the necessary dissemination, adaptation and testing processes.

The Commission expects to award at most ONE grant in this area, with a maximum EU contribution of 500,000 Euro.

2) Priority Objective "Contributing to a greener and more resource efficient economy and to the development and implementation of Union environmental policy and legislation" (total 400 000)

2.1Providing support to foster innovative approaches to policy implementation

The proposed project

The project aims at reviewing and informing different approaches to implementation of EU environmental law and policy at different levels of governance. The project will pay particular attention on how policy integration issues can be addressed being one of the main hurdles regarding the implementation of environmental legislation.

First, the project would seek to inform the process initiated by the Environmental Implementation Review (EIR) by collection information on different practices involving civil society and other stakeholders to promote better implementation. On this basis, the project will include an assessment of the efficiency of the different practices identified, taking into account the varying contexts in EU Member States as regards their geographical, political, administrative or economic situation.

Second, the project would seek to inform NGOs active at grass-root level in the Member States about the EIR findings and good practice across the EU with a view to steer and equip them to participate in debates at national and local level aimed at finding tailor-made solutions to fill in the implementation gaps.

The specific need addressed

The EIR is a new approach to closing the implementation gap of EU environmental legislation and policy and there is a need to ensure that this process is informed by existing concrete experiences with implementation and enforcement in order to come to informed conclusions about structural problems and structural solutions. It is essential for the EIR that implementation discussions are inclusive. In line with Better Regulation principles, the specific need addressed by this project is to know which approaches to improve implementation civil society organisations and other stakeholders consider the best ways forward, in different Member States, and what constraints they have experienced in becoming involved in improving implementation and more specifically, in being part of the EIR process. It should inter alia look at how such different approaches can help bring the EU closer to its citizens by upholding citizens' fundamental right to a clean environment and the EU's strong track record in setting and implementing high standards. It will provide steer and information to local NGOs so that they can engage in discussions with the national (regional/local) authorities to address the outstanding implementation gaps, building up on positive experiences of other authorities in the EU.

The Commission expects to award at most ONE grant in this area, with a maximum EU contribution of 400,000 Euro.

2.2 How to conceive a LIFE Preparatory project proposal?

A proposal for a LIFE Preparatory project must be designed to respond to one of the specific needs described in the previous section. Actions must be clearly related to the objective(s) of the project, and be completed within the duration of the project. Furthermore, the long-term sustainability of the investments must be guaranteed. As a general principle, all actions included in the project must be new and additional to the work undertaken by the applicant prior to the projects.

Actions may not include (this is not an exhaustive list):

- land purchase or lease
- activities that overlap with ongoing LIFE projects or any other projects co-financed by the EU budget.
- large infrastructure

When preparing your proposal, the following main types of actions must be clearly distinguished:

A. Implementation actions (obligatory),
B. Communication and dissemination actions (obligatory),
C. Project management and monitoring of project progress (obligatory).

2.2.1 Implementation actions (A actions - obligatory)

These are the core actions of the proposals. They may not include preparatory actions that have been completed prior to the start of the project.

All actions should:

- be clearly related to the objective(s) of the project;
- <u>not</u> be research actions, <u>unless</u> they fall under the exceptions described in point 1.7.16 of this Guide,

The impact of these actions must be *monitored* during the project.

2.2.2 Communication and dissemination actions (B actions - obligatory)

Note that certain communication actions are obligatory for preparatory projects and should therefore be explicitly foreseen in the proposal as separate actions. These include establishment and maintenance of a project web site and use of the LIFE logo, and Natura 2000 logo if relevant.

In addition projects will typically include:

- information activities to the general public and stakeholders aimed at facilitating the implementation of the project;
- public awareness and dissemination actions aimed at publicising the project and its results both to the general public and to other stakeholders that could usefully benefit from the project's experience;

The range of possible actions for both types of communication actions is large (media work, organisation of events for the local community, didactic work with local schools, seminars, workshops, brochures, leaflets, newsletters, DVDs, technical publications, …), and those proposed should form a coherent package. Each communication and dissemination action must clearly define and justify its target audience, and should be expected to have a significant impact. To be effective, these actions should in general begin early on in the project. The organisation of large and costly scientific meetings or the financing of large-scale visitor infrastructures is not eligible.

Each proposal must assess the range of related projects and include an action entitled "Networking with other LIFE and/or non-LIFE projects". Where there are related projects that have been financed under LIFE, this action must include visits, meetings, exchange of information, and/or other such networking activities with an appropriate number of other relevant LIFE projects (ongoing or completed). It may also include similar exchanges with other non-LIFE projects and/or participation in information platforms related to the project objectives (including at international level where justified).

See articles II.7 and II.8 of the General Conditions of the LIFE Model grant agreement for full details of communication and dissemination requirements. The LIFE website http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/toolkit/comtools/index.htm also contains detailed advice on communication and dissemination actions, in particular *LIFE Nature*: Communicating with stakeholders and the general public – Best practices examples for *Natura 2000* and the guidelines on how to design a LIFE web-site.

2.2.3 Project management and monitoring of project progress (C actions - obligatory)

Every project proposal must contain an appropriate amount of these actions, which typically involve:

- Project management, activities undertaken by the beneficiaries for the management of the project (administrative, technical and financial aspects) and for meeting the LIFE reporting obligations. The technical project management may be partially outsourced. Outsourcing of project management is possible, provided the coordinating beneficiary retains full and day to day control of the project. The proposal should clearly describe how this control will be guaranteed. The project management structure must be clearly presented (including an organigramme and details of the responsibilities of each person and organisation involved). It is strongly recommended that the project management staff has previous experience in project management. If a coordinator or project manager also directly contributes to the implementation of certain actions, an appropriate part of his/her salary costs should be attributed to the estimated costs of those actions.

- Specific training relevant to the project, workshops and meetings for the beneficiaries' staff, where these are required for the achievement of the project objectives.
- **Indicators (obligatory action)**: A distinct C-action must be included concerning the compilation of information needed to complete the indicator tables (quantitative and qualitative) to be submitted with the first Progress and Final Reports. These indicators will contribute to evaluating the impact of the LIFE project in view of the overall objectives of the LIFE Programme, in line with the Regulation and the Multiannual Work Programme for 2014-2017. Templates of the tables will be made available in due course.

  The project proposal will therefore have to foresee monitoring actions that will enable this reporting, establishing baselines and monitoring the progress and results of all actions. All projects will have to include impact monitoring actions in addition to routine monitoring of the project progress.

  Information and guidance on indicators can be found on the LIFE web site at http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/toolkit/pmtools/life2014_2020/monitoring.htm.

- In addition, if relevant to the specific need targeted, each proposal must include an action aimed to assess the **socio-economic impact** of the project actions on the local economy and population. This can take the form of a study consolidating the data and results over the project lifetime, to be delivered with the Final Report. Projects should aim to increase social awareness and acceptance of the benefits of protecting the environment or climate. Examples of positive effects of the project are: direct or indirect employment growth, enhancement of other activities (e.g. ecotourism) aimed to develop supplementary income sources, offsetting social and economic isolation.

- **After-LIFE Plan** (obligatory action): The coordinating beneficiary must produce an “After-LIFE Plan” as a separate chapter of the final report. This plan shall set out how the actions initiated in your LIFE project will continue and develop in the years that follow the end of the project. It should give details regarding what actions will be carried out, when, by whom, and using what sources of finance. A separate C-action for this plan should be added to the proposal and the plan must be added to the list of deliverables.

