LIFE+ Nature and Biodiversity

Guidelines for applicants 2011

The current guidelines apply to the preparation of project proposals to be submitted to the European Commission under *LIFE+ Nature and Biodiversity*. They are intended to help the applicant prepare the project proposal and fill in the application forms.

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1. Introduction to LIFE+

1.1 What is LIFE+?

LIFE+ is the European financial instrument for the environment, for the period from 1 January 2007 until 31 December 2013. The legal basis for LIFE+ is the ***Regulation (EC) No 614/2007 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 May 2007***[1].

LIFE+ covers both the operational expenditure of the Directorate-General Environment of the European Commission and the co-financing of projects. According to Article 6 of the LIFE+ Regulation, at least 78 % of the LIFE+ budgetary resources must be used for project action grants (= LIFE+ projects).

During the period 2007-13, the European Commission will launch one call for LIFE+ project proposals per year. The amount available for co-financing projects under the 2011 LIFE+ call for proposals has been set at EUR 267.431.506.

These guidelines for applicants only apply to this fifth call for LIFE+ project proposals ("LIFE+ 2011").

LIFE+ is open to public or private bodies, actors or institutions registered in the European Union. Project proposals can either be submitted by a single beneficiary or by a partnership which includes a coordinating beneficiary and one or several associated beneficiaries. They can be either national or transnational, but the actions must exclusively take place within the territory of the 27 Member States of the European Union.

[1] Regulation (EC) n° 614/2007 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 May 2007, published in the Official Journal of the European Union L149 of 9 June 2007, http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/oj/2007/l_149/l_14920070609en00010016.pdf

1.2 Priority actions and projects to be co-financed under LIFE+

LIFE+ aims at co-funding actions in the field of nature conservation (LIFE+ Nature and Biodiversity) as well as in other fields of the environment that are of European interest (LIFE+ Environment and Governance). A third component of LIFE+ aims specifically at co-funding information and communication activities for the environment (LIFE+ Information and Communication). More specifically, the following types of projects can be distinguished under LIFE+:

1. *LIFE+ Nature and Biodiversity*

- Best practice and/or demonstration projects contributing to the implementation of the objectives of the Birds and Habitats Directives (Council Directives 79/409 EEC and 92/43/EEC).
- Demonstration and/or innovation projects contributing to the implementation of the objectives of the Commission Communication COM (2006) 216 final: "*Halting the loss of Biodiversity by 2010 – and beyond*" and of the Commission Communication COM (2010) 4 final: *"Options for an EU vision and target for biodiversity beyond 2010".*

2. *LIFE+ Environment Policy and Governance*

- Demonstration and/or innovation projects related to any of the "*priority areas of action*" set out in the document "LIFE+ Environment Policy and Governance, Guidelines for applicants 2011".
- Projects contributing to the monitoring of the environmental status of forests within the European Union territory.

3. *LIFE+ Information and Communication*

- Communication and awareness raising campaigns related to the implementation, updating and development of European environmental policy and legislation set out in the document "LIFE+ Information and Communication, Guidelines for applicants 2011".
- Awareness raising campaigns for the prevention of forest fires and training for forest fire agents.

1.3 How, where and when to submit a proposal?

LIFE+ beneficiaries must submit their proposals to the competent national authority of the Member State in which the coordinating beneficiary is registered. The complete list of the names and contact addresses of the national authorities for LIFE+ for the 27 Member States can be found on the LIFE web site at http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/contact/nationalcontact/index.htm

National authorities must receive the proposals by **18 July 2011, 17 h 00 local time**.

The national authorities will then forward all LIFE+ project proposals to the Commission, to be received before the deadline of **9 September 2011, 17 h 00 Brussels local time**. The only address that national authorities shall use for submitting LIFE+ proposals to the European Commission is the contact address indicated in Annex 1. **Proposals sent directly by beneficiaries to the Commission will not be accepted**.

The proposal and all its obligatory annexes must be forwarded to the Commission on CD-ROM or DVD, in an electronic format. Project beneficiaries must use a separate CD-ROM/DVD for each individual LIFE+ project proposal. The full title of the proposal should be clearly labelled on the CD-ROM/DVD. The proposal itself must be submitted as **one pdf document** using the specific **application file downloadable from LIFE website.** The application forms contain the technical (A, B and C) and financial (F) forms. **Make sure that you use the most recent Acrobat Reader version.**

All annexes to the proposal (maps, mandatory administrative and financial documents related to the legal status of the coordinating beneficiary according to section 1.5 below, etc) must be submitted as separate documents and should be clearly labelled as such (filename). The annexed map files may be submitted in sizes A4 or A3.

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

Before submitting the proposals to the Commission, national authorities are strongly advised to check whether the CD-ROM/DVD can be opened and read, whether it contains all the required electronic files, and whether the application forms and files provided are correctly filled in and complete.

When filling in the application file, the applicants are invited to consult the "Frequently Asked Questions" section on LIFE website at http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/funding/faq.htm

1.4 How will LIFE+ projects be selected?

The LIFE Units of the Directorate-General Environment are responsible for the evaluation procedure. For a detailed description of the evaluation procedure, please refer to the *"Guide for the evaluation of LIFE+ project proposals 2011"*.

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 European Commission as the single contact point for all correspondence with the applicant during the evaluation procedure (<u>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</u>).

The individual grant agreements are expected to be signed in **June 2012** at the very latest (for a detailed timetable, see **Annex 2**).

The earliest possible starting date for projects is **1 June 2012**.

1.5 Administrative and financial information to be provided

The LIFE+ Regulation states that applicants must be public or private bodies, actors or institutions registered in the EU. This application guide categorises such applicants into three types of beneficiaries: (1) *public bodies*[2], (2) *private commercial organisations*[3] and (3) *private non-commercial organisations* (including NGOs)[4].

The term "public bodies" is defined as referring to national public authorities, regardless of their form of organisation – central, regional or local structure – or the various bodies 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 organisation stops its activities, its rights and obligations, liability and debts will be transferred to a public body. For a complete definition, please refer to the annex "Public body declaration".

All beneficiaries must show their legal status (by completing application forms A2 or A5) confirming that they are legally registered in the EU. In addition they must declare that they are not in any of the situations foreseen under Article 93(1) and 94 of the Financial Regulation (by signing the application form A3 or A4).

All coordinating beneficiaries that have declared themselves as being public bodies in their proposal (application form A2) must provide as a financial annex a declaration (the "Public body declaration") stating that the coordinating beneficiary is a public body, fully completed, with a dated signature.

In addition all coordinating beneficiaries other than *public bodies*, that is to say the beneficiary types (2) and (3), must provide, as annexes to their proposal, evidence that they comply with the financial selection criterion set out in the Article 176 of the Financial Regulation i.e. 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*".

Further details on how this criterion will be assessed are found in the *Guide for the evaluation of LIFE+ project proposals 2011.*

Therefore, all coordinating beneficiaries other than *public bodies* will have to provide the following administrative and financial documents as annexes to their LIFE+ proposal:

1. The most recent balance sheet and profit and loss account. This document must be annexed to the LIFE+ proposal as a scanned pdf file, printable in A4 paper format. Where the coordinating beneficiary does not yet have a balance sheet and profit and loss account, because the organisation has been only recently created, it must

[2] Including public institutions which for the further purposes of these Guides are considered as public bodies
[3] Including similar commercial actors which for the further purposes of these Guides are considered as private commercial organisations
[4] Including similar non-commercial actors which for the further purposes of these Guides are considered as private non-commercial organisations

provide a management plan (for at least 12 months in the future) with the financial data prepared in accordance with the standard required under national legislation.

2. Where the EU contribution requested exceeds 300.000 €, the most recent balance sheet and profit and loss account must either have an *independent audit report* certifying that they present a true and fair view of the coordinating beneficiary's financial situation <u>or</u> a *certification by an independent auditor* that the accounts give a true and fair view of the coordinating beneficiary's financial situation. This document must be annexed to the LIFE+ proposal as a scanned pdf file, printable in A4 paper format. In the case of a newly created organisation, the auditor's certificate provided is based on the management plan where the financial data are presented in accordance with relevant national provisions.

3. A "Simplified Financial Statement"; coordinating beneficiaries are required to fill in the Excel table which is part of the application package**.** This document must be duly filled in and must be annexed to the LIFE+ proposal as an Excel file.

It should be noted that the above annexes will be required by the Commission <u>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</u>.

1.6 General recommendations for all LIFE+ beneficiaries

The current chapter replies to some frequently asked questions on how to conceive a project proposal, applicable to all three strands of LIFE+. Specific guidelines and recommendation on how to fill in the technical and financial forms for LIFE+ Nature and Biodiversity follow in subsequent chapters.

1.6.1. 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 recommends to fill in the technical part of the proposal also or only in 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.

1.6.2. Who may submit a proposal?

A proposal may be submitted by any legal person registered in the European Union, i.e. (1) public bodies, (2) private commercial organisations and (3) private non-commercial organisations (including NGOs).

1.6.3. Who may participate in a project?

Once a proposal has been accepted for co-funding, the **coordinating beneficiary** will become 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 there are any – see below). The coordinating beneficiary must be directly involved in the technical implementation of the project and in the dissemination of the project results.

The coordinating beneficiary must bear part of the project costs and must thus contribute financially to the project budget. It cannot therefore be reimbursed for 100% of the costs that it incurs. Furthermore it cannot act, in the context of the project, as a sub-contractor to one of its associated beneficiaries.

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

An **associated beneficiary** must be legally registered in the European Union. It shall 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 cannot act, in the context of the project, as a sub-contractor to the coordinating beneficiary or to other associated beneficiaries. Furthermore it must provide the beneficiary with all the necessary documents required for the reporting to the Commission.

Projects involving partnerships between beneficiaries are only encouraged when this partnership brings an added value to the project. A meaningful collaboration can be expected for instance when the partnership strengthens the feasibility or the demonstration character of the proposal, its European added value and/or the transferability of its results and lessons learnt.

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.

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 regional development agencies.

A **project co-financier** 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.

LIFE+ Nature and Biodiversity proposals involving business-sector co-financing will be favourably considered during the evaluation process.

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 and, even if they are, Article 8 of the Common Provisions still has to be respected (in particular paragraph 8.4 on the selection of sub-contractors).

For a more detailed description of the respective rules related to the coordinating beneficiary, associated beneficiaries, co-financiers and subcontractors, please refer to Articles 3 to 8 of the Common Provisions applicable to LIFE+ projects.

1.6.4. What is the optimal budget for a LIFE+ project?

There is no fixed minimum size for project budgets. Beneficiaries should however be aware that the European Commission favours the co-financing of large, ambitious LIFE+ proposals with a substantial budget. Historically, the average grant awarded has been in excess of 1 million €.

When preparing a project budget, beneficiaries should also take into account the maximum ceilings for the LIFE+ allocation per Member State: a project proposal from one single Member State that requests an EU financial contribution higher than the national allocation for that Member State may have a reduced probability of being selected for LIFE+ co-funding (for the national allocations see the *Guide for the evaluation LIFE+ project proposals 2011*).

1.6.5. What is the maximum rate of EU co-financing under LIFE+?

The maximum EU co-financing rate for LIFE+ projects is 50% of the total eligible project costs.

By way of exception, a co-financing rate of up to 75% of the total eligible costs may be granted to *LIFE+ Nature* proposals that focus on concrete conservation actions for **priority** species or habitat types of the Birds and Habitats Directives.

1.6.6. How much should project beneficiaries contribute to the project budget?

The coordinating beneficiary and (if applicable) any associated beneficiaries are expected to provide a reasonable financial contribution to the project budget. A beneficiary's financial contribution is considered as a proof of its financial 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 be rejected in the project selection round if the financial contribution of any of the beneficiaries to the proposal budget is 0 €.

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 of their staff charged to the project.

