

LIFE PROGRAMME 2014-2020

What is it?

The LIFE programme is the EU's funding instrument for the environment and climate action from 2014 until 2020. The general objective of the programme is to contribute to the implementation, updating and development of EU environmental and climate policy and legislation by co-financing projects with European added value. The programme framework for the next four years will be defined by the LIFE multiannual work programme for 2014-2017.

The LIFE Programme shall in particular have the following general objectives:

- (a) to contribute to the shift towards a resource-efficient, low-carbon and climate- resilient economy, to the protection and improvement of the quality of the environment and to halting and reversing biodiversity loss, including the support of the Natura 2000 network and tackling the degradation of ecosystems;
- b) to improve the development, implementation and enforcement of Union environmental and climate policy and legislation, and to act as a catalyst for, and promote, the integration and mainstreaming of environmental and climate objectives into other Union policies and public and private sector practice, including by increasing the public and private sector's capacity;
- (c) to support better environmental and climate governance at all levels, including better involvement of civil society, NGOs and local actors;
- (d) to support the implementation of the 7th Environment Action Programme.

The Life programme is divided into two sub-programmes:

- (a) The sub-programme for Environment with three priority areas:
 - Environment and Resource Efficiency
 - Nature and Biodiversity
 - Environmental Governance and Information
- (b) The sub-programme for Climate Action with three priority areas:
 - Climate Change Mitigation
 - Climate Change Adaptation
 - Climate Governance and Information

Types of funding

1. Union funding may take the following legal forms:

- (a) Action grants (for projects);
- (b) Public procurement contracts;
- (c) Contributions to financial instruments in accordance with provisions on financial instruments under Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012, in particular Articles 139 and 140 thereof, and with operational requirements set out in specific Union acts;
- (d) Any other interventions needed for the purpose of achieving the general objectives set out in Article 3.

Action grants may finance the following projects:

- (a) pilot projects;
- (b) demonstration projects;
- (c) best practice projects;
- (d) integrated projects;
- (e) technical assistance projects;
- (f) capacity-building projects;
- (g) preparatory projects;
- (h) information, awareness, and dissemination projects;
- (i) any other projects needed for the purpose of achieving the general objectives .

Note: a), b), c) and h) type of projects are known as “traditional projects”.

There is also another type of funding specifically for Environmental and /or Climate Non Profit Making Organizations, which are the **Operating Grants**.

The financial envelope for the implementation of the LIFE Programme for the period from 2014 to 2020 is set at € 3.456 billion euro, 75% of which allocated to the environmental subprogramme. 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.

Why should I do it?

The LIFE programme will contribute to sustainable development and to the achievement of the objectives of the programme. On top of that, there will be € 3 billion euros to fund projects and to help meet those objectives.

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Who can apply?

Life Programme is open to the participation of all the **28 EU Member States or Associated Countries**. The programme shall be open to the participation of the following countries:

- (a) European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries which are parties to the Agreement on the European Economic Area (EEA);
- (b) candidate countries, potential candidates and acceding countries to the Union;
- (c) countries to which the European Neighbourhood Policy applies;
- (d) countries which have become members of the European Environmental Agency in accordance with Council Regulation (EC) No 933/1999 ⁽²⁴⁾.

Such participation shall be pursued in accordance with the conditions laid down in the respective bilateral or multilateral agreements establishing the general principles for those third countries' participation in Union programmes.

Entities that wish to apply for funding under **Operating Grants for NPOs** must be non-profit-making and independent environmental and/or climate non-governmental organisations. They must also be active at the European level (have activities and members in at least three EU Member States).

Eligibility criteria for participants and researchers

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

In the specific case of **capacity building projects**, a Member State shall be eligible for funding if it meets one of the following criteria:

1. During the first multiannual work programme, for funding up to and amount of €1.0 million euro:
 - (a) the Member State's average absorption level of its indicative national allocation for the years 2010, 2011 and 2012, as established under Article 6 of Regulation (EC) No 614/2007, is below 70 %;
 - (b) the Member State's GDP per capita in 2012 was below 90 % of the Union average;
 - (c) the Member State acceded to the Union after 1 January 2013.

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2. During the second multiannual work programme, for funding up to an amount of € 750.000 euro:
 - (a) the Member State's average absorption level of its indicative national allocation for the years 2014, 2015 and 2016, referred to in paragraph 5, is below 70 %;
 - (b) the Member State's average absorption level of its indicative national allocation for the years 2014, 2015 and 2016 has increased compared to the average absorption level for the years 2010, 2011 and 2012.

How can I apply?

Applicants must use LIFE 2014 application packages for the preparation of their proposals. Each application package contains full and detailed explanations with regard to eligibility, procedures, co-financing rates and all other relevant details. These can be downloaded on the Life Programme webpage, next to the calls. For "**Traditional**" projects, applicants may only use the **eProposal** tool to create and submit proposal(s). All other types of projects may use the **application forms** provided in the corresponding application package. Please note that the conditions in each document in each application package will be binding on the successful applicants, so please read them carefully. Member States may, on a voluntary basis, provide support to applicants and therefore invite applicants to let them see their draft proposals before a certain date which will be earlier than the formal deadline. Providing the draft proposal to the national authority that offers such help is not compulsory. For further details, please contact your National Contact Point.

When can I apply?

Proposals may be submitted when there is an open call for proposals.

How much funding can I expect?

The maximum co-financing rates for the projects shall be:

- (a) For the duration of the first multiannual work programme, up to 60 % of eligible costs for all projects, funded under both sub-programmes for Environment and Climate Action;
- (b) For the duration of the second multiannual work programme, up to 55 % of eligible costs for all projects, funded under both sub-programmes for Environment and Climate Action;
- (c) For the entire duration of the LIFE Programme:
 1. Up to 60% of eligible costs for integrated, technical assistance and preparatory type of projects;

2. Up to 60% of eligible costs for projects funded under the priority area Nature and Biodiversity in the sub programme for Environment;
3. Up to 75% of eligible cost for projects funded under the priority area Nature and Biodiversity in the subprogramme for Environment is applicable to projects that focus on concrete actions for priority habitats/species of the Bird and Habitat Directives. This higher financing rate will only be applied to projects allocating 50% or more of the total estimated cost for concrete conservation actions, to activities directly benefitting priority habitats or species.
4. Up to 100% of eligible costs for capacity building projects

(d) Eligibility costs shall include VAT Costs and staff costs.

e) If any of the beneficiaries are public bodies, it is important to be aware of the 2% rule: The sum of the public contributions as beneficiaries to the project budget must exceed by at least 2 % the sum of the salary costs charged to the project for public body employees who are not considered 'additional'. ('Additional' personnel includes all employees – permanent or temporary – of public bodies whose contracts or contract renewals: (1) start on or after the start date of the project or on or after the date of signature of the grant agreement by the Agency/Commission in case this date takes place before the project start date; (2) specifically second/assign them to the project.

f) Overhead amount: (also referred to as "indirect costs") are eligible at a flat rate, which will be fixed in the grant agreement as a percentage of the total eligible direct costs of the entire project, excluding long-term lease of land/one-off compensations for land use rights (and excluding the overheads themselves, since they are indirect costs). In accordance with Article II 19.3 of the General Conditions for the Model LIFE Grant Agreement this percentage may not exceed 7%.

Operating grants shall support certain operational and administrative costs of non-profit making entities which pursue an aim of general Union interest, are primarily active in the field of environment or climate action and are involved in the development, implementation and enforcement of Union policy and legislation. The maximum rate of Union co-financing for operating grants shall be 70 % of eligible costs.