3. Completing the Application

There are 4 sets of application forms: A, B, C (technical forms) and F (financial forms). The financial forms are in a separate Excel file.

Whenever several copies of one form 2017-XY need to be produced, please use the following naming convention per page: 2017-XY/1; 2017-XY/2 etc.

3.1 Technical application forms

The technical part of the *LIFE Preparatory Project* application file consists of 3 parts (A, B and C) available for download as a single Word file.

While filling in the technical forms A – C, please respect the standard A4 format.

All forms are mandatory and must be fully completed, except:

- if there are no associated beneficiaries, the associated beneficiary declaration (form A4) and profile (form A5);
- if there are no cofinancers, form A6.

Where forms are not obligatory or where you have no specific information to put on certain parts of obligatory forms (e.g. for "who will use equipment after the end of the project"), you are **strongly advised** to indicate "not applicable" or "no relevant information" or an equivalent indication.

A Forms – Administrative information

Form A1

Project title (max 120 characters): It should include the key elements and objective of the project, such as the specific need addressed. Note that the Commission may ask you to change the title in order to make it clearer. It is recommended that the title of the project must be in English, even if the proposal itself is submitted in a different language.

Project acronym (max 25 characters): The acronym must contain the word 'LIFE', e.g. 'LIFE Red Lists'.

Project location: In case a significant amount of work is proposed to take place outside of the EU Member States this should be explicitly justified. (Additional rows can be inserted by using the tab function in the table)

Expected start date: The earliest possible start date is the 1st December 2017. Please use the following format for all dates: DD/MM/YYYY.

Expected end date: Type in the date in the format DD/MM/YYYY.

List of Beneficiaries: Please use the names from form A2 and A5.

Form A2

Legal Name: The legal name is the official of name of the applicant, who will become the coordinating beneficiary.

Short Name (max 10 characters)**:** The coordinating beneficiary should be identifiable throughout the technical proposal forms and the financial proposal forms (FC and F1 – F7) by its short name.

Legal Status: Select one of the following 3 choices: *Public body*, *Private commercial* or *Private non-commercial* (including NGOs). Tick the appropriate box. Further guidance on how to distinguish private entities from public bodies can be found in section 1.5 of this document.

Value Added Tax (VAT) number: If applicable, provide the entity's VAT number in the VAT register.

Legal Registration Number: If applicable, provide the entity's legal national registration number or code from the appropriate trade register (e.g. the Chamber of Commerce register), business register or other.

Registration date: Type in the date in the format DD/MM/YYYY or use the calendar functionality.

Legal address: Enter Street name and no., PO Box, Town / City, Post code.

Member State: Use the relevant Member State code as indicated at:

http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/nuts_nomenclature/introduction

Contact person information: The function of the person in charge of coordinating the proposal could be for example Managing Director, Project Manager, etc.

Department/Service Name: Name of the department and/or service in the entity, co-ordinating the proposal and for which the contact person is working. The address details given in the fields which follow must be for the department / service and not the legal address of the entity.

E-mail: This e-mail address will be used by the Commission as the single contact point for all notifications of correspondence availability with the applicant during the evaluation procedure.

Brief description of the activities of the beneficiary: Please describe the entity, its legal status, its activities and its competence in environment, particularly in relation to the proposed actions. The description given should enable the Commission to evaluate the technical reliability of the coordinating beneficiary, i.e. whether it has the necessary experience and expertise for a successful implementation of the proposed project.

For private non-commercial entities please provide the key elements that prove that the entity is recognised as such.

In case an affiliated entity to a private beneficiary will be involved in the project, this affiliated entity, its relationship to the beneficiary and its activities and competence should also be described in this section.

Form A3a

Before completing this form, please check that the beneficiary does not fall into any of the situations listed in Articles 106(1) and 107 of the Financial Regulation (Regulation (EU, EURATOM) No 966/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union and repealing Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002, OJEU L 298 of 26.10.2012, p.1.; see http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ:L:2012:298:TOC).

Financial contribution of the beneficiary, actions in which it will participate: Amount to be provided in Euro (€). The amount indicated here must be identical with the amount indicated as corresponding to the beneficiary's contribution in the financial forms **FA** and **FC.** This amount must be greater than 0€ and cannot include any funding specifically obtained (or earmarked) for the project from other public or private sources (this is co-financing). List all the actions in the implementation of which the beneficiary will participate. Indicate the total cost (in Euro) of the beneficiary's part: this amount must be coherent with the costs indicated in forms C and in the financial form FB; it must cover the total costs including infrastructure and equipment costs before depreciation, costs of pre-existing staff, and overheads. Furthermore, the sum of the estimated total costs mentioned in forms A3 and A4 must equal the total cost of the project as shown in forms A1 and FA.

Signature: The form **must be signed** and the signature **must** be dated. The **name** and **status** of the person signing the form must be clearly indicated.

Form A3b

Signature: The form **must be signed** and the signature **must** be dated. The **name** and **status** of the person signing the form must be clearly indicated.

Form A4

If the project foresees associated beneficiaries, this form becomes compulsory. Complete one form per associated beneficiary (A4/1, A4/2, A4/3, etc.).

For completing this form, please **see instructions for form A3a.**

Form A5

If the project foresees associated beneficiaries, this form becomes compulsory. Complete one form per associated beneficiary (A5/1, A5/2, A5/3, etc.).

Legal Status: Select one of the following 3 choices: *Public body*, *Private commercial* or *Private non*-commercial (including NGOs). Tick the appropriate box. Further guidance on how to distinguish private entities from public bodies can be found in section 1.5 of this document.

For completing this form, please also **see instructions for form A2.**

Form A6 – Co-financers

For completing this form, please **see also the instructions for form A3a above.**

Note that the co-financer contribution will have to be entered also in form FC (see below).

Status of the financial commitment: 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 in the selection process you will be required to provide the A6 form with status "confirmed".

Important note: A coordinating / associated beneficiary should only appear in the proposal with that single role of coordinating / associated beneficiary and not also as a co-financer. In case a coordinating / associated beneficiary wishes to be a net financial contributor to the project, they should still only submit forms A2/A3 or A4/A5 in which their financial contribution may be higher than their foreseen costs.

Form A7 – Other proposals submitted for European Union funding

Clear and complete answers must be provided to each question. LIFE projects **should not finance** actions that are better financed by other EU funding programmes (see "Complementarity with other EU funding programmes" in the section on general principles). **Applicants must therefore verify this aspect carefully** (please note point 1 of the declaration in form A3 that you have to sign) and provide the fullest possible information in their answers. Supporting documents (e.g. extracts from the texts of the relevant programmes) should be provided (as far as possible and appropriate).

B Forms – Technical summary and overall context of the project

Form B1 – Summary description of the project (to be completed in English, max. 2 pages)

Please provide a Summary Description of your project. The description should be structured, concise and clear. It should include:

- **Project title:** see instructions for form A1.
- **Project focus:** this must correspond to one of the specific needs listed in section 2.1
- **Objectives of the project:** Please provide a detailed overview of all project objectives, listing them by decreasing order of importance. These objectives must be realistic (be achievable within the timeframe of the project with the proposed budget and means) and clear (without ambiguity).

- **Actions and means involved**: Please explain clearly what means will be utilised during the project to reach the objectives indicated above (financial means should not be indicated). Please ensure that there is a clear link between the proposed actions and means and the project's objectives.
- **Expected results (quantified as far as possible)**: Please list the main results expected at the end of the project. The expected results must be concrete, realistic and **quantified** as far as possible. Since the project's final achievements will be judged against its expected results, please make sure that the expected results are well defined and well quantified.