Finally, it is expected that all beneficiaries of a project receive a share of the EU financial contribution that is proportionate to the costs that they are expected to incur. Where the financial contribution of a beneficiary would be equal or superior to the costs that it would incur, this may indicate that the actions of this beneficiary would have been carried out anyway, even without LIFE+ co-financing. Such actions may therefore be deleted from the project during revision.

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

When preparing the project's time planning, beneficiaries should be aware that the expected date of the signature of the grant agreements for the LIFE+ 2011 projects will be before mid-2012. Therefore, the earliest possible starting date for these projects is **1 June 2012**. 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. Most projects last for 2-5 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.

1.6.8. Where can a LIFE+ proposal take place?

Proposals submitted under the 2011 call may only take place on the territory of the European Union Member States. Actions are not allowed to take place and costs are not allowed to be incurred outside the EU territory. There are however 2 exceptions to this rule:

- a) a limited amount of travel and subsistence costs incurred outside the EU for the attendance of conferences, workshops or similar events, provided that these are useful to achieve the project objectives, and have been specifically foreseen in the proposal or have specifically been approved by the Commission in advance;
- b) any action to be carried out outside the EU which is necessary to secure reaching the project objectives in the EU. The action will have to provide direct added value in one or more of the Member States for the implementation, updating or development of EU environmental legislation. The applicant shall provide all necessary evidence to prove that these actions outside the EU are essential for the success of the project. To be eligible, these actions must be carried out directly by one of the project beneficiaries or sub-contracted to third parties. Associated beneficiaries legally registered in non-EU countries are not accepted in the project. However, free of charge support from entities established in non-EU countries is possible provided it is functional to the project objectives.

1.6.9. Which project beneficiary 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 subcontractor under its direct control. 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 for the beneficiaries 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).

It is important to note that if an agency associated with the beneficiary carries out the technical and/or financial administration of the project, this body **MUST** be an associated beneficiary of the project in order for its costs to be eligible for co-financing.

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

Please refer to the 'Financial application forms' section of this guide, 'Form F1 – Direct personnel costs'.

1.6.11. Outsourcing of project activities

The beneficiaries should have the technical and financial 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 (also including any outsourcing of the project management) 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 125.000 €, private beneficiaries shall 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.

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

1.6.12. 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 nature protection. A transnational proposal should therefore be submitted only if the project proposal provides sufficient arguments for an added value of the transnational approach. If such evidence can be provided, the proposal will be considered for a higher scoring in the project selection process and will therefore have a higher chance of being selected for co-funding (see the *Guide for the evaluation LIFE+ project proposals 2011*).

When preparing a transnational proposal, the beneficiaries must clearly determine the share of the project costs to be spent by them in each of the EU Member States.

1.6.13. How voluminous should a LIFE+ proposal be?

A proposal should be as concise and clear as possible. Avoid voluminous proposals and do not provide excessively detailed descriptions of project areas, environmental technologies, lists of species, etc. The technical application forms of a LIFE+ proposal (i.e. the LIFE+ application forms, part B and C) should normally not encompass more than 50 pages.

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.

1.6.14. Recurring activities are ineligible for LIFE+ funding

The LIFE+ Regulation (Article 3.2) does not allow the financing of recurring activities.

See chapter 2 (section 2.2.a. or 2.3.a.) of the present guidelines for further details and for possible exceptions.

Some flexibility in respect to recurring activities for projects developing and implementing EU objectives relating to broad based, harmonised, comprehensive and long-term monitoring of forests and environmental interactions, that avoid the financing of day to day operations, may be applied.

1.6.15. Limited research activities are eligible

Whereas research activities are being funded in the EU under the Seventh Framework Programme for research, technological development and demonstration activities, very 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 and intrinsically related to the project's objectives and the beneficiary shall have to explain in detail that the proper implementation of the project relies on these research activities, showing that the existing scientific basis is insufficient. In such case, scientific publications are considered important deliverables of the project.

1.6.16. Complementarity with other EU funding instruments must be ensured

According to Article 9 of the LIFE+ Regulation, LIFE+ may not finance any "measures which fall within the eligibility criteria and main scope of, or receive assistance for the same purpose from, other Community financial instruments". 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 seventh Research Framework Programme.

It is thus essential that, prior to submitting their proposal to the European Commission, beneficiaries check thoroughly that the actions proposed under their project **in practice cannot be and are not funded** through other EU funds. Beneficiaries will be required to sign a declaration to this effect.

The beneficiaries must inform the European 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 operating grants from LIFE+ (or other EU programmes) with respect to the on-going operations.

In addition, at the project revision stage, the national authority may also be required to indicate the steps taken to ensure the coordination and complementarity of LIFE+ funding with other EU financial instruments.

1.6.17. Role of national annual priorities

Article 6 of the LIFE+ Regulation allows Member States to submit national annual priorities – for 2011 several Member States have taken advantage of this possibility.

Proposals submitted to the Commission may receive an enhanced score during the evaluation process which may play a role in the proposal's success when the national indicative allocations are to be fulfilled (see the *Guide for the evaluation of LIFE+ project proposals 2011*). On the other hand, projects that do not meet a Member State's national annual priorities may also be selected on quality grounds alone.

National annual priorities can be viewed at the following web address:

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/funding/lifeplus2011/call/index.htm#nap

1.7 Additional elements to be considered when preparing the proposal

Efforts for reducing the project's "carbon footprint": Please explain how you intend to ensure that the "carbon footprint" of your project remains as low as it 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 expenses for offsetting greenhouse gas emissions will not be considered as eligible costs.

For all proposals aimed at **direct or indirect tourism related sectors** or activities, we invite applicants to carefully consider the Commission Communication COM(2010) 352 of 30/6/2010 "Europe, the world's No 1 tourist destination - a new political framework for tourism in Europe"[5] and to describe if and how their project is likely to support any of the objectives set out in this Communication.

[5] http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/tourism/files/communications/communication2010_en.pdf

1.8 Personal Data Protection Clause

The personal data supplied with your proposal, notably the name, address and other contact information of the beneficiaries and co-financiers, will be placed in a database named ESAP that will be made available to the EU Institutions, as well as to a team of external evaluators who are bound by a confidentiality agreement. ESAP is used exclusively to manage the evaluation of LIFE+ proposals.

The same personal data of successful projects will be transferred to another database, BUTLER, which will be made available to the EU Institutions and to an external monitoring team 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 sub-contractors. You will notably have the right to access data concerning you in our possession and to request corrections.

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.

2. LIFE+ Nature and Biodiversity

2.1 What is LIFE+ Nature and Biodiversity?

These guidelines concern uniquely ***LIFE+ Nature & Biodiversity***.

LIFE+ Nature & Biodiversity aims specifically at contributing to the implementation of EU policy and legislation on nature and biodiversity. Furthermore, actions financed must have a European added value and be complementary to those actions that can be financed under other EU funds during the period 2007-2013. There are two distinct categories of projects: ***LIFE+ Nature*** projects and ***LIFE+ Biodiversity*** projects.

A proposal must either be a ***LIFE+ Nature*** or a ***LIFE+ Biodiversity*** project. **It cannot be a mixture of both.**

LIFE+ Nature projects contribute to the **implementation of the Birds and/or Habitats Directives**[6], including at local and regional level, and support the further development and implementation of the *Natura 2000* network, including coastal and marine habitats and species (Article 4.2 and Annex II.1 of the LIFE+ Regulation). The focus is on long-term sustainable investments in *Natura 2000* sites and on the conservation of species and habitats targeted by these Directives. LIFE+ Nature projects must be ***best practice*** or ***demonstration*** projects (Article 3.2a of the LIFE+ Regulation).

LIFE+ Biodiversity projects contribute to the **implementation of the objectives of Commission Communication "Halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010 – and beyond"**[7] and of the **Commission Communication "Options for an EU vision and target for biodiversity beyond 2010"**[8].LIFE+ Biodiversity projects must be ***demonstration*** or ***innovation*** projects (Article 3.2b of the LIFE+ Regulation). They are different from LIFE+ Nature projects insofar as their focus is on the demonstration of measures and practices that contribute to halting the loss of biodiversity on the territory of the Member States, other than those related to the implementation of the objectives of the Birds and Habitats Directives. All biodiversity projects, whether innovative or demonstration, must have as an **integral part** of their project the evaluation and active dissemination of the results and lessons learnt during the project.

A nature conservation project that targets **exclusively** species/habitats of the Birds / Habitats Directives is a *LIFE+ Nature* project (provided it meets the various

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[6] Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the conservation of wild birds, http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/legislation/birdsdirective/index_en.htm

Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild flora and fauna http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/legislation/habitatsdirective/index_en.htm,

[7] Communication from the Commission COM (2006) 216 final "Halting the loss of Biodiversity by 2010 – and beyond", http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/biodiversity/comm2006/index_en.htm

[8] COM (2010) 4 Final - Options for an EU vision and target for biodiversity beyond 2010, http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/biodiversity/policy/pdf/communication_2010_0004.pdf

requirements specified in this document). In all other cases, it can only be a *LIFE+ Biodiversity* project (provided it meets the various requirements specified in this document), and must therefore be an innovative / demonstration project.

The only exception to this rule is that applicants may submit a LIFE+ Biodiversity project proposal that targets exclusively **species** covered by the Birds / Habitats Directives in the case where it is a demonstration of an innovative site-related conservation measure not involving long-term investments, and that takes place outside a *Natura 2000* site.

LIFE+ Biodiversity projects taking place within *Natura 2000* areas should not have, as a primary goal, conservation management of species/habitats covered by the EU Birds and Habitats Directives. Should this be the case, **the project should be classified as a LIFE+ Nature project**. It is however acceptable that a LIFE+ Biodiversity project demonstrating innovative conservation techniques targets, **amongst others**, species and habitats covered by the Birds and Habitats Directive.

The table below lists the key differences between the two sorts of project.

LIFE+ Nature	LIFE+ Biodiversity
exclusively in relation to the objectives of the Birds and Habitats Directives	not restricted to the Birds and Habitats Directives, but is in relation to the Commission Communications "Halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010 – and beyond"" and "Options for an EU vision and target for biodiversity beyond 2010"
best practice and/or demonstration	demonstration and/or innovation
long-term, sustainable conservation measures and investments in *Natura 2000* sites, species and habitats	demonstration of the feasibility of measures in favour of biodiversity monitoring, evaluation and active dissemination of these measures are an integral part of the project
land purchase and long-term lease or compensation are eligible	only short term lease or compensation are eligible

LIFE+ Nature and LIFE+ Biodiversity projects should be primarily focussed on nature protection and/or on halting the loss of biodiversity. A project that may have a positive but *secondary* impact on nature and biodiversity and whose main objective is in relation to another environmental theme (e.g. water quality) should not be submitted under *LIFE+ Nature and Biodiversity* (see the guidelines for applicants for *LIFE+ Environment Policy and Governance* to see whether the project may be eligible under this other strand of LIFE+).
A project on nature protection and/or on halting the loss of biodiversity that is essentially targeting awareness raising campaigns should be submitted under *LIFE+ Information and Communication*. The EC would, in particular, be interested to receive under LIFE+ Information and Communication, proposals that compile the techniques used, results and lessons learnt from a significant number of previous LIFE projects for a specific theme/habitat/species or group of habitats/species (e.g. rivers, bogs, bats) and actively transfer them to the corresponding key stakeholders that could

usefully implement these techniques. The Commission would also welcome under *LIFE+ Information and Communication* projects aimed at:

1. Launching national public campaigns to promote *Natura 2000*;
2. Integrating the concept of Ecosystems services in private companies management or in public spending in particular in connection to Green Public Procurement;
3. The promotion of Green Infrastructure by explaining it better to citizens;
4. The implementation of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive with specific reference to the way the evaluation of incidence is carried out.

LIFE+ Biodiversity should not be interpreted as an alternative to the restrictions imposed under LIFE+ Nature and its focus on *Natura 2000*. The EU network of protected areas is still the major EU contribution in our fight against the loss of biodiversity. Within the classic LIFE+ Nature projects most of the priorities listed in the Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP)[9] may be effectively addressed: e.g. invasive alien species through control and eradication in and around *Natura 2000* sites, green infrastructures through the connectivity dimension of the network, ecosystem services like flood protection, improving water quality etc. through nature conservation activities resulting in the preservation or enhancement of these functions for a site or for the whole network in a region.

The most appropriate use of LIFE+ Biodiversity would require proposals that address the BAP priorities in an innovative way exploring sectors and processes that have not been the classic target of LIFE + Nature projects.

In line with the EU Business and Biodiversity Platform[10], the Commission welcomes projects submitted by business stakeholders or in which business stakeholders are involved, aimed at integrating biodiversity concerns into their planning or functioning.

To help applicants to better understand what type of project proposals the EC would welcome we have developed the lists below.

[9] EU Biodiversity Action Plan, http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/biodiversity/comm2006/pdf/sec_2006_621.pdf

[10] EU Business and Biodiversity Platform, http://ec.europa.eu/environment/biodiversity/business/index_en.html

Indicative list of themes for LIFE+ Nature and Biodiversity projects

In this section applicants will find a non-exhaustive list of themes for which the Commission would welcome receiving proposals. This does not exclude the possibility of submitting proposals for themes that are not listed here, but falling under the general remit and objectives of LIFE+ Nature and Biodiversity. For further details, please refer to the explanatory Annex no.4.

LIFE+ Nature

1. Projects aimed at the direct conservation of habitats and species covered by the Habitats and Birds Directives and, in particular, supporting the management and restoration of *Natura 2000*. These are the classic LIFE+ Nature projects (site or species related) that will remain the main axe of LIFE+ Nature financing. Ex-situ actions are also possible if justified.
2. Projects for improving the ecological coherence/connectivity of the *Natura 2000* network (Green Infrastructure projects)
3. Projects aimed at fulfilling the obligations deriving from Article 8 (1) and 8 (2) of the Habitats Directive (Article 8 projects)
4. Projects aimed at the preparation and planning for the designation of new marine *Natura 2000* sites in territorial or off-shore waters and/or the extension of existing marine sites (Marine site designation projects)
5. Projects for the support and development of surveillance of the conservation status of habitats and species deriving from Article 11 of the Habitats Directive (Article 11 projects)
6. Projects for the control and eradication of invasive alien species
7. Projects aimed at developing national/regional management and restoration programmes for *Natura 2000* (*Natura 2000* management and restoration programme projects)

Note: Data from past LIFE funding show that there are relatively few proposals addressing the direct conservation of a rather large part of the biodiversity covered by the Habitats Directive. For example arthropods and mollusc species are seldom the specific target of LIFE+ Nature projects. Applicants are invited to consider this aspect when preparing their proposals.

LIFE+ Biodiversity

1. Projects targeting threatened species that are not included in the annexes of the Habitats Directive but that have a status of "endangered" or worse in the available European Red Lists (**http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/conservation/species/redlist/index_en.htm**) or in the IUCN Red List for those species that are not covered by the European Red Lists.
2. Projects for the implementation of river basin management plans[11], or addressing marine regions, for the implementation of measures to guarantee a Good environmental status. Note: the main focus of such proposals **must be biodiversity** (otherwise such proposals should be submitted under the LIFE+ Environment Policy and Governance strand).
3. Projects to test fisheries management measures in line with the requirements of the Marine Strategy Directive[12] and technical measures to reduce by-catch of species which are not commercially exploited. Note: the main focus of such proposals **must be biodiversity** (otherwise such proposals should be submitted under the LIFE+ Environment Policy and Governance strand).
4. Projects addressing ecosystem functions and services. The focus of LIFE-Nature has been, until now, on the conservation of habitats and species, for themselves and not for the functions and the services they deliver to society.
5. Projects addressing biodiversity and soil. The Commission welcomes projects aiming at increasing the protection of soil biodiversity and its many ecological functions.
6. Projects for the control and eradication of invasive alien species.

[11] Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2000 establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2000:327:0001:0072:EN:PDF

[12] Directive 2000//56/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 June 2008 establishing a framework for Community action in the field of marine environmental policy http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2008:164:0019:0040:EN:PDF

2.2 LIFE+ Nature

2.2.a. General principles of LIFE+ Nature funding

General scope

LIFE+ Nature projects aim to improve the conservation status of species / habitats of the Birds / Habitats Directives; the species and habitats targeted must be listed in the annexes of the EU Birds and Habitats Directives as follows:

Site-based actions:

- Bird species targeted by site-based actions must be listed in Annex I of the Birds Directive or be regularly occurring migratory bird species.
- Any habitat types / species (other than bird species) targeted must be listed in Annexes I or II of the Habitats Directive.

Species-based (i.e. not site-based) actions:

- Bird species targeted must be listed in Annex I or II of the Birds Directive or be regularly occurring migratory bird species.
- Any species (other than bird species) targeted must be listed in Annexes II, IV and/or V of the Habitats Directive.

Geographic scope

LIFE+ Nature projects must exclusively take place on the terrestrial and/or marine territory of the EU Member States where the EU Birds and Habitats Directives apply[13] (see section 1.6.8. for possible exceptions).

Best practice and/or demonstration

LIFE+ Nature projects must either be best-practice or demonstration projects.

A "**best practice**" **project** applies appropriate, cost-effective, state-of-the-art techniques and methods for the conservation of species/habitats targeted, taking into account the specific context of the project and its sites. Testing and evaluating best practice techniques and methods should not be part of the project as they are already state-of-the-art (monitoring the impact of the project actions is nevertheless obligatory).

A **"demonstration" project** puts into practice, tests, evaluates and disseminates actions/methodologies that are to some degree new or unfamiliar in the project's specific context (geographical, ecological, socio-economical …), and that **should be more widely applied** elsewhere in similar circumstances. The project must therefore be designed right from the start to demonstrate whether the techniques and methods used work or not in the project's context (geographical, ecological, socio-economical,…). Demonstration projects may therefore also have a higher added value if they are taking place on a national or transnational level, rather than on a local scale.

[13] Note that these two Directives do not apply to the French Overseas Departments (DOMs), and therefore LIFE+ Nature projects in the DOMs are not eligible

Monitoring, evaluation and active dissemination of the main project results and/or lessons learnt are integral parts of the project and its aftermath. A demonstration project therefore ultimately aims to encourage other stakeholders to use the techniques and methods demonstrated in the project. Given the time required in many cases for restoration actions to have a measurable impact, it is recognised that the evaluation and dissemination (transfer) of the results may need to continue well after the end of the project.

Recurring actions cannot be financed

The LIFE+ Regulation (Article 3.2) does not allow the financing of recurring activities.

Any **recurring** monitoring or management action that was already carried out prior to the start of the project and/or that needs to be continued after the end of the project (at the same level of intensity, using the same techniques and material…) cannot be included in the *LIFE+ Nature* proposal budget. For example, any recurring site surveillance, annual mowing or long-term monitoring actions (other than to evaluate the impact of the project) are in principle ineligible[14].

For *LIFE+ Nature*, investments necessary to *facilitate recurrent management* (e.g. the purchase of grazing animals and related infrastructure or machinery) may be fully eligible for funding. In such cases, however, the costs related to the use of this equipment remain, as above, ineligible as they concern recurring activities.

Also by way of exception, *recurring actions with a clear demonstration* value may be considered as eligible for funding. However, in such cases, the proposal must clearly explain the demonstration character.

Finally, where a necessary recurrent concrete conservation action is not already taking place, an action may be proposed to set it in place and implement it for a trial period not exceeding 1/2 of the total duration of the project. The beneficiary responsible for this action must also explicitly undertake to continue it during the project and after its end at his own cost (or else provide an equivalent undertaking from another organisation). Should the recurrent action not be continued after the end of the trial period then all related costs will be ineligible (unless clear evidence can be provided that the measure in question has turned out in practice to be inappropriate).

Projects must have at least 25% of their budget earmarked for concrete conservation actions

At least **25%** of the provisional budget of *LIFE+ Nature* projects must concern "concrete conservation" actions. In this context, *"concrete conservation"* actions are those that *directly improve* (or slow/halt/reverse the decline of) *the conservation status* of the species and habitat types targeted.

Preparatory actions (e.g. planning and preparation of the concrete conservation actions) and land purchase / lease / compensation payments count towards this 25% *insofar as they are directly necessary for the execution of concrete actions during the project's lifetime*. Any investments necessary to facilitate recurring management (see above) are also considered as concrete actions.

[14] Where a proposal includes actions that would normally be considered as recurring (e.g. mowing), the applicant must explain in detail why this is a restoration action and not a recurrent action.

Such actions must be clearly identifiable (i.e. must be 100% concrete conservation and not contain parts that are not).

Monitoring of reintroduced species will only be considered as concrete if it can re-direct the course of the reintroduction action.

Legal protection will only be considered as a concrete conservation action if it is fully achieved within the project duration.

Actions that aim to influence the behaviour of key stakeholders (e.g. farmers, hunters, fishermen, visitors) so as to indirectly benefit the site/species/habitats targeted, may only be considered as concrete conservation actions:

- if the inappropriate behaviour of the stakeholders in question is an important threat to the site/species/habitat targeted;
- if the action has as its main objective changing the behaviour of specified category of stakeholder in a specified way that will clearly benefit the habitat/species in a specified way:
- if the behaviour in question is foreseen to change during the project duration
- if this action is sufficiently quantified (no of persons reached by the action, % whose behaviour will be favourably changed during the project, estimation if possible of favourable impact on the species/habitat targeted, …);
- if this change is explicitly monitored by the project to check the results.

Visitor management actions (e.g. fences, trails) will only be considered as concrete conservation actions if the proposal can show that the visitors already directly have a negative impact on the conservation status of the habitats/species targeted.

It is strongly advised that *LIFE+ Nature* projects include *significantly more* than 25% concrete conservation actions. During the evaluation of the proposal, certain actions may be considered ineligible and removed from the project. Should the percentage of concrete actions fall under 25%, then the whole project may be rejected for that reason.

LIFE+ Nature proposals involving few or no concrete actions will thus generally be considered ineligible. There are however a few <u>exceptions</u> to this rule:

- **Article 8 projects:** Projects aimed at fulfilling the obligations deriving from Article 8 (1) and 8 (2) of the Habitats Directive. Such projects shall aim at identifying at national level (*i.e. one proposal per Member State presented by the national competent authority as coordinating beneficiary*) the specific needs for EU co-financing which they consider necessary to meet their obligations pursuant to Article 6(1) of the Habitats Directive, as well as identifying the measures for which co-financing is sought, that they consider essential for the maintenance or re-establishment at a favourable conservation status of the priority natural habitat types and priority species, as well as estimating the total costs arising from these measures. These projects may also cover the identification of needs for sites hosting non-priority habitats and species. These projects shall, ideally, last not more than 18/24 months. These projects shall include as part of its actions the formal submission to the EC of the estimates and the proposed measures. See also Annex 4.

- ***Natura 2000* management and restoration programme projects:** Projects aimed at developing national/regional financing programmes for *Natura 2000*. It is expected that such programs would be mostly set up by the authorities that are responsible for the management and restoration of the network (national and/or regional authorities). In exceptional cases, projects could also be prepared by NGOs, provided they are directly responsible to manage a significant number of sites. For further details on such *Natura 2000* programmes please refer to Annex 4.

  The development of such programmes may also be part of a larger project including classical conservation actions on one or more sites or species. In those cases the budget allocated to the programme development will not be considered for the verification of the 25% concrete actions rules.