Form B2 -- State of the problem targeted (max 10,000 characters)

Please provide a clear description of the present situation in regard to the specific need targeted by your proposal. Describe any previous research and experience carried out in preparation for the project implementation, including feasibility studies.

Form B3- Efforts for reducing the project's "carbon footprint" (max. 1000 characters)

Please explain how you intend to ensure that the "carbon footprint" of your project remains as low as is reasonably possible.

Form B4 – Stakeholders involved (max 8,000 characters)

Indicate the stakeholders the proposal intends to involve and how. Please indicate what kind of input you expect from them and how their involvement will be used in and useful and/or needed for the project.

Form B5 – Expected constraints and risks related to the project implementation and mitigation strategy (max 12,000 characters)

It is important that project applicants identify all possible **internal or external events** ("constraints and risks") that could have **major negative impacts** on the successful implementation of the project. Please list such constraints and risks, in decreasing order of importance, indicating one main constraint or risk per paragraph. Please also indicate any possible constraints and risks due to the **socio-economic environment**. For each constraint and risk identified, please indicate how you envisage overcoming it. Please ensure that the list is coherent with the "constraints and assumptions" indicated in the C1 forms.

The experience of the LIFE programme has shown that some projects have difficulties completing all actions within the proposed project duration, due to unforeseen delays and difficulties encountered during the project. It is important that applicants identify all possible external events ("constraints and risks") that could cause such delays. Applicants should describe in Form B5 how these issues are taken into account and how they envisage overcoming potential problems.

You are also strongly advised to include in this section any details on licences or permits, etc., and to indicate what support you have from the competent bodies responsible for issuing such authorisations. To pre-empt unforeseen problems, good communication and consultation with the competent authorities in charge of these procedures is essential. This should already be done at the beginning of the LIFE proposal preparation.

Finally, please detail also how you have taken into account the risks identified into the planning of the project (time planning, budget, etc.) and the definition of the actions.

Form B6 - Continuation / valorisation of the project's results after the end of the project:

Describe how the project will be continued after the end of the LIFE funding, what actions are required to consolidate the results in order to ensure the sustainability of the project results. Please indicate what mechanisms will be put in place to ensure that this will be done. Please note that information provided in this section is indicative and will have to be updated during the project life.

In particular, please reply to the following questions:

- **Which actions will have to be carried out or continued after the end of the project? (max 5,000 characters)** Please list such project actions indicating their reference (e.g. A1, A2…) and title.
- **How will this be achieved? Which resources will be necessary to carry out these actions? (max 5,000 characters)** Please indicate how the above actions will be continued after the project, by whom, within what timeframe and with what financing.
- **To what extent will the results and lessons of the project be actively disseminated after the end of the project to those persons and / or organisations that could best make use of them? (Please identify these persons / organisations) (max 5,000 characters):** Please indicate how dissemination activities will continue after the end of the project. Please list the persons / organisations that have been so far identified as targets for these dissemination activities.

C Forms – Detailed technical description of the proposed actions

Under this part, the applicant must list **all the actions which will be implemented under the project**. There are 3 types of actions:

A. Implementation actions (obligatory)
B. Actions for communication and for dissemination of project lessons (obligatory)
C. Project management and monitoring of project progress (obligatory).

Under each type of action (A, B, C), the applicant must list the different actions: A1, A2, A3… B1, B2 … C1, C2 … etc. It is recommended that each action which is expected to have an important output for the project (e.g. preparation of an action plan, recruitment of new staff, etc.) is presented as a **separate action**. Do not divide actions into sub-actions.

The actions must be described as precisely as possible, however the description of an action should not exceed 1 page.

The description of each action should clearly indicate the links with other actions and should clearly (and in quantitative terms) indicate how it contributes to the project's overall objectives. There should be a **clear coherence between the technical forms and the financial forms.**

For each action, the applicant should provide the following information:

- **Name of the action**: Please ensure that the name is short (maximum 2 lines) and that it clearly reflects the objective of the action.
- **Description (what, how, where and when)**: Please describe the content of the action indicating what will be done, using what means, on which location/site, with what duration and with what deadline.
- **Reasons why this action is necessary:** Please indicate why the action is necessary and how it will contribute to reaching the project's objectives.
- **Constraints and assumptions:** Indicate what may prevent you from implementing the action as planned and what will be done to address this risk. Please ensure that these constraints and assumptions are in line with those indicated on Form B5.
- **Beneficiary responsible for implementation:** Please indicate which of the project's beneficiaries will be in charge of the implementation of this action. In case an affiliated entity to a private beneficiary will be involved, its role should be specified. Should more than one beneficiary be implicated, please give full details of which beneficiary is responsible for what in the "**Description (what, how, where and when)**" section.
- **Expected results (<u>quantitative</u> information as far as possible):** Please indicate concisely what results will be achieved at the end of the action (e.g. five new staff members trained) and what deliverable products (e.g. information brochures) will be produced.
- **Indicators of progress:** Please indicate how progress of this action will be measured.
- **Cost estimation**: Please summarise how you have estimated the cost of this action (eg no. days * average cost / day, …). Do not simply indicate the total cost of the action, you must give details of the different calculations and estimations on which this total cost is based. Please verify that the costs indicated here are consistent with the data on the financial forms.

Please find below indication on the additional information to be provided for specific actions.

Important note:

➢ **All calculations and detailed cost breakdowns necessary to justify the cost of each action should be included in the financial forms F. In order to avoid repeating the financial information (with the risk of introducing incoherencies), Part C should only contain financial information not contained in the financial forms (e.g. details explaining the elements included in unit rates).**

- **All forms in this section may be duplicated, so as to include all essential information.**
- **Any action that is sub-contracted should be described just <u>as clearly</u> as an action that will be directly carried out by the beneficiaries.**

The eligibility criteria formulated in European Commission notice Nr.2013/C-205/05 (OJEU C-205 of 19/07/2013, pp. 9-11), concerning the eligibility of Israeli entities and their activities in the territories occupied by Israel since June 1967 for grants, prizes and financial instruments funded by the EU from 2014 onwards, shall apply for all actions under this call for proposals, including with respect to third parties referred to in Article 137 of the EU's Financial Regulation.

<u>Form C0 – List of all actions</u>

Please list all the actions foreseen in the project, per type of action (A, B, C)

- **Action number**: Indicate the number of each action, i.e. the letter of the category + its number in that category, e.g. A1, A2…, B1, B2,…, C1, C2,…
- **Name of the action**: Please ensure that the name is short (maximum 2 lines) and that it clearly reflects the objective(s) of the action.

Additional rows can be inserted in the tables by using the tab function.

<u>Form C1a – A. Implementation actions (obligatory)</u>

The output of each A action should be indicated in the 'expected results' section. It should be **concrete, measurable (**quantified when possible) **and with a clear benefit** for the project objectives. This benefit should be **measurable** and should be measured and evaluated under **monitoring actions(s) proposed in form C1b.**

In case some of these implementation actions depend on actions to be undertaken outside of the project, please indicate this clearly.

If the beneficiaries need to **purchase equipment** for project purposes, these items should be listed, described and justified in detail.

If appropriate, explain how, by whom and through which financing source the action will **be continued** after the project period. Note also that any anticipated payments for actions that take place after the end of the project are not eligible for LIFE funding.

<u>Form C1b – B. Actions for communication and for dissemination of project lessons (obligatory)</u>

For each action, please specify and justify the target audience. If an action involves meetings, you should specify how many meetings, where, when, who will attend, what will be discussed, how many persons are expected and how this will contribute to meeting the objectives of the project. If an action concerns brochures, leaflets, publications..., specify how many copies, how many pages (size, colour...), to whom they will be distributed and when. Should an action concern a film, specify the format, duration, number of copies, where it will be shown, etc. Should beneficiaries plan to present the project results in national / international events (conferences, congresses), the relevance and added value for the project should be clearly explained.

All actions should specify the expected results in qualitative and quantitative terms (e.g. improved understanding of BAT, 2500 persons informed, 3000 newsletters circulated…), indicating how this serves the project's objectives.

The following dissemination activity is considered obligatory and shall be included among the actions on form C1b:

- **Notice boards** describing the project shall be displayed at strategic places accessible to the public. The LIFE logo should always appear on them.
- A description of the project shall be included in a newly-created or existing **website** (with the LIFE logo), and full details of its objectives, actions, progress and results should be provided. The web site shall be regularly updated during the project period and shall be maintained on-line during at least 5 years after the project's end.
- **Networking with other projects** (including LIFE III, LIFE+ and/or LIFE projects, as well as projects financed under other programmes such as Horizon 2020 or the European Structural & Investment Funds), information exchange activities etc. should be presented as one distinct B-category obligatory action with a separate budget.
- A **layman's report** shall be produced in paper and electronic format at the end of the project. It shall be presented in English and in the project's language. This report shall be 5 to 10 pages long and present the project, its objectives, its actions and its results to a general public.

The following dissemination activities are not considered obligatory, but are foreseen in many projects:

- **Media work** (press conferences, meetings with or visits by journalists, preparing articles for the press …).
- **Organisation of events:** e.g., public information meetings, meetings with interest groups, guided visits… Describe exactly what is planned and how it contributes to the objectives of the project. Describe final output.
- **Workshops, seminars, conferences:** If (one or more) beneficiaries are attending, specify which (if known already). If (one or more) beneficiaries are organising, describe exactly what the topic will be, how it contributes to the project objectives, who will be invited (whenever possible, beneficiaries implementing or having implemented similar projects ought to be invited in order to foster networking). Finally, describe the output of each event and how it will be disseminated.

- **Production of brochures, publications, films, etc.** Specify exactly what is planned (subject matter, number of copies, distribution to whom). Note that all such material charged to LIFE must bear a clear reference to LIFE financial support (including the LIFE logo) to be considered eligible for reimbursement and that one copy of each product must be annexed to the progress/intermediate report or final report.

Form C1c – C. Project management and monitoring of project progress (obligatory)

The applicant should list the different actions aiming at managing/operating the project and monitoring the progress of the actions.

Overall project management:

Each project must include one or several distinct actions named "Project management by (name of the beneficiary in charge)". This/these action(s) should include a description of the project management **staff** and describe management and reporting duties of the project beneficiaries. The management should be described, even if no costs are charged for this to the project. Reporting should include the preparation of the inception report, the progress reports, the mid-term and final reports with payment requests.

Please include a **management chart** of the technical and administrative staff involved. This chart must provide evidence that the coordinating beneficiary (Project Manager) has a clear authority and an efficient control of the project management staff, even if part of the project management would be outsourced. Explain if the management staff has **previous project management experience**.

Audit:

Where required, an independent auditor nominated by the coordinating beneficiary must verify the financial statements provided to the Commission in the final project report. This audit should not only verify the respect of national legislation and accounting rules but should also certify that all costs incurred respect the General Conditions of the LIFE Model Grant Agreement. In the financial forms, the costs for the audit should be under the budget item "external assistance".

"**After-LIFE Plan**" :

The coordinating beneficiary must produce an "After-LIFE Plan" as a separate chapter of the final report. This plan shall set out how the actions initiated in your LIFE project will continue and develop in the years that follow the end of the project, and how the longer term capacity to implement the LIFE programme will be assured. It should give details regarding what actions will be carried out, when, by whom, and using what sources of finance. A separate D-action for this plan should be added to the proposal and the plan must be added to the list of deliverables.

Indicators:

A distinct C-action must be included concerning the compilation of information needed to complete the indicator tables (quantitative and qualitative) to be submitted with the first

Progress and Final Reports. Projects shall include sufficient impact monitoring action(s) to measure and document the effectiveness of the project implementation actions as compared to the initial situation, objectives and expected results.

This action should also clearly include the evaluation of the success of each implementing action. This can take the form of a study consolidating the data and results over the project lifetime, to be delivered with the Final Report.

Form C2 – Deliverable products, milestones of the project, and reporting schedule

Deliverable products: Please list all deliverable products chronologically according to their deadline for completion (day/month/year). ***Deliverable products*** are all those **tangible** products that can be shipped (e.g. brochures, studies and other documents, software, videos, etc). For each deliverable, please include the number of the associated action (e.g. A1, C5 etc.) and the deadline for its completion (day/month/year). Please note that any deliverable product will have to be **submitted as a separate document** (bearing the LIFE logo) to the Commission together with an activity report.

Milestones: Please list all project milestones chronologically according to their deadline for delivery/achievement (day/month/year). ***Project milestones*** are defined as **key moments** during the implementation of the project e.g. ”Nomination of the Project Manager”, “Completion of new recruitment”, etc. Milestones (or corresponding documents) do not need to be submitted to the Commission. In a report, you would need to inform the Commission whether the milestone has been completed or not.

Activity reports foreseen: The coordinating beneficiary shall report to the Commission about the technical and financial progress of the project. The project's achieved results and possible problems should be highlighted in these reports. If the project lasts more than 24 months and requests an EU contribution in excess of 300,000 Euro, and if the coordinating beneficiary intends to ask for a mid-term payment, a more detailed "Mid-term report with payment request" has to be provided. One "Final Report with payment request" shall be submitted, not later than 3 months after the project end date. Additional "Progress reports" should also be foreseen in order to ensure that at least one report is received every 18 months (the reporting schedule may be modified during the revision phase).

Form C3 - Timetable

In the table, please list all actions ordered by number and using their numbers and names. Please use the same number and title of action as presented in the project proposal (e.g. A1, A2 …etc.). For each project action, please tick the action's implementation period. Please ensure that the timetable is presented **on one page only**. You may use the 'landscape' page setup format as necessary.

When planning the implementation period of your project, please bear in mind that a LIFE 2017 Preparatory project cannot start before 1 December 2017. Also, please add an appropriate safety margin at the end of the project, to allow for the inevitable unforeseen delays.

3.2 Financial application forms

The financial part of the *LIFE Preparatory project* application file consists of 10 forms (FA, FB, FC, F1, F2, F3, F4, F5, F6, and F7). It is available for download as an Excel file.

Please note that only those cost categories that are relevant to Preparatory Projects are mentioned in this section; there are additional cost categories mentioned in the General Conditions of the LIFE Model Grant Agreement which are not eligible for Preparatory Projects.

General remarks

The project's budget should be prepared in consideration of the General Conditions of the LIFE Model Grant Agreement. The EU contribution will be calculated on the basis of eligible costs. Only costs incurred during the lifetime of the project should be included. In case the signature date is before the start date, the legal obligation to pay for project costs may be contracted between the date of signature and the start date of the project.

The coordinating beneficiary and associated beneficiaries, as well as other companies which are part of the same groups or holdings, cannot act as sub-contractors.

Internal invoicing (i.e. costs which result from transactions between departments of a beneficiary) is not allowed, unless it is possible to prove that such transactions represent the best value for money and exclude all elements of profit, VAT and overheads.