  A project for the development of a *Natura 2000* management and restoration programme will only be considered if there is strong evidence that the programme will be at least partly implemented during or directly after the end of the LIFE+ project. For this purpose particular care should be given to the "After LIFE" plan provided with the proposal.

- **Marine site designation projects:** Projects for inventories and planning for the designation of new marine *Natura 2000* sites (either offshore or in territorial waters) or their extension do not need to include concrete conservation actions (for a definition of the term "offshore" within the context of *Natura 2000* marine sites please refer to page 7 and to section 2.6 of the document "Guidelines for the establishment of the *Natura 2000* network in the marine environment" - **http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/marine/docs/marine_guidelines.pdf**). Any such proposal must, however, include a commitment from the Competent Ministry/Authority to designate the site(s) concerned as *Natura 2000* sites before the end of the project and **the Competent Authority must be a beneficiary of the project** (coordinating or associated beneficiary). This paragraph also applies to marine extensions of existing coastal sites. Inventories for extending or designating additional terrestrial sites of marine/coastal species will not be considered.

- **Article 11 projects:** Life+ Nature projects for the support and/or the further development of the surveillance of the conservation status of natural habitats and species covered by the Birds and Habitats Directives (in the sense of Article 11 of the Habitats Directive) do not have to include concrete conservation actions. In any such cases, **the Competent Authority in charge of the Article 11 monitoring must be a beneficiary of the project** (coordinating or associated beneficiary). Proposals for routine monitoring or for merely local improvement in monitoring will not be considered as qualifying for this exception.

Long term sustainability of the project and its actions

LIFE+ Nature projects will often represent a considerable investment, and the Commission attaches great importance to the long term sustainability of these investments. For this reason, 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 after the end of the project. This should be built into the proposal. This aspect will be carefully checked during the evaluation process.

Any investments regarding land purchase, one-off compensation payments, long-term lease, land management and/or land restoration shall normally be restricted to land that is located within the existing *Natura 2000* network of sites. This criterion will be strictly applied in all those cases where the areas concerned would qualify for *Natura 2000* designation. The following **exceptions** may however be allowed:

- Investments outside existing *Natura 2000* sites may be considered as eligible for funding if the beneficiary can demonstrate that the area clearly does not yet qualify for *Natura 2000* designation AND if a commitment to designate the sites concerned before the end of the project is provided by the competent nature conservation authority. Where such commitments are necessary, this authority must be an active beneficiary of the project (either coordinating or associated beneficiary).
- Where the creation of corridors or "stepping stones" between existing *Natura 2000* sites is foreseen, investments may be considered on areas that will not be designated under *Natura 2000*. In such cases, evidence must be provided that the investments foreseen contribute to an improvement of the "ecological coherence of the *Natura 2000* network". A guarantee must also be provided for the sustainability of these investments, in the form of a commitment for giving these sites **the most appropriate protection status** before the end of the project. Note also that any such actions will only be accepted where the national *Natura 2000* network of sites is considered as sufficient for the species/habitats targeted by the project.

The eligibility of conservation actions for species listed in **Annex IV** of the Habitats Directive (that are not listed in Annex II) is not dependant on the *Natura 2000* status of the areas concerned. However, the long-term sustainability of any such investments (whether inside or outside *Natura 2000*) will have to be secured by an appropriate legal national/regional conservation status of these areas, to be achieved at the latest by the end date of the project. Land purchase is not possible in this context.

Maximum co-financing rates

LIFE+ Nature projects are co-financed by the EU at a maximum rate of 50% of their eligible costs (Article 5.3 of the LIFE+ Regulation).

By way of exception, a maximum co-financing rate of 75% is applicable to *LIFE+ Nature* projects that focus on priority habitats/species of the Birds and Habitats Directives as follows:

- 50% maximum for all projects investing less than 30% of the total cost estimated for concrete conservation, for activities directly benefitting priority habitats or species;

- 60% maximum for all projects investing between 30% and 50% of the total estimated cost for concrete conservation, for activities directly benefitting priority habitats or species;

- 75% maximum for all projects investing more than 50% of the total estimated cost for concrete conservation, for activities directly benefitting priority habitats or species.

The applicant shall identify in a clear way all actions and the corresponding costs they consider as benefitting priority habitats or species. For this purpose it is extremely important that the proposal includes complete and correct information on the species and habitats targeted by each action. The higher percentages (i.e. 60 or 75%) will only be granted to projects for which clear and convincing details have been given, allowing the EC to verify the eligibility of the requested rate.

Priority habitat types and priority species of the Habitats Directive are those marked by an asterisk in Annexes I or II of this Directive. If you have any doubts as to whether a habitat is a priority habitat, you are advised to consult the Interpretation Manual of EU Habitats:

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/legislation/habitatsdirective/docs/2007_07_im.pdf

Bird species considered as "priority for funding under LIFE+" are those that appear in the following list:

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/conservation/wildbirds/action_plans/index_en.htm

2.2.b. How to conceive a *LIFE+ Nature* project proposal?

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

- Preparatory actions,
- Land purchase/lease of land and/or compensation payment for use rights,
- Concrete conservation actions,
- Monitoring of the impact of the project actions (obligatory if there are concrete conservation actions),
- Communication and dissemination actions (obligatory),
- Project management and monitoring of project progress (obligatory).

Preparatory actions

As a general principle, all preparatory actions must produce practical recommendations and/or information which can be implemented (either during the project or after the project) and be used without requiring further preparatory work. Furthermore, where preparatory actions do not lead to direct implementation during the project, the proposal must provide a sufficient set of explanations, commitments and guarantees to show that their full implementation after the project is effectively ensured. Most projects include preparatory actions. Projects may not include preparatory actions that have been fully completed prior to the start of the project.

In general, and amongst others, preparatory actions:

- should not be research actions, unless they are critically needed for the project implementation; in such case, the studies and publications resulted from the research shall constitute a deliverable of the project,
- should not be inventories of new or existing *Natura 2000* sites (unless they are new marine sites),
- should be of limited duration (i.e. should be significantly shorter than the project duration),
- should be clearly related to the objective(s) of the project.

Preparatory actions may include (this is not an exhaustive list):

- Actions preparatory to the concrete conservation actions of the project (technical planning, permit procedures, stakeholder consultations, etc.);
- Drafting *Natura 2000* site management plans;
- Developing conservation action plans for species/habitat types of the Birds and Habitats Directives;
- Preliminary studies required to improve the ecological coherency and connectivity of the *Natura 2000* network.

Where management plans, action plans or other similar plans are drafted or modified in the framework of a *LIFE+ Nature* project, they must become legally operational before the end of the project. Therefore in those Member States where a procedure for their legal adoption and/or approval exists, this procedure must be completed before the end of the project otherwise the related expenses will be ineligible. Applicants are therefore advised not to include actions to develop such plans unless they are **certain** that they will be legally operational before the end of the project. Please include a timetable showing how and when they will become legally operational.

Land purchase/lease of land and/or compensation payment for use rights

This includes:

- the purchase of land and associated costs (e.g. notary expenses, taxes, etc.);
- the long-term lease of land and associated costs;
- one-off land use compensation payments and associated costs.

(Note: short term lease and/or compensation payments are possible but only for the demonstration of innovative actions - see below)

Land purchase, long-term lease and/or one-off compensation payments for land uses are only possible for *LIFE+ Nature* projects. The eligibility of any such costs is subject to the following conditions. The applicant must address each of these conditions in his proposal, explaining how each condition is met or will be met during the project.

1. The land purchase must be clearly related to the objectives of the project.
2. The purchase of land shall normally be restricted to lands that are located within an existing *Natura 2000* site.
3. The land purchase would contribute to maintaining or restoring the integrity of a *Natura 2000* site.
4. The purchase is the only or most effective way of achieving the desired conservation outcome.
5. The land purchased is reserved in the long-term for uses consistent with the implementation of the EU Birds and Habitats Directives. The beneficiaries must ensure that the sales contract and/or entry in the land register includes a guarantee that the land is assigned definitively (without time limitation) to nature conservation purposes consistent with the objectives of the EU Birds and Habitats Directives. Where both possibilities exist (sales contract and land registry entry), the beneficiaries must use that which offers the strongest long-term protection. Note that with the final report, the beneficiaries will have to submit a copy of the sales contract and/or entry in the land register including the above mentioned guarantee. Should they fail to provide such documents, the corresponding land purchase costs and associated costs will be considered ineligible. For countries where it would be illegal to include such a guarantee both in the land register and in the sale contract, the Commission may accept an equivalent guarantee, provided it offers the same legal level of protection in the long term and complies with the requirement contained in Annex I of the LIFE+ Regulation.
6. The land must be purchased by one of the official project beneficiaries who is either a well-established private organisation (e.g. nature conservation NGO or other) or a public body with nature conservation tasks, and must remain in his ownership after the end of the project.
7. The proposal must demonstrate that each beneficiary carrying out land purchases has the necessary competence and experience in land purchase for nature

conservation, and that the planned target is realistic within the time framework of the project,

8. If the purchasing body is a private organisation, its statutes must include a provision that, in case of dissolution, the land will be transferred to another legal body primarily active in the field of nature conservation (e.g. another conservation NGO or appropriate public body).
9. Evidence must be provided in the proposal that the purchase price is consistent with the current market prices for the type of land and the region concerned.
10. Evidence must be provided that the land purchased was privately owned prior to the project starting date (exceptions are only possible if duly justified and accepted by the Commission). Purchase of land that that has recently been transferred from public to private ownership will not be eligible.
11. Land purchased must be the subject of specific restoration and/or active management or restrictions of use that go beyond existing restrictions. The purchase of land that is in excellent conservation status (i.e. that requires no restoration or specific management or restrictions of use) is only eligible if strategic to the objectives of the project.

Long-term land lease and one-off compensation payments: The same conditions listed above apply, as and where appropriate, to long-term land lease and one-off compensation payments. The applicant must address each of these conditions in his proposal, explaining how each condition is met or will be met during the project. The duration must be sufficient to guarantee the durability of the conservation investment, i.e. the principles of long-term sustainability and cost-effectiveness must apply.

Short term land lease or compensation payments with a limited duration within the project period will only be eligible insofar as they are **necessary for the demonstration of innovative actions** favourable to the conservation status of the species/habitats targeted. Note that appropriate justification for the costs of short term lease and/or one-off compensation payments will have to be provided with the project's final report.

Any land purchase payments, compensation payments or lease payments **to public bodies** are not eligible, with the exception of one-off compensation payments to local authorities. It is recommended that local authorities re-invest the income from such one-off payments into conservation or public awareness-raising measures for *Natura 2000* sites. Those proposals which include a commitment from the local authorities in question to do so will be considered for a higher scoring in the project selection process and will therefore have a higher chance of being selected for co-funding.

Concrete conservation actions

Concrete conservation actions must aim to directly improve (or slow/halt/reverse the decline of) the conservation status of the species and habitats targeted. Their impact must be measurable and must be monitored and evaluated during the project.

The maintenance of the investments made through these actions must be ensured in the long-term after the end of the project.

For the purpose of these guidelines we distinguish site related actions from species (non-site) related actions.

Site-related conservation actions inside Natura 2000 sites:

As a general rule, site-related conservation actions shall take place within existing designated *Natura 2000* sites (exceptions are given below in the section entitled "Site-related conservation actions outside *Natura 2000* sites").

Actions in sites that are not yet officially designated *Natura 2000* sites by the deadline for the submission of applications are in general ineligible. The date of designation in this context is the date at which the European Commission received the formal information from the Member State about the site's designation.

For each *Natura 2000* site targeted, you should provide a general description and (in annex) a map of the site, indicating where each action is planned to take place. The project area will be the whole of the *Natura 2000* site(s) targeted by the project (it is thus unnecessary to further delimit a project area within the *Natura 2000* site, unless there are specific reasons for doing so).