All contracts attributed under any of the cost categories should respect the principle of absence of conflict of interest, regardless of the amount involved.

Value added tax paid by the beneficiaries is eligible except for:

a) taxed activities or exempt activities with right of deduction;
b) activities engaged in as a public authority by the beneficiary.

Cover page:

Please fill in the acronym of your proposal as stated in the technical forms.

Form FA - Budget breakdown and project funding

This form is filled in automatically, based on the data provided in the other forms in this section. **Please do not modify any cells**.

The form summarises the financial structure of the project, by providing a budget breakdown for the project and an overview of the financing plan.

Note that depreciation costs of equipment are only eligible up to 50% of its purchase value.

Form FB – Cost breakdown for actions

For every action described in the technical forms C1, a detailed breakdown of the total projects costs should be provided on this form. Please use the same numbers and names for the actions as in forms C1.

This form is very useful in order to link technical outputs and costs, and to thus show cost effectiveness of the actions. Particular attention should be given to the coherence of the presented costs with the costs included in forms F1-F7.

Depending on the number of actions, rows may have to be added on this table. Information should be consistent with the contents of the technical forms.

In the overhead cell, you should indicate the overheads rate that you wish to charge to the project, bearing in mind that it cannot be more than 0.07 (ie, seven percent) of the costs of each beneficiary.

Form FC – Project funding breakdown

This form describes the funding of the project by the beneficiary/ies, as well as the EU contribution requested per beneficiary.

Goods or services which are to be provided **"in kind"**, i.e. for which there is no cash-flow foreseen, should not be included in the project's budget.

Beneficiary country: Select the relevant Member State code of the beneficiary as indicated at:

http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/nuts_nomenclature/introduction

Use Other in case of a beneficiary not established in an EU Member State.

Beneficiary short name: Please use the short name given in the Coordinating beneficiary and Associated beneficiary profiles in the *LIFE* technical forms **A2** and **A5**.

Total costs of the actions in €: Indicate the total costs of the actions undertaken by the beneficiaries as in the *LIFE* technical forms **A3** and **A4**. These amounts must include the purchase costs of durable goods equipment before depreciation. The sum of beneficiaries' "total costs of the actions" must equal the total cost of the project as shown in form FA and in the technical form A1.

Coordinating beneficiary contribution: specify the amount of financial contribution provided by the coordinating beneficiary. The amount indicated here should be the same as in the *LIFE* technical form **A3**.

Associated beneficiary contribution: Indicate the financial contribution from each associated beneficiary, as in the *LIFE* technical form **A4.** These amounts cannot include any funding obtained from other public or private sources specifically earmarked for the project or for a part of it..

Co-financers contribution: Indicate the financial contribution from each co-financer, as in the *LIFE* technical form **A6.**

Amount of EU contribution requested: Specify the amount of EU financial contribution requested by the coordinating beneficiary and each of the associated beneficiaries. This amount must be in accordance with the General Conditions of the LIFE Model Grant Agreement.

Forms F1 to F7

General remarks

All costs must be rounded to the nearest Euro and must exclude value-added tax (VAT) when the beneficiary can recover this cost from its national authorities. If the number is zero, put zero or leave the cell empty.

Form F1 – Direct personnel costs

General: The salary costs of public body personnel may be funded only to the extent that they relate to the cost of project implementation activities that the relevant public body would not have carried out had the project concerned not been undertaken. The personnel in question, irrespective of whether they are working full or part time for the project, must be specifically seconded/assigned to a project; the individual assignment shall either take the format of a contractual document or that of a letter of assignment signed by the responsible service or authority of the relevant beneficiary.

Moreover, the sum of the public bodies' contributions (as coordinating beneficiary and / or associated beneficiary) to the project budget must exceed (by at least 2%) the sum of the salary costs of their non-additional staff charged to the project. The definition of 'additional' personnel costs include the costs of all personnel – permanent or temporary – of public bodies whose contracts or contract renewals:

- start on or after the start date of the project or on or after the date of signature of the grant agreement by the Commission in case this signature takes place before the project start date, and
- specifically mention the LIFE project

Beneficiary short name: Please use the short name given in the Coordinating beneficiary and Associated beneficiary profiles in the LIFE technical forms **A2** and **A5**.

Action number: Please insert the number(s) of the action(s) in which each member of personnel will be involved.

Type of staff: Please indicate "additional" if the personnel fall under the above definition of additional staff, else blank. If an action is going to be carried out by both additional and non-additional personnel, please split the personnel costs for the action in two lines.

Note that service contracts with individuals may be charged to this category on condition that the individual concerned works in the beneficiary's premises and under its supervision and provided that such practice complies with the relevant national tax and social legislation.

Important: The time which each employee spends working on the project shall be recorded on a timely basis (i.e. every day, every week) using time sheets or an equivalent time registration system established and certified regularly by each of the project beneficiaries.

Category/Role in the project: You should identify each professional category in a clear and unambiguous manner to enable the Commission to monitor the labour resources allocated to the project. When the professional category is not explanatory of the role that the person will play in the project, you should also include this information. *Examples of staff categories/roles in the project are: senior engineer/project manager; technician/data analysis, administrative/financial management etc.*

Daily rate: The daily rate charged for each member of personnel is calculated on the basis of gross salary or wages plus obligatory social charges, any other statutory cost but excluding any other costs. For the purpose of establishing the budget proposal, the salary may be calculated based on indicative average rates which are reasonable to the concerned category of personnel, sector, country, type of organisation, etc. Please take predictable salary increases into account when estimating the average daily rates for the project duration.

Please note that the rates indicated in the budget proposal must not be used when reporting the costs of the project. The rates reported should be based on actual costs incurred, i.e. the actual gross salary, obligatory social charges and any other statutory costs, and the actually productive working time for a given year.

The total number of person-days per year should be calculated on the basis of the total working hours/days according to national legislation, collective agreements, employment contracts, etc. An example for determining the total productive days per year could be as follows (provided what is established in the appropriate legislation):

Days/year	365 days
Less 52 weekends	104 days
Less annual holidays	21 days
Less statutory holidays (bank holidays)	15 days
Less illness/other (when relevant)	10 days
= Total productive days	215 days

Number of person-days: The number of person-days needed to carry out the project.

Direct personnel costs: Calculated automatically by multiplying the total number of person-days for a given category by the daily rate for that category.

Form F2 – Travel and subsistence costs

Note: Under this budget category applicants should foresee the travel costs for 2 persons from the project to attend a regional kick-off meeting with the Commission representatives.

General: Only costs for travel and subsistence must be included here. Costs related to the attendance of conferences, such as conference fees, should be reported under other costs. The cost of participation in a conference is only considered eligible if the project is presented at the conference. The number of participants in conferences is limited to those for whose attendance there is a valid technical justification.

Beneficiary short name: Please use the short name given in the Coordinating beneficiary and Associated beneficiary profiles in the LIFE technical forms **A2** and **A5**.

Action number: Please insert the number(s) of the action(s) to which each cost is related.

Destination (From / To): Identify the origin and destination of the trips. Specify the country and city name, if already known.

Purpose of travel: The purpose of travel must be clearly described, in order to allow an assessment of the costs in relation to the objectives of the project (examples: 'dissemination event', 'technical co-ordination meeting'). Identify the number of trips foreseen and the number of people who will be travelling as well as the duration of the travel in days.

You may use more than one line for the purpose of travel or destination if necessary, but costs may be presented grouped, e.g. for all technical co-ordination meetings. However, the individual costs must be discriminated when submitting the financial reporting during the project.

Travel costs: Travel costs shall be charged in accordance with the internal rules of the beneficiary. Beneficiaries shall endeavour to travel in the most economical and environmentally friendly way – video conferencing must be considered as an alternative.

In absence of internal rules governing the reimbursement of the use of an organisation's own cars (in opposition to private cars) costs related to the use of these are to be estimated at 0.25 Euro per km. If costs for fuel are foreseen in relation to travel activities, they should also be listed here, otherwise fuel is reported under consumables.

Subsistence costs: Subsistence costs shall be charged in accordance with the internal rules of the beneficiary (daily allowances or direct payment of meals, hotel costs, local transportation etc.). Make sure that meals related to travel/meetings of the beneficiaries are not included if subsistence costs are already budgeted as per diem allowances.

<u>Form F3 – External assistance costs</u>

General: External assistance costs refer to sub-contracting costs: i.e. services/works carried out by external companies or persons, as well as to renting of equipment. Please justify in detail if the proposed costs of External assistance is above <u>35% of the total budget.</u>

For example, the creation of a logo, establishment of a dissemination plan, design of dissemination products, translation services, publication of a book or renting of material should be included in external assistance. Costs related to the **purchase or leasing** (as opposed to renting) **of equipment** supplied under subcontract should be budgeted under that cost categories and not under external assistance.

Beneficiary short name: Please use the short name given in the Coordinating beneficiary and Associated beneficiary profiles in the LIFE technical forms **A2** and **A5**.

Action number: Please insert the number(s) of the action(s) to which each cost is related.

Procedure: Specify the procedure foreseen to sub-contract the work, e.g. 'public tender', 'direct treaty', 'framework contract', etc. Subcontracts must be awarded in accordance with articles II.9 and II.10 of the General Conditions of the LIFE Model Grant Agreement.

Description: Provide a clear description of the subject of the service that will be subcontracted, e.g. ‘carrying out impact assessment’, ‘maintenance of …’, ‘renting of …’, ‘consultancy on …’, ‘web page development’, ‘intra-muros assistance’, ‘organisation of dissemination event’, etc. You may use more than one line for the description of the subcontract if necessary.

Form F4 – Durable Goods - Equipment

Please list in this category the costs related to items that according to the accounting rules of the beneficiary in question are treated as durable goods. Please be informed that items which are fully depreciated in the year of purchase, but which are recorded in any registry of durable goods for the purpose of this application should also be listed under this cost category. This often apply to low value electrical consumer goods, such as laptop computers, smart phones, tablets, photo equipment, gps equipment, etc.

You need to indicate the actual cost as well as the value of depreciation, in accordance with the General Conditions of the LIFE Model Grant Agreement. Only the depreciation is an eligible cost for the project and the EU co-financing will be calculated on the basis of this amount.

Actual cost: Full cost of the equipment without applying any depreciation.

Depreciation: Total value of the depreciation in the accounts of the beneficiaries at the end of the project. For the purpose of establishing the budget proposal, the beneficiaries should estimate as precisely as possible the amount of depreciation for each item, from the date of entry into the accounts (if relevant) until the end of the project. This estimation is based on their internal accounting rules and/or in accordance with national accounting rules. This amount represents the eligible cost.

Please note that depreciation is limited to a maximum of 50% of the actual cost for equipment.

Beneficiary short name: Please use the short name given in the Coordinating beneficiary and Associated beneficiary profiles in the LIFE technical forms **A2** and **A5**.

Action number: Please insert the number(s) of the action(s) to which each cost is related.

Procedure: Specify the procedure foreseen to sub-contract the work, e.g. ‘public tender’, ‘direct treaty’, ‘framework contract’, etc. Subcontracts must be awarded in accordance with articles II.9 and II.10 of the General Conditions of the LIFE Model Grant Agreement. Please be aware that you should be ready to explain why a 'direct treaty' has been used in particular observing the principles of sound financial management.

Description: Provide a clear description of each item, e.g. ‘laptop computer’, ‘database software (off-the-shelf or developed under sub-contract)’, etc.

Form F5 – Costs for consumables

General: Consumables declared on this form must relate to the purchase, manufacture, repair or use of items costs may also be declared here. However, **general consumables/supplies** (as which are not considered equipment according to the definition under form F4 (such as materials for dissemination, repair of equipment given that this is not capitalised and that they are purchased for the project or used 100% for the project etc.). Should the project include a significant dissemination activity in which substantial mailing, photocopying, or other communication forms are used, the corresponding opposed to direct costs), such as telephone, communication costs, photocopies, etc. are covered by the overheads category (which is not an eligible project cost).

Catering costs/meals/coffees related to dissemination activities, such as presentations of the project, workshops or conferences should be reported here. However, please note that if the whole organisation of the conference is subcontracted, the corresponding cost should all be budgeted under external assistance. Catering costs for normal meeting activities should be covered by the 7% overhead charges.

They must also be specifically related to the implementation of project actions (**general consumables/supplies**, such as office material, water, gas etc. are covered by the overhead charges).

Beneficiary short name: Please use the short name given in the Coordinating beneficiary and Associated beneficiary profiles in the LIFE technical forms **A2** and **A5**.

Action number: Please insert the number(s) of the action(s) to which each cost is related.

Procedure: Specify the procedure foreseen to sub-contract the work, e.g. 'public tender', 'direct treaty', 'framework contract', etc. Subcontracts must be awarded in accordance with articles II.9 and II.10 of the General Conditions of the LIFE Model Grant Agreement.

Description: Provide a clear description of the type of consumable materials, linking it to the technical implementation of the project, e.g. 'raw materials for experiments action 2', 'stationery for dissemination products (deliverable 5) ', etc.

Form F6 – Other costs

General: Direct costs which do not fall in any other cost category should be placed here. Costs for bank charges, conference fees, insurance costs when these costs originate solely from the project implementation, etc. should be placed here. Also the costs related to the audit report should be classified under this cost category.

Beneficiary short name: Please use the short name given in the Coordinating beneficiary and Associated beneficiary profiles in the LIFE technical forms **A2** and **A5**.

Action number: Please insert the number(s) of the action(s) to which each cost is related.

Description: Give a clear description of each item, linking it to the technical implementation of the project.

Procedure: Specify the procedure foreseen to sub-contract the work, e.g. 'public tender', 'direct treaty', 'framework contract', etc. Subcontracts must be awarded in accordance with articles II.9 and II.10 of the General Conditions of the LIFE Model Grant Agreement.

Costs for translation of reports, if needed, must always be reported in this category.

The **bank guarantee shall always be reported in this category.** A bank guarantee covering the first pre-financing payment might be necessary. Please refer to section 4.6 of this document for more information.

Auditor costs related to the auditing of the project's financial reports should always be placed under this budget category. These costs will always be incurred solely by the Coordinating beneficiary.