Please note that many applicants provide maps indicating *Natura 2000* perimeters that do not correspond to the official ones (i.e. as notified to the EU by the Member State in question). Such proposals generally receive a lower score as it is not certain that all the actions proposed will take place within the site and therefore may be all or in part ineligible and need to be deleted. Even if selected, such proposals often have serious problems during the short revision period. Applicants are advised to check that the perimeters on their maps correspond to those on the EU *Natura 2000* viewer available to the public (http://natura2000.eea.europa.eu).

Actions targeting bird species must take place within SPAs (Special Protection Areas) that were explicitly designated for the species in question. Note that actions on Annex I habitat types that directly benefit birds may be eligible within SPAs that are not pSCIs/SCIs.

Actions targeting habitat types or species other than birds must take place within pSCIs (proposed Sites of Community Interest) or SCIs (Sites of Community Interest) that were explicitly designated for the species / habitats in question.

Actions targeting species and habitats not listed in project site's official *Natura 2000* data sheet are ineligible. Applicants are advised to check this carefully. These standard data forms (SDFs) can be viewed at http://natura2000.eea.europa.eu/ (note: this public site is updated generally within a couple of months of the Commission receiving data from the Member States, however in some cases it may take up to six months for the very latest information to be added). Where the species/habitats are in fact present but are not in the data sheet, actions targeting them **can only be accepted** if the proposal contains a letter of commitment from the competent authority to correct the data sheet before the end of the project.

Eligible site-related conservation actions inside *Natura 2000* sites concern a wide range of **restoration** and **management** actions too numerous to list here. Eligible actions may include, amongst others:

- Actions **aimed at improving** the long-term effectiveness, in terms of cost-efficiency and conservation benefit, of the management of *Natura 2000* sites, habitat types and species;
- **Investments necessary to facilitate recurring management** (e.g. the purchase of grazing animals and related infrastructure or machinery). These investments must be clearly linked to the objectives of the project. The equipment / infrastructure acquired through such investments must be used to a significant degree for the project objectives during the project. Note, however, that the **costs related to the use of such material are in principle ineligible** as they concern recurring management - see general principles – unless they relate to the demonstration of an innovative recurring management technique;

- Actions for **combating invasive alien species** or for **mitigating negative impacts of climate change**, insofar as they are not recurring actions and they directly benefit the species / habitats targeted by the project.

<u>Site-related conservation actions outside Natura 2000 sites:</u>

The following types of concrete site-related actions may be eligible outside *Natura 2000* sites, and in all of these, the long-term sustainability of the investments must be guaranteed:

- Actions on strategic spots and actions affecting adjacent *Natura 2000* sites;
- Habitat and/or site restoration actions on areas to become *Natura 2000* sites before the end of the project;
- Actions for improving the ecological coherence / connectivity of the *Natura 2000* network;
- Actions for improving the conservation status of species listed on Annex IV, but not on Annex II of the Habitats Directive (the *Natura 2000* site status is legally irrelevant for those species).

- Actions on strategic spots and actions affecting adjacent Natura 2000 sites:

A strategic spot is defined here as an area with little or no natural value, but which is necessary for the implementation of key actions resulting in a direct and significant benefit for the habitats/species targeted by the project within a *Natura 2000* site (e.g. a plot needed to relocate a damaging structure/device, etc.).

Land purchase may, if clearly justified, be possible in this context.

Actions carried out near or adjacent to a *Natura 2000* site which improve the conservation status of the species/habitats targeted within the site may also be eligible. This may concern, for example, actions for **combating invasive alien species** outside a pSCI so as to limit or prevent damage within the site.

- Habitat and/or site restoration:

In general, habitat restoration must take place within designated *Natura 2000* sites. However projects and actions to restore/recreate habitats outside *Natura 2000* sites may be eligible if they:

- can demonstrate that the area clearly does not yet qualify for *Natura 2000* designation;
- address the main threats to the habitats/species and have a direct impact on restoring their favourable conservation status within the EU;
- are based on a good scientific knowledge (ecology, function, resilience, …);
- have a good chance of success and be cost effective;
- include a commitment from the Competent Authority to designate the sites concerned as *Natura 2000* sites before the end of the project (provided the restoration has been successful); **in all such cases, the Competent Authority must be a beneficiary of the project** (coordinating or associated beneficiary);
- set clear targets and give a detailed timetable outlining when it is expected that the site concerned will be designated under *Natura 2000*, and include specific and detailed monitoring to verify at predetermined intervals if the site has achieved the conditions necessary for designation (i.e. if the restoration has been successful);
- land purchase may, if clearly justified, be possible in this context.

- Actions for improving the ecological coherence / connectivity of the Natura 2000 network:

Where the creation of corridors or "stepping stones" between existing *Natura 2000* sites or of buffer zones around them is foreseen, investments may be considered in areas that will not be designated under *Natura 2000*. Evidence must be provided that the investments foreseen contribute to an "improvement of the ecological coherence of the *Natura 2000* network", i.e. the applicants must demonstrate how these corridors or stepping stones will improve the conservation status of the species targeted. A guarantee must also be provided for the sustainability of these investments, in the form of a commitment for giving these sites **the most appropriate legal protection status** before the end of the project. When submitting the proposal, the applicant must provide detailed information on the proposed protection status and explain why it is considered as being sufficient for securing the long-term sustainability of the investments. Note also that any such actions will only be accepted where the national *Natura 2000* network of sites is considered as sufficient for the species/habitats targeted by the project.

Actions for the creation of "corridors" may also include the construction of infrastructures acting as animal migration corridors (e.g. eco-ducts) that would enhance the possibilities for the migration of animals, provided that the species population targeted already benefits from an appropriate *Natura 2000* site designation of their main breeding, feeding and/or resting areas. Typical examples are wildlife bridges/tunnels, fish passes etc. In these cases, a protected area status is not required for the site where the infrastructure will be located. The applicant will, however, need to provide evidence that the future use and maintenance of the infrastructure is backed by an appropriate land use planning at the most relevant administrative level.

Land purchase may, if clearly justified, be possible in this context. If land purchase is foreseen, the proposal should include a commitment from the Competent Authority to designate the sites concerned or at least the land that will be purchased as *Natura 2000* sites before the end of the project; **in all such cases, the Competent Authority must be a beneficiary of the project** (coordinating beneficiary or associated beneficiary).

- Actions for improving the conservation status of species listed in Annex IV, but not in Annex II of the Habitats Directive

The eligibility of the costs for land-based conservation actions for the conservation of Annex IV species not listed in Annex II is not conditional upon a *Natura 2000* site status of the lands targeted. However, a guarantee must be provided for the sustainability of any such investments, in the form of a commitment for giving these sites **the most appropriate legal protection status** before the end of the project. When submitting the proposal, the applicant must provide detailed information on the proposed protection status and explain why it is considered as being sufficient for securing the long-term sustainability of the investments. Land purchase is not possible in this context.

Species-related actions (that are not site-related):

- Species-based conservation actions (i.e. actions that are not site-based and that target species of the Birds / Habitat Directives):

This concerns any actions other than site-related actions that are necessary to improve the conservation status of species covered by the Birds Directive (Annex I or II or regularly occurring migratory species) or Habitats Directives (Annex II, IV or V). Such actions should be clearly distinct from those that concern site protection and must address significant conservation issues. Applicants must provide guarantees and commitments that the investments made will be sustained in the long-term. Such projects may include, amongst others:

- Actions related to the direct protection of animal species against unintentional or incidental disturbance, collection, capture, poisoning or killing. These may in particular concern wide-ranging or mobile species for which the designation of *Natura*

2000 sites and the associated conservation and management of sites are not sufficient to ensure a favourable conservation status. For example, this may concern actions to remove or modify technical devices or infrastructures such as electric power lines, fishing gear, etc.;

- Actions for combating invasive alien species or mitigating the negative impact of climate change, insofar as they directly benefit the species targeted by the project.

- Species re-introduction:

Projects and actions to reintroduce species are subject to the following conditions. The applicant must address each of these conditions in his proposal, explaining how each condition is met or will be met during the project.

1. they are justifiable and have a high chance of success;
2. they target areas where the causes of extinction of the species have been eliminated;
3. the removal of individuals for re-introduction is only considered if that would not endanger the captive or wild source populations;
4. they target areas whose habitats meet the conditions necessary for the survival of a viable population of the species;
5. they establish and document a prior agreement between all parties involved (e.g. between the competent authority for the donor population and the manager of the area of reintroduction);
6. they target only areas where the attitude of the local population towards the planned reintroduction is favourable or there is a reasonable expectation that local acceptance can be achieved during the project;
7. they only reintroduce animals / plants that belong to the closest and most similar population available (in terms of genetics, ecology, etc…) to that previously occurring in the area;
8. they include a feasibility study, a preparatory phase, a re-introduction phase and a follow-up phase.

Projects and actions to reintroduce species outside existing *Natura 2000* sites and which target species for which *Natura 2000* designation is foreseen are subject to the following additional condition:

9. they include a commitment from the Member State to designate the core reproductive and feeding areas of the re-introduced population as *Natura 2000* sites before the end of the project (provided the reintroduction has been successful); the competent authority for *Natura 2000* site designation must be a beneficiary of the project (coordinating or associated beneficiary); applicants should be aware that land purchase within these future *Natura 2000* sites is only eligible if they are designated as such before the end of the project.

Further guidelines on re-introduction can be found in the following document:
http://www.iucnsscrsg.org/policy_guidelines.html

- Ex-situ conservation actions:

These concern such actions as captive breeding, seed banks, etc., and may include sustainable investments in infrastructure / equipment.

Monitoring of the impact of project actions (obligatory if there are concrete conservation actions)

All projects including concrete conservation actions (i.e. that do not fall under one of the exceptions detailed at pages 25-26), will have to foresee impact monitoring actions.

The concrete conservation actions (C actions) must lead to a measurable improvement of the conservation status of the species / habitats targeted by the project. Monitoring these effects should take place throughout the project and its results should be evaluated on a regular basis. In this view, every project proposal including concrete conservation actions must contain an appropriate amount of monitoring activities in order to measure their *impact* on the species / habitats targeted.

These activities are distinct from the monitoring of the project progress (F actions).

For this purpose, the proposal should identify <u>specific indicators</u> to be used to measure the impact of the project (or foresee an action to do so). These indicators should be coherent with the conservation problem addressed and the type of activities planned during the project. The initial situation from which the project starts should be assessed and progress should be regularly evaluated against it.

The monitoring of the project impact on the targeted species/habitats should allow the project management team either to confirm the adequacy of the developed means to address the specific problems and threats, or to question these means and alternatively develop new ones. At the end of the project, the beneficiaries should be able to quantify the progress achieved, in terms of impact on the targeted species/habitats. Depending on the species/habitats targeted and on the actions foreseen, it is recognised that their impact may not always be practicably measurable within the project's lifetime.

Each proposal containing concrete conservation actions must also include an action aimed to assess the **socio-economic impact** of the project actions on the local economy and population, as well as on the **ecosystem functions**. This may, for example, 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 *Natura 2000* network. 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, raising the profile of the area/region, resulting in increasing the viability of the local community (especially in rural areas). The direct linkages between *Natura 2000* management measures and key ecosystem services provided, such as carbon sequestration, water purification, pollination, etc. should be clearly assessed. Project actions aimed at restoring multi-functional ecosystems such as rivers, floodplains, forests, peatlands or mires should be valued in economic terms (monetary terms or if this is not possible there should be a qualitative estimation).

<u>Communication and dissemination actions (obligatory)</u>

Every proposal must contain an appropriate amount of communication and dissemination actions. These 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.