3.3 Informal checklist for Preparatory project proposals

1. Have you used the standard application forms for preparatory projects, without modification? Forms A1, A2, A3a, A7, B1 (in English), B2, B3, B4, B5, B6, C0, C1a, C1b, C1c, C2, C3, FA, FB, FC, F1, F2, F3, F4, F5, F6 and F7 are mandatory for all projects and must be completed in their entirety. If the project involves associated beneficiaries, forms A4 and A5 are obligatory for each associated beneficiary. In case certain forms or sections are irrelevant to your project, have you indicated "not applicable", "no relevant information" or an equivalent mention? Note that forms should not be, even in part, hand-written.
2. Are all obligatory signatures provided?
3. Is the start date not earlier than 01/12/2017?
4. Have you included a safety margin at the end of the project to allow for unforeseen delays?
5. Is the applicant legally registered in the EU?
6. Have you determined whether each beneficiary (coordinating and associated) is a "public body" or "private commercial organisation" or "private non-commercial organisation (including NGOs)"?
7. Have you included the mandatory annexes (annual balance sheet and profit and loss account, audit report or auditor-certified balance sheet and profit and loss account, simplified financial statement for coordinating beneficiaries that are not public bodies; public body declaration for coordinating beneficiaries that are public bodies)?
8. For each action have you detailed the expected results as far as possible in quantitative terms?
9. Do you clearly justify any actions that do not take place in the EU Member State territories to which the treaties apply?
10. Does your project integrate monitoring, evaluation and active dissemination of the project's results and lessons learnt ?
11. Have you included a coherent package of communication and dissemination actions?
12. Is the project management team sufficient? Is an organigramme provided? Is there a full time project coordinator (not obligatory but strongly recommended)? Is there a financial coordinator?
13. Have you excluded all actions that are more appropriately funded by other EU funds? In case of doubt, have you foreseen complementary actions or objectives?
14. Have you detailed your efforts towards carbon neutrality?
15. Have you and your associated beneficiaries read the General Conditions of the LIFE Model Grant Agreement in full?
16. Is your application on a CD-ROM/DVD in the correct file format? Don't forget the financial forms and obligatory annexes (where required)!

4. Guide for the evaluation of LIFE Preparatory project proposals 2017

4.1. General Remarks

The evaluation, selection and award procedure is carried out by the European Commission, including, the awarding of the final scores, the drawing up of the list of proposals to be co-financed and the rejection of the proposals.

This document only refers to the 2016 call for proposals. The technical methodology may be modified in future calls for proposals.

Only proposals received by the Commission before the deadline of 30 June 2017, 16:00 Brussels local time and thereafter passing the Opening phase (see point 4.2) will be further considered. Any information or documents submitted otherwise, or after the deadline, will not be taken into account unless explicitly requested by the Commission.

Basic selection and evaluation principles

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

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

Evaluators must ensure that all their comments are concise, complete and comprehensible and must always be directly relevant to both the proposal and the criterion applied.

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

4.2 Opening phase

Proposals will be checked for compliance with the following criteria:

1. The proposal has been submitted before the deadline of **30 June 2017, 16:00** Brussels local time.

2. The LIFE 2017 Preparatory Projects application forms have been used for preparing and submitting the proposal.

4.3 ADMISSIBILITY AND EXCLUSION PHASE

All proposals that were not rejected during the Opening phase are checked for their compliance with the following general admissibility and exclusion criteria:

1. Where relevant, the **signed and dated declarations** (forms **A3, A4, A6**) are included in the application. Failure to deliver these declarations or to clearly indicate the financial contribution (forms **A3, A4 and A6**) may lead to an exclusion of the proposal from all further evaluation. Note that signing the forms A3 and A4 confirms that the beneficiaries are not in one of the situations referred to in Articles 106(1) and 107 of the Financial Regulation (*Regulation (EU, EURATOM) No 966/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union and repealing Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002*).[5]

2. If the status of the co-financer commitment (on form A6) at this stage is 'not fully confirmed', the declaration must explain the current status of the commitment.

3. Form B1 (Summary description of the project) is completed in English. The other application forms may, however, be completed in any official EU language, except Maltese and Irish.

4. The coordinating beneficiary is legally registered in the EU.

In case LIFE proposals do not fully comply with all the above criteria (e.g. mandatory signatures / dates of signatures on are missing) the Commission will first send a message to the coordinating beneficiary indicating which forms are missing. The coordinating beneficiary will have **5 working days** to reply and provide the missing or incomplete documents and forms. In exceptional circumstances, the Commission may extend the deadline.

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

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

4.4 TECHNICAL SELECTION PHASE

All proposals that were not rejected during the Opening or Admissibility phases are checked for their compliance with the technical selection criteria.

[5] OJEU L298 of 26.10.2012, p.1

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

1) Generic selection criteria

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

- addresses one of the six specific needs defined in section 2.1 of this document.

- satisfies the definition set out in Article 2(g) of the LIFE Regulation

- meets the minimum quality requirements in conformity with the relevant provisions of Financial Regulation (*Regulation (EU, EURATOM) No 966/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union and repealing Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002*).

N.B.: Projects focused on ***research***[6] *do not fall within the scope of the LIFE programme and are therefore* ***not eligible****.*

Furthermore, a proposal will be rejected on the basis of this criterion if there is strong positive evidence that any of the beneficiaries has been an unreliable manager in previous LIFE or other European Union-financed projects and has given no proof that necessary initiatives have been taken to avoid similar problems in the future.

2) Specific selection criteria for proposals addressing each of the specific needs for Preparatory Projects (as identified in section 2.1)

a.) Criteria applicable to proposals for " **Providing support for Integrating ecosystems and their services with LIFE and other EU funded projects** ":

- The applicant (if relevant, together with associated applicants) :

    - should include partners from relevant existing or previous LIFE and EU projects, and may also include other relevant actors, such as local decision makers, public administrations, associations, NGOs, land owners, private sector, etc

b.) Criteria applicable to proposals for " **Providing support to improve knowledge and capacity amongst Natura 2000 site mangers across the EU”**

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

- The applicant (if relevant, together with associated applicants) has:
  - the necessary qualifications and experience, both educational and professional, in relation to Natura 2000 site management issues;
  - the necessary qualifications and experience in setting up training events and networking activities targeting an audience of site managers
  - access to relevant networks of Natura 2000 site managers across Europe and the ability to coordinate the work in a range of different EU Member States
- The proposal includes a mechanism for ensuring full availability of all the deliverables produced through this project to the public and to EU Institutions

c.) Criteria applicable to proposals for " Providing support for tailoring innovative private land conservation tools to the national and regional contexts in the EU Member States"

- The applicant (if relevant, together with associated applicants) has:
  - the experience and necessary qualifications, both educational and professional, to promote conservation on private lands;
  - access to relevant land owner networks across Europe and the ability to coordinate the work in a range of different EU Member States
  - the capacity to draft high quality scientific reports in English, as evidenced by past experience.
- The proposal includes a mechanism for ensuring full availability of all the deliverables produced through this project to the public and to EU Institutions
- The proposed project includes actions in at least 14 Member States.

d.) **Criteria applicable to proposals for "Contributing to a greener and more resource efficient economy and to the development and implementation of Union environmental policy and legislation":**

- The applicant (if relevant, together with associated applicants) has:

  - the experience and necessary qualifications, both educational and professional, to carry out legal, economic, social and environmental analyses

  - access to relevant expert networks across Europe and the ability to coordinate the work in different EU Member States representative of the different environmental challenges identified in the EIR,

    - the capacity to draft high quality reports in English, as evidenced by past experience.

- The proposal includes appropriate mechanisms for ensuring a full availability of all deliverables produced through this project, to the public and to the EU institutions

4.5 Award phase

All proposals that were not rejected during the Opening, Admissibility or Technical selection phases are admitted to an in-depth evaluation of their quality during the Award phase.

Preparatory projects will be awarded to the applicant which submits a proposal which surpasses the pass score and which reach/es the highest score/s regarding the following criteria:

Award criteria	**Minimum pass score***	**Maximum score**
Technical coherence and quality of the proposal in relation to the specific need addressed	22	45
Comprehensiveness of the approach in relation to the specific need addressed	15	30
Financial coherence and quality	12	25
Overall (pass) scores	**55**	**100**

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

1. Technical coherence and quality in relation to the specific need addressed:

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

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

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

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

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

Proposals may receive up to 45 points for this criterion. The pass score for this criterion is 22 points.

2. *Comprehensiveness of the approach* in relation to the specific need addressed

This criterion will assess how completely the proposal addresses the scope of targeted specific need identified in section 2.1, taking into account the available budgetary envelope. Proposals may receive up to 30 points for this criterion. The pass score for this criterion is 15 points.

3. Financial coherence and quality

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

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

Proposals may receive up to 20 points for this criterion. The pass score for this criterion is 10 points. A proposal would receive a score below the pass score if its financial part is poorly conceived and/or requires a considerable revision. A proposal will also receive a failing score if the budget surpasses the envelope available for the targeted specific need.

Mechanics of the Award phase

For any given proposal, each of the above 3 criteria will be assessed and scored by at least two independent evaluators. A synthesis report will then be written on the basis of the individual assessments, and including the mean score for each criterion.

On the basis of the synthesis reports and scores provided by the evaluators, the final approval on the scores to be awarded to each proposal will be taken during a meeting ("Award Panel") chaired by the Commission and attended by the evaluators. Each proposal will fall into one of the following situations:

- Any proposal that receives a final score below the pass score for any of the Award criteria for which a minimum pass level is indicated, or for which the total score is less than 55 points, will be declared "rejected at the Award phase".

- For all proposals not falling into the above situation, the total score to be awarded is calculated by summing up the final synthesis scores for the 3 Award criteria.

4.6 Financial selection phase

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

Step A – Document check:

All applicants (potential coordinating beneficiaries) other than public bodies, must provide, as annexes to their proposal, evidence that they comply with the financial selection criterion set out in Article 202 of the Rules of Application of the Financial

Regulation (Commission Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1268/2012 of 30 October 2012), namely that "the applicant has stable and sufficient sources of funding to maintain his activity throughout the period during which the action is being carried out". Therefore, coordinating beneficiaries other than public bodies have to provide the following administrative and financial documents as annexes to their LIFE proposal. It should be noted that these annexes will be required by the Commission irrespective of whether they are obligatory or not for the particular type of organisation, according to national legislation, in the coordinating beneficiary's Member State:

A. The "LIFE Simplified Financial Statement", provided as a separate Excel file with the LIFE Application Package. The financial table in this statement must be completed and annexed to the proposal as an Excel file.
B. The most recent balance sheet and profit and loss account. This document must be annexed to the LIFE proposal. If the applicant does not yet have a balance sheet and profit and loss account, because the organisation has been only recently created, it must provide a management/ business plan (for at least 12 months in the future) with the financial data prepared in accordance with the standard required under national legislation.

An applicant (coordinating beneficiary) that declared itself as being a public body (in application form A2) must provide as a financial annex the "Public body declaration", fully completed, with a dated signature (form A3b).

In case LIFE proposals are missing one or more mandatory financial annexes the Commission will first send a message to the applicant indicating the annexes that are missing.

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

The applicant will have 5 working days to reply and provide any missing or incomplete annexes. In exceptional circumstances, the Commission may extend the deadline.

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

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

Step B – Financial Check:

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

The Commission will utilise all the information at its disposal to assess whether the applicant and the associated beneficiaries fulfil the selection and the exclusion criteria. On the basis of Article 202, a proposal will be rejected if the evaluator has strong evidence showing that it falls into any of the following situations:

- if there is information available to indicate that the coordinating beneficiary and/or one of its associated beneficiaries, contrary to the declaration for exclusion, are in one of the situations referred to in art. 106(1) and 107 of the Financial Regulation n° 966/2012 of 25 October 2012 (JO L 298 of 26/10/2012);
- the results of audits carried out by European Union Institutions in relation to the coordinating beneficiary and/ or one of its associated beneficiaries have clearly shown their inability to comply with the administrative rules regulating European Union grants and in particular those applicable to LIFE;
- the coordinating beneficiary has an unpaid debt owed to the Commission at the time of the submission of its application. The Commission will make this assessment based on a consultation of its "early warning system".

For private commercial and private non-commercial organisations:

- the auditor's report or auditor-certified balance sheet and profit and loss account provided with the project proposal has not given an "unqualified opinion" about the coordinating beneficiary's financial viability[7];
- on the basis of the financial viability test, it is concluded that the coordinating beneficiary does not have <u>the financial capacity</u> to cover its share of co-financing within the proposed project period;
- on the basis of the financial viability test, it is concluded that the coordinating beneficiary does not have <u>the capacity to manage</u> the financial amounts provided for in the proposal budget within the proposed project period;

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

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

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

1. the ratio "total grant requested divided by the number of project years" / "shareholders' equity" is lower than 1

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

2. the ratio "current assets" / "current liabilities" is higher than 1
3. the ratio "total debts" / "total assets" is lower than 0.8
4. there is a positive operational profit

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

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

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

4.7 ESTABLISHMENT OF THE "SHORT LIST" OF PROPOSALS

All proposals that have passed all phases of the Evaluation will be ranked on the basis of their scores. In cases of proposals with equal overall scores, priority will be given to proposals with a higher score on the comprehensiveness of approach criterion. The highest ranking proposal addressing each specific need will be "revised" (see following section).

National allocations will not be used in ranking proposals, however, the results of the evaluation of Preparatory projects under this call will be taken into account in determining remaining national allocations for subsequent evaluations of other types of action grants under the Environment sub-programme of the LIFE programme. In order to do so, for each proposal, the Member States to which the EU financial contribution will be allocated must be clearly identifiable in the proposal. This EU financial contribution is either allocated to the Member State in which the coordinating beneficiary is registered, or, in case of a trans-national proposal, to more than one Member State. In the latter case, the proportion of the EU financial contribution that needs to be allocated to a particular Member State is equivalent to the amount of the EU contribution requested by the partner(s) in that Member State.

Note that national allocations are not applicable for the Climate Action sub-programme.

The results of the evaluation of LIFE Preparatory projects under this call will also be taken into account when determining the 55% minimum threshold for "nature and biodiversity" projects under the Environment sub-programme of the LIFE programme.

4.8 REVISION OF PROJECTS

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

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

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

The Commission will send all revision questions and instructions to the coordinating beneficiary.

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

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

By the end of the revision phase, all projects retained are expected to be fully coherent and transparent, and in line with all technical and financial requirements of the LIFE Regulation and the General Conditions of the LIFE Model Grant Agreement. The applicants of the short-listed proposals will then be informed about the outcome of the revision phase and will be asked to provide 3 identical paper copies of the final revised proposals. At this stage, all commitments from associated beneficiaries/co-financers must be fully confirmed in the revised forms.

Applicants should not introduce any unilateral modifications at all to the revised proposal after the conclusion of the revision phase.

4.9 AWARD DECISION

After the formal endorsement of the Commission of the evaluation results, applicants will be officially informed by letter about the results of the evaluation of their proposals and, where appropriate, about the reasons for rejection. A copy of this letter will be sent to the relevant national LIFE contact point (see LIFE website).

In case any proposals are rejected or withdrawn during the revision phase or at any time prior to signing of the grant agreement, the rejected/withdrawn proposal will be replaced by the next proposal on the Short List that addresses the same specific need. Said replacement proposal will then be 'revised' as described above.

Any budget remaining at the conclusion of the award decision procedure will be re-assigned to the budget for other types of LIFE projects under the same sub-programme.