Should the proposal include the development of general guidelines for setting up management plans for *Natura 2000* sites / habitat types / species or guidelines for their practical management, it must demonstrate the need for such guidelines and that equivalent guidelines do not already exist elsewhere, and must identify the target "public" and how the guidelines will be distributed to them.

Should the proposal include the creation of **small-scale** visitor infrastructures, these must not cover more than 10% of the budget allocated to concrete actions in the proposal budget, and must be well-justified and cost effective or else they will be deleted from the proposal during the revision phase.

The range of possible 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. To be effective, these actions should in general begin early on in the project. Each communication and dissemination action must clearly define and justify its target audience, and should be expected to have a significant impact. The organisation of large and costly scientific meetings or the financing of large-scale visitor infra-structures is not eligible.

Note that certain communication actions are obligatory (project web site, notice boards,…) and should therefore be explicitly foreseen in the proposal as separate actions. See Article 13 of the Common Provisions for full details.

Please see also http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/toolkit/comtools/index.htm for detailed advice on communication and dissemination actions, in particular the 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.

Project management and monitoring of project progress (obligatory)

Every project proposal must contain an appropriate amount of both project management and monitoring actions. This typically involves at least all of the following actions and associated costs:

- 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, provided the coordinating beneficiary retains full and day to day control of the project. The project management structure must be clearly presented (including an organigram and details of the responsibilities of each person and organisation involved). It is strongly recommended that the project management staff has previous experience in project management.
- Where obligatory, the external audit and the bank guarantee.
- Training, workshops and meetings for the project beneficiaries' staff, where these are required for the achievement of the project objectives.
- **Obligatory action**: each proposal must include an action entitled "Networking with other LIFE and/or non-LIFE projects". This 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).

It is **strongly recommended** that the project manager be full-time. 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.

2.3 LIFE+ Biodiversity

2.3.a. General principles of LIFE+ Biodiversity funding

General scope

LIFE+ Biodiversity projects must aim to implement the objectives of the Commission Communication "Halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010 – and beyond" and of the Commission Communication "Options for an EU vision and target for biodiversity beyond 2010", other than those already covered by LIFE+ Nature. They must thus be clearly different from LIFE+ Nature projects (i.e. they shall not be best practice projects primarily targeting species and/or habitat types of the Birds and Habitats Directives).

LIFE+ Biodiversity projects may only concern European biodiversity; i.e. actions and measures for species, habitats and/or ecosystems other that those naturally present on the terrestrial or marine territory of the Member States are not eligible for funding.

LIFE+ Biodiversity projects must be compatible with national and/or regional strategies for biodiversity (where these exist).

Geographic scope

LIFE+ Biodiversity projects must exclusively take place on the terrestrial and/or marine territory of the EU Member States. This includes the French Overseas Departments (DOMs); see section 1.6.8. for possible exceptions.

Demonstration and/or innovation

LIFE+ Biodiversity projects must either be demonstration or innovative projects. The proposed actions cannot simply be best practice. **Any LIFE+ Biodiversity proposal consisting essentially of best practice actions is likely to be rejected.** Moreover, all LIFE+ Biodiversity projects must have as an **integral part** of the project the evaluation and active dissemination of the results and lessons learnt.

A **"demonstration" project** puts into practice, tests, evaluates and disseminates actions/methodologies that are to some degree new or unfamiliar in the project's specific context (geographical, ecological, socio-economical …), and that **should be more widely applied** elsewhere in similar circumstances. The project must therefore be designed right from the start to demonstrate whether the techniques and methods used work or not in the project's context (geographical, ecological, socio-economical, …). Monitoring, evaluation and active dissemination of the main project results and/or lessons learnt are integral parts of the project and its aftermath. A demonstration project therefore aims to assess the effectiveness of the method and, ultimately, to encourage other stakeholders to use the techniques and methods demonstrated in the project for halting the loss of biodiversity.

An "**innovative**" **project** applies a technique or method that has not been applied / tested before or elsewhere and that offers potential advantages compared to current best practice. The monitoring, evaluation and active dissemination of the main project results and/or lessons learnt is an integral part of the project. An innovative project therefore aims to evaluate whether the innovative techniques and methods for halting the loss of biodiversity work or not. Moreover, it aims to assess the effectiveness of the method, to inform other stakeholders of the results and to encourage them where appropriate to use the techniques and methods successfully tested in the project.

In order to be considered innovative/demonstration, the overall character of the core project actions must be innovative/demonstration. If best practice actions are part of the project proposal, the overall approach must clearly and in detail justify an innovative/demonstration character. A proposal presenting a mixture of best practice and innovation/demonstration will be rejected.

Recurring actions cannot be financed

The LIFE+ Regulation (Article 3.2) does not allow the financing of recurring activities.

Any **recurring** monitoring or management action that was already carried out prior to the start of the project and/or that needs to be continued after the end of the project (at the same level of intensity, using the same techniques and material…) cannot be included in the *LIFE+ Biodiversity* proposal budget. For example, any recurring site surveillance, annual mowing or long-term monitoring actions (other than to evaluate the impact of the project) are in principle ineligible.

However, *recurring actions with a clear demonstration* value and/or *innovative recurring actions* may be considered as eligible for funding. In such cases, the proposal must clearly explain the demonstration/innovation character.

Projects must have at least 25% of their budget earmarked for concrete conservation actions

At least **25%** of the provisional budget of *LIFE+ Biodiversity* projects must concern "concrete conservation" actions. In this context, "concrete conservation" actions are those that *directly improve* (or slow/halt/reverse the decline of) *the conservation status* of the species, habitats or ecosystems targeted.

Preparatory actions (e.g. planning and preparation of the concrete conservation actions) and short-term lease and/or compensation payments count towards this 25% *insofar as they are directly necessary for the execution of concrete conservation actions during the project's lifetime*.

Such actions must be clearly identifiable (i.e. must be 100% concrete conservation and not contain parts that are not).

Monitoring of reintroduced species will only be considered as concrete if it can re-direct the course of the reintroduction action.

Legal protection or site designation will only be considered as a concrete conservation action if it is fully achieved within the project duration.

Actions that aim to influence the behaviour of key stakeholders (e.g. farmers, hunters, fishermen, visitors), so as to benefit the site/species/habitats targeted, may only be considered as concrete conservation actions:

- if the inappropriate behaviour of the stakeholders in question is an important threat to the site/species/habitat targeted;
- if the action has as its main objective changing the behaviour of specified category of stakeholder in a specified way that will clearly benefit the habitat/species in a specified way;

- if the behaviour in question is foreseen to change during the project duration;
- if this action is sufficiently quantified (no of persons reached by the action, % whose behaviour will be favourably changed during the project, estimation if possible of favourable impact on the species/habitat targeted, …);
- if this change is explicitly monitored by the project to check the results.

It is strongly advised that *LIFE+ Biodiversity* projects include *significantly more* than 25% concrete conservation actions. During the evaluation of the proposal, certain actions may be considered ineligible and removed from the project. Should the percentage of concrete actions fall under 25%, then the whole project may be rejected for that reason.

LIFE+ Biodiversity proposals involving few or no demonstration actions will generally be considered ineligible. There are however a few exceptions to this rule:

- **Biodiversity indicator projects:** *Life+ Biodiversity* projects for the development and testing of new biodiversity monitoring indicators do not need to include concrete conservation actions. Such proposals should normally be submitted by the national or regional authorities in charge of monitoring. If not, they should at least be associated beneficiaries.

  The core of such a project must focus on the development and testing of **new biodiversity indicators**. Proposals that, for example, involve much data collection or research, of which only a part is related to the development and testing of new indicators, will not benefit from this exception. Any such project should also provide clear operational guidelines on how these indicators should be applied.

  Routine monitoring actions or harmonisation/standardisation of established monitoring techniques/indicators will not benefit from this exception.

  Proposals that only develop and test new indicators for local use and that do not have a much wider applicability (e.g. at national or EU level) or that do not contain sufficient actions to disseminate their use on a wide scale will not benefit from this exception.
- **European Outermost Regions site designation projects:** *Life+ Biodiversity* projects for preparatory inventories and planning for the designation of sites in the European Outermost Regions (e.g. French overseas departments), on the basis of the voluntary scheme for biodiversity and ecosystem services which has been suggested in the paragraph 13 of the Message from Reunion Island http://www.reunion2008.eu/pages/en/en-home.html. Any such proposal must, however, include a commitment from the Competent National Ministry/Authority AND the Competent Regional Overseas Authority to join the scheme (commitment to be provided on form A8).
- **Species Action Plan projects:** *Life+ Biodiversity* projects targeting only the preparation of Action Plans at regional, national or EU level for species that are not included in the annexes of the Habitats Directive but that have a status of "endangered" or worse in the **available European Red Lists (http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/conservation/species/redlist/index_en.htm) or in the** IUCN Red List **for those species that are not covered by the European red Lists**, may be eligible if such Action Plans are necessary to define the needs for further (concrete) measures.
- **Marine Region projects:** Life+ Biodiversity projects targeting Marine Regions in view of guaranteeing a Good environmental status, as defined in the Marine Strategy

Framework Directive (MSFD). There is still a need for more work on Marine Regions, in terms of further refining the definitions 'good environmental status' the initial assessments already made, the environmental targets and their associated indicators and monitoring programmes. Such proposals do not need to include concrete conservation actions. Such proposals should normally be submitted by the competent authorities as defined in the MSFD. If not, they should at least be associated beneficiaries.

Note however that, as for any other *LIFE+ Biodiversity* projects, projects that fall under either of these exceptions cannot involve recurrent activities (see above).

Only natural systems, natural habitats and wild flora and fauna may be targeted. The principal objective of LIFE+ Nature & Biodiversity is "To protect, conserve, restore, monitor and facilitate the functioning of natural systems, natural habitats, and wild flora and fauna, with the aim of halting the loss of biodiversity, including diversity of genetic resources, within the EU by 2010" (Annex II.1 of the LIFE+ Regulation). In consequence, projects targeting domestic species or varieties of plants or animals **are discouraged**.

Complementarity with other EU funding instruments

Since *LIFE+ Biodiversity* projects must either be demonstration or innovative projects, there is *a priori* little risk of overlap with the main scope of other EU funding instruments. Nevertheless, applicants should address this issue carefully while preparing their proposal which should contain relevant details.

Maximum co-financing rates

LIFE+ Biodiversity projects are co-financed by the EU at a maximum rate of 50% of their eligible costs (Article 5.3 of the LIFE+ Regulation).

Some lessons from past Calls for Proposals

- A number of LIFE+ Biodiversity proposals were rejected because they were not innovation/demonstration. The core actions were best practice presented incorrectly as being innovation/demonstration.

- Some of these best practice proposals targeted mainly *Natura 2000* sites/species/habitats. Had they been clearly presented as a LIFE+ Nature proposal (excluding as appropriate those actions outside *Natura 2000* sites or targeting other species/habitats), they may well have been accepted.

- Some proposals were rejected because they presented essentially best practice techniques applied on a large scale outside *Natura 2000* sites. For example, simply applying best practice techniques at the scale of a river basin that are already applied in *Natura 2000* sites, is not demonstration.

- Some proposals whose core actions were clearly demonstration/innovation were nevertheless rejected because they did not contain a coherent and sufficient set of actions for the evaluation and dissemination of the results to those stakeholders that could use the lessons learnt.

- A number of proposals simply did not comply with the requirement for a minimum of 25% concrete conservation actions (NB Listing actions in the C1c section of the application does not qualify them by default as concrete actions).

- Some proposals that sought to be exempted from the 25% concrete conservation actions requirement by presenting themselves as developing new biodiversity indicators were rejected because much of the effort concerned data collection / research unrelated to the testing and development of new indicators.

- Some proposals that were to take place on essentially agricultural/forest land were rejected because the measures proposed could have been financed by agri-environment / Rural Development Programmes.

- A number of proposals were rejected because they were not directly related to biodiversity or because the measures were poorly described.

2.3. b. How to conceive a LIFE+ Biodiversity project proposal?

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

- Preparatory actions (including short term lease of land and/or one-off compensation payments),
- Concrete conservation actions,
- Monitoring of the impact of the project actions (obligatory if there are concrete conservation actions),
- Communication and dissemination actions (obligatory),
- Project management and monitoring of project progress (obligatory).

<u>Preparatory actions</u>

As a general principle, all preparatory actions must produce practical recommendations and/or information which can be implemented (either during the project or after the project) and be used without requiring further preparatory work. Furthermore, where preparatory actions do not lead to direct implementation during the project, the proposal must provide sufficient set of explanations, commitments and guarantees to show that their full implementation after the project is effectively ensured. Most projects include preparatory actions. Projects may not include preparatory actions that have been fully completed prior to the start of the project.

In general, and amongst others, preparatory actions:

- should not be research actions,
- should be of limited duration (i.e. should be significantly shorter than the project duration),
- should be clearly related to the objective(s) of the project.

Preparatory actions may include (this is not an exhaustive list):

- actions preparatory to the concrete conservation actions of the project (technical planning, permit procedures, stakeholder consultations, etc.),
- making preparatory inventories, drafting, monitoring and reviewing biodiversity action plans (at trans-national, national, regional or local level).
- short-term land-lease/one-off compensation payments covering the project period

Where management plans, action plans or other similar plans are drafted or modified in the framework of a *LIFE+ Biodiversity* project, they must become legally operational before the end of the project. Therefore in those Member States where a procedure for their legal adoption and/or approval exists, this procedure must be completed before the end of the project otherwise the related expenses will be ineligible. Applicants are therefore advised not to include actions to develop such plans unless they are **certain** that they will be legally operational before the end of the project. Please include a timetable showing how and when they will become legally operational.

Short-term leases/compensation payments with a limited duration will only be eligible insofar as they are necessary *for the demonstration of innovative actions* that would take place during the project period and that would be favourable to biodiversity or the conservation status of the species targeted. Evidence must be provided that the lease price is consistent with the current market prices for the type land and the region concerned. Long-term land-lease/one-off compensation payments *are not eligible*.

Concrete actions aimed at halting the loss of biodiversity

Concrete biodiversity actions are actions that *directly improve the biodiversity* of the sites/areas targeted and/or *improve* (or slow/halt/reverse the decline of) *the conservation status* of the species and habitats targeted or directly and practically address a biodiversity related problem that may not be linked specifically to a site or species. Their impact must be measurable and must be monitored and evaluated during the project.

In any case they must be *innovative and/or demonstration actions* that are different from and have an added value compared to those related to the *Natura 2000* network (see above General Principles and *LIFE+ Nature* section).

These actions may concern all types of areas, including farmlands, forests, urban and sub-urban areas, marine areas, river basins, areas in or outside *Natura 2000* sites, etc. (provided that they do not fall within the main scope of, or are financed at the same time by other European Union funding programmes).

Monitoring of the impact of project actions (obligatory if there are concrete conservation actions)

All projects including concrete conservation actions (i.e. that do not fall under one of the exceptions detailed at pages 40-41), will have to foresee impact monitoring actions. The concrete conservation actions (C actions) must lead to a measurable improvement of the biodiversity problem targeted by the project. Monitoring these effects should take place throughout the project and its results should be evaluated on a regular basis.

Note: LIFE+ Biodiversity projects, being demonstration/innovation, must have a clear set of actions for evaluating the main project findings and results. Proposals that are insufficient in these respects will be rejected.

These activities are distinct of the monitoring of the project progress (F actions).

For this purpose, the project management should identify specific indicators to be used to measure the impact of the project. These indicators should be coherent with the biodiversity problem addressed and the type of activities planned during the project. The initial situation from which the project starts should be assessed and progress should be regularly evaluated against it.

The monitoring of the project impact should allow the project management either to confirm the adequacy of the developed means to address the specific problems and threats, or to question these means and alternatively develop new ones. At the end of the project, the beneficiaries should be able to quantify the progress achieved, in terms of impact on the targeted biodiversity issue.

Communication and dissemination actions (obligatory)

LIFE+ Biodiversity projects are innovative or demonstration projects. As such they **must include a significant set of actions to evaluate and disseminate the results of the project** so that the knowledge gained is actively communicated to those stakeholders that may apply the lessons from the project. Proposals that are insufficient in this respect will be rejected. A crucial element is active networking with, and dissemination to, other stakeholders that could apply the results.

LIFE+ Biodiversity projects should therefore typically include 2 distinct types of communication actions:

- information and awareness raising activities regarding the project to the general public and stakeholders. These actions should in general begin early on in the project.
- more technical dissemination actions aimed at transferring the results and lessons learnt **to those stakeholders that could usefully benefit from the project's experience** and implement themselves the actions demonstrated in the project.

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. The organisation of large and costly scientific meetings or the financing of large-scale visitor infra-structures is not eligible.

Note that certain communication actions are obligatory (project web site, notice boards, etc.) and should therefore be explicitly foreseen in the proposal as separate actions. See Article 13 of the Common Provisions for full details.

Please see also http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/toolkit/comtools/index.htm for detailed advice on communication and dissemination actions, in particular the 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.

Project management and monitoring of project progress (obligatory)

Every project proposal must contain an appropriate amount of both project management and monitoring actions. This typically involves at least all of the following actions and associated costs:

- 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, provided the coordinating beneficiary retains full and day to day control of the project. The project management structure must be clearly presented (including an organigram and details of the responsibilities of each person and organisation involved). It is strongly recommended that the project management staff has previous experience in project management.
- Where obligatory, the external audit and the bank guarantee.
- Training, workshops and meetings for the beneficiaries' staff, where these are required for the achievement of the project objectives.
- **Obligatory action**: each proposal must include an action entitled "Networking with other LIFE and/or non-LIFE projects". This 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).

It is **strongly recommended** that the project manager be full-time. If a coordinator or project manger 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.

3. Application forms

Please use the application file (pdf document) corresponding to the proposal, i.e. for a Nature proposal use the *LIFE+ Nature Application forms* and for a Biodiversity proposal use the *LIFE+ Biodiversity Application forms.* The application file contains the technical and financial forms.

General rules on how to fill in the forms:
- You may introduce the information either directly into the textboxes or you may copy/paste information as simple text format;
- The data between various technical and financial forms are intrinsically connected, this is why as a matter of principle the information will be introduced manually only once and then automatically transferred to other relevant fields across the file;
- Fields with a red border are related to compulsory information and must be filled in;
- Fields with a yellow background cannot be filled in manually since the respective information will be extracted/calculated automatically from other forms;
- Use "+" to add and "-" to delete information;
- You will be allowed to insert objects (such as maps, graphs, tables, photos) in certain forms where the "Pictures" check box appears;
- Please use the following format for all dates: DD-MM-YYYY.

3.1 Technical application forms

The technical part of the *LIFE+ Nature* and *LIFE+ Biodiversity* application file consists of 3 parts (A, B and C).

All forms are mandatory and must be fully completed.

Where you have no specific information to put on certain parts of obligatory forms (e.g. for "previous conservation efforts"), you are **strongly advised** to indicate "not applicable" or "none" or "no relevant information" or an equivalent indication.

Part A – administrative information

Guidelines common to LIFE+ Nature and LIFE+ Biodiversity projects

Form A1

Language of the proposal: Select from the drop-down menu

Project title (max 120 characters): It should include the key elements and objective of the project, such as the name of the site and/or the name of the main species/habitat type or biodiversity issue targeted. Note that the Commission may ask you to change the title in order to make it clearer. The title of the project must always be in English, even if the proposal itself is submitted in a different language.

Expected start date: The earliest possible start date is the 1st June 2012.

List of beneficiaries / co-financiers:

Name of the coordinating beneficiary /associated beneficiary / co-financier: Provide the legal name under which the organisation is officially registered.

Add associated beneficiary / co-financier: If you click "yes" the corresponding obligatory forms will be created for each new associated beneficiary (A4 and A5 forms) / co-financier (A6 form).

Form A2

Short Name (max 10 characters)**:** The beneficiary should be identifiable throughout the technical proposal forms and the financial proposal forms (FC and F1 – F8) 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 organisations from public bodies can be found in section 5 of chapter 1 of the present guidelines.

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

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

Member State: Select the relevant member state code from the drop-down menu

Title: Title commonly used in correspondence with the person in charge of proposal co-ordination.

Function: Provide the function of the person in charge of coordinating the proposal. Example: Managing Director, Project Manager, etc.

Department/Service Name: Name of the department and/or service in the organisation, 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 organisation.

Brief description of the activities of the beneficiary: Please describe the organisation, its legal status, its activities and its competence in nature / biodiversity conservation, 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 project.

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

Form A3

Before completing this form, please check that the beneficiary does not fall into any of the situations listed in Articles 93.1 and 94 of the Financial Regulation (EC) 1605/2002, reference: http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/budget/l34015_en.htm

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. When the form is completed including the fields which will be automatically filled in (yellow background), please print it using the "Print this page" button, scan it as an image file (not as a pdf file) and upload it on the next page.

Form A4

For completing this form, please **see instructions for form A3.**

Form A5

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

Form A6

For completing this form, please **see instructions for form A3.**

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: If a coordinating/associated beneficiary also co-finances the project, it should only appear in the proposal with that single role of coordinating/associated beneficiary and not also as a co-financer.

Form A7

Clear and complete answers must be provided to each question. **Applicants frequently underestimate the importance of this form**. LIFE+ projects **may not include** actions that fall within the main scope of other EU financial instruments (see "Complementarity with other EU funding instruments" 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).

National authorities may be asked to review this declaration.

Form A8

Project proposals frequently include actions for which the coordinating and associated beneficiaries are not empowered to take the necessary decisions to ensure their successful completion. Typical examples are actions like management plan approval, *Natura 2000* site designation or modification or simply working on land falling partly or completely under the authority of a third party. For these proposals it is essential that the competent authority formally expresses its support and commitment to the proposal. The choice of the authority that should complete and sign the A8 form depends on the national/local administrative context. Applicants are advised to carefully evaluate the necessity of such a support. Proposals including actions requiring this type of support for which the corresponding A8 form has not been completed and signed are likely to receive a low score during the award phase of the selection procedure.

For projects carried out in more than one country, this form (if considered necessary, see paragraph above), must be completed by the relevant competent nature conservation / biodiversity authority of **all participating countries**. In this case, one form needs to be completed by each authority.

The **name and legal status**, **full address**, **telephone** number, **fax** number, **e-mail** and **contact person** (name and function) of each authority should be indicated on the form.

The authority in question should indicate **whether, why and how** it will support this project. The authority's support or non-support for the project should be without ambiguity. The authority should indicate, in particular, if the proposed actions constitute part of a programme drawn up/approved by the competent authority. The reasons why the authority grants support should be described. If the competent authority is to play an active role in some aspects of project implementation (such as through the provision of a permit, the approval of a prepared management plan etc.), this should also be detailed.

- Should the proposal include actions that require a commitment from the Member State to **designate new *Natura 2000* sites before the end of the project**, this commitment should be given in full detail here.
- It is also preferable, where possible, to include in this form a commitment from the Competent Authority to support or ensure the implementation of preparatory actions (e.g. to draft management plans) after the end of the project (where this is not ensured during the project) and/or to disseminate and make use of the innovative techniques demonstrated by the project.

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. Please print this form using the “Print this page” button, scan it as an image file (not as a pdf file) and upload it on the next page.

This form may also be used, as a separate page, to indicate any other support to the project by **important stakeholder bodies, administrative bodies or individuals** that may be concerned by the project. The submission of such form(s) is encouraged in all cases where the feasibility or the success of the project implementation is dependent on agreements from any third parties.

When all competent authorities are directly involved as project beneficiaries they do not need to complete an A8 form.

Part B – Technical summary and overall context of the project

Guidelines for LIFE+ Nature projects

Form B1 – Summary description of the project (to be completed in English)

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

- **Objectives of the project:** Please provide a detailed description 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), clear (without ambiguity), should concern mainly the species/habitats issue(s) targeted by the project, and should directly address the problems and threats identified in form B2d.
- **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. These must directly relate to the species/habitats issue(s) targeted by the project and to the project's objectives. 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.

At the end of this form, applicants are required to indicate whether their project can be considered to be a **climate change adaptation project**, by ticking the appropriate box. A climate change adaptation project is defined as a project where the main actions concern initiatives and measures that can be used to reduce the vulnerability of natural and human systems against actual or expected climate change effects.

Form B2a – General description of the area(s)/site(s) targeted by the project

➢ ***For projects with actions targeting a well-defined area/site:***

Please provide a general description of the area(s)/site(s) targeted by the project. If your project involves several distinct **sub-areas / sub-sites**, please fill in **one form for each**.

Note that for site-based LIFE+ Nature projects, the project area is considered to be the entire area of all of the *Natura 2000* sites covered by the project, i.e. you should not define a project perimeter within a *Natura 2000* site. The form should include:

- **Name of the project area**: Please indicate the name of the area. The name indicated should be short and must be used consistently on all maps and technical forms of the proposal.
- **Surface area (ha):** Please indicate the total surface of the project area in hectares.
- **EU protection status:** Please tick SPA and/or pSCI as relevant and indicate the corresponding *Natura 2000* site code. In case the site is protected both under the Birds and Habitats Directive, both *Natura 2000* codes should be provided.
- **Other protected statuses according to national or regional legislation**: Please indicate, if relevant, any other international, national and/or local protection status.
- **Main land uses and ownership of the project area:** Please indicate what are, at the project application date, the main uses made of the project site. Examples of uses are farming, tourism, urban, nature conservation etc. Please indicate the rough

proportions (in %) among the various uses. Please ensure that the total reaches 100%. Please also indicate the ownership status/types of the area at the project application date (e.g. private, state, etc.) Please indicate the rough proportions (in %) among the different ownership status/types. Please ensure that the total reaches 100%.

- **Scientific description of the project area:** Please provide a global description of the scientific value of the project area (geological, botanical, zoological, hydrological etc.). Whenever possible, please indicate the main source of your information for this description.
- **Importance of the project area for the conservation of the species / habitat types targeted at regional, national and EU level:** You must justify why you have selected this particular area for your project. You must explain why your choice is the most appropriate to reach the project's objectives. Indicate what actions are planned in this area and at what locations (where feasible provide a map in A4 or A3 format of the area/site summarising where each action will take place). The size of the area should correspond to the scope of the actions planned. As far as possible, provide quantitative information and indicate your main source of information.

➢ ***For projects without actions targeting a well-defined area:***

In case the project does not include actions targeting a well-defined area, you should describe as precisely as possible where the project will be implemented (city, area, region, etc.). Please use only one form, which should include:

- **Name of the project area(s)**: Please indicate the name of the city, area, region…. The name indicated should be short and must be used consistently on all maps and technical forms of the proposal.
- **Surface area (ha), EU protection status**, **Other protected statuses according to national or regional legislation, Main land uses and ownership of the project area, Scientific description of the project area:** Please indicate relevant information or else 'NON APPLICABLE'
- **Importance of the project area for the conservation of the species / habitat types targeted at regional, national and EU level:** You must explain where the project will be implemented. Justify why you have selected this particular area for your project. You must explain why your choice is the most appropriate to reach the project's objectives.

Form B2b – Map of the general location of the project area

It should locate **the project area(s) described in form(s) B2a**. It should locate the project area(s) within the country and, if necessary, within the region(s) concerned. In case the project does not include actions targeting a defined area, you should locate as clearly as possible where project is implemented (city, area, region etc.).

The **title and scale of the map** must be indicated. The map should be of **high quality** and **high resolution**, preferably in colour. The map should be easy to read. It should include, as a minimum: a clear legend and the background (main cities, main administrative delimitations, main rivers, lakes and sea(s) with the corresponding names, and the main roads). In addition, topography and vegetal coverage may be indicated on the map, if appropriate.

Form B2c – Description of species/habitats targeted by the project

List and provide a brief description of the **main species** and/or **main habitats** directly targeted by the project. Please note that only the main species and/or habitats should be described.

For each of the main species targeted, please indicate:

- **Scientific name** (in Latin), as indicated in the EU Birds or Habitats Directive. Please note that the regularly occurring migratory bird species not listed in the EU Birds Directive which are targeted by the project should be listed here. If the species is a priority species (according to Annex II of the Habitats Directive or is on the list of priority bird species referred to in "50% / 60% / 75% co-financing" in the general principles section), please mark with an asterisk.
- The **Annex of the EU Birds or Habitats Directive** where the species is listed.
- **Population size** within the project area. In case the project does not include actions targeting a well-defined area, please indicate the population size at regional, national or multinational level, as relevant.
- The **conservation status** within the project area. Please provide full and quantitative details. In case the project does not include actions targeting a well-defined area, please indicate the conservation status at regional, national or multinational level, as relevant.
- For bird species, please indicate whether the project area (if relevant) is used for **breeding, wintering and/or staging.**

For each of the main habitats targeted, please indicate:

- **Name and *Natura 2000* code**, as indicated in the EU Habitats Directive. If the habitat is a priority habitat (according to the Annex I of the Habitats Directive), please mark with an asterisk.
- The **% of the cover of the habitat type** over the whole project area and for each sub-area
- The **conservation status** within the project area (if relevant). Please provide full and quantitative details.

Form B2d

Conservation problems and threats: Identifying the threats in the project area(s) to the species / habitats targeted is essential for determining which actions need to be undertaken. This section should describe these threats (in decreasing order of importance) and their importance for the conservation of the habitats/species targeted (both within the project area(s) and in general) or for biodiversity in general. Whenever possible, problems/threats should be located and quantified. The description should include: **the name of the threat**, its **description**, its **location** (if relevant), its **impact on biodiversity or on the habitats/species targeted** (quantify if possible) and an indication as to **how these problems and threats will be dealt with during the project**.

Previous conservation efforts in the project area and/or for the habitats / species targeted by the project: Please describe whether any actions have been undertaken previously on the area or for the species / habitat type targeted (e.g. any management plan drawn up, surveys conducted, land purchased etc.). Please indicate the year and results of these efforts. Please also indicate who was/is responsible for these efforts. If the project fits into a regional/national or EU conservation / biodiversity strategy, this should be clearly mentioned there.

Form B3

EU added value of the project and its actions: Please indicate the added value of your project for the benefit for the species/habitats targeted by the project. Indicate what would be the situation should your project **not** be implemented. Indicate if the project will make a significant contribution to the conservation of the species/habitats targeted at the EU level. For LIFE+ Nature projects *with demonstration of innovative methods or techniques,* indicate to what extent these methods or techniques are potentially replicable in the EU. You should also provide here a clear description of the geographical scope of the project. A **transnational approach** and/or a **multinational partnership** may, if well justified here, be also considered as added value.

Socio-economic effects of the project: Please indicate the probable impact of the project actions on the local economy and population, as well as on the ecosystem functions protection and restoration.

Best Practice / Demonstration character of the project: Please explain the best practice / demonstration character of your project.

Efforts for reducing the project's "carbon footprint": Please explain how you intend to ensure that the "carbon footprint" of your project remains as low as is reasonably possible.

Form B4 – Expected constraints and risks related to the project implementation

It is important that applicants identify all possible **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 the decreasing order of importance. Please also indicate any possible constraints and risks due to the **socio-economic environment**. If your project involves management agreements or land purchase, please indicate whether the landowners have been consulted and if they agree in principle. For each constraint and risk identified, please indicate how you envisage overcoming it.

You are also strongly advised to include in this section any details on licences, permits, EIA, etc., and to indicate what support you have from the competent bodies responsible for issuing such authorisations.

Finally, please detail 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 B5 – 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, and what actions are required to consolidate the results in order to ensure the favourable conservation status of the targeted species and/or habitats. 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?** Please list such project actions indicating their reference (e.g. A1, A2…) and title.
- **How will this be achieved, what resources will be necessary to carry out these actions?** Please indicate how the above actions will be continued after the project, by whom, within what timeframe and with what financing.
- **Protection status under national/local law of sites/species/habitats targeted (if relevant):** Please indicate what protection status is expected to be acquired by or after the end of the project, and when. Describe the legal protection under national and local law, and (if relevant) any provisions in local zoning and land use planning which will be applied to the site and, in particular, to any land purchased.

- **How, when and by whom will the equipment acquired be used after the project end**: Please list the main pieces of equipment to be purchased under the project and provide details on their utilisation after the end of the project. Please bear in mind that, according to Article 25.9 of the Common Provisions, the eligibility of durable goods purchased under the project shall be subject to the beneficiaries undertaking to continue to assign these goods **definitively to nature conservation activities** beyond the end of the project.

- **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):** Please indicate how dissemination activities will continue after the end of the project. **This is of particular importance for LIFE+ Nature projects that have a demonstration character.** Please list the persons/organisations that have been so far identified as targets for these dissemination activities.

Guidelines for LIFE+ Biodiversity projects

Form B1 – Summary description of the project (to be completed in English)

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

- **Objectives of the project:** Please provide a detailed description 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), clear (without ambiguity), should concern mainly the biodiversity issue(s) targeted by the project, and should directly address the problems identified in form B2.
- **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. These must directly relate to the biodiversity issue(s) targeted by the project and to the project's objectives. 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.

At the end of this form, applicants are required to indicate whether their project can be considered to be a **climate change adaptation project**, by ticking the appropriate box. A climate change adaptation project is defined as a project where the main actions concern initiatives and measures that can be used to reduce the vulnerability of natural and human systems against actual or expected climate change effects.

Form B2

Biodiversity problem targeted: Please describe the biodiversity issue(s) targeted by your project and the biodiversity/conservation status within the project area. In case the project does not include actions targeting a defined area, you should describe the biodiversity/conservation status at the city, area, region etc. scale.

Should your project target specific species and/or habitats, please provide for each of the main species / habitats the same information as for LIFE+ Nature projects (see form B2c).

Innovative aspects of the project: Please explain the innovative aspects of your project.

Elaborate on the technical description of the proposed innovation(s), new elements, improvements. Describe the previous research and experience carried out in preparation for the project implementation.

N.B. Geographical technology or practice transfer alone (without a genuine development of innovative character) cannot be considered as innovative. Equally, projects which involve pure research and development or merely preparatory activities (studies, surveys, etc) can not be considered innovative per se.

Form B3

Demonstration character: Please explain the demonstration character of your project.

EU added value of the project and its actions: Please indicate the added value of your project for the benefit for biodiversity or for the species/habitats targeted by the project. Indicate what would be the situation should your project **not** be implemented.

Indicate to what extent the demonstrative/innovative methods or techniques are potentially replicable in the EU. Indicate to what extent the biodiversity issue targeted is of European importance and to what extent the project results (if successful and widely applied) could make a significant difference to biodiversity at the EU level.

You should also provide here a clear description of the geographical scope of the project. A **transnational approach** and/or a **multinational partnership** may, if well justified here, be also considered as added value.

Efforts for reducing the project's "carbon footprint": 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 and main target audience of the project:

Indicate the stakeholders the proposal intends to involve and how. Please indicate which kind of input you want from their involvement.

Describe target groups and methods for dissemination of knowledge. Comment on activities for general publicity and/or marketing of the concept during and after implementation.

Form B5 - Expected constraints and risks related to the project implementation:

It is important that applicants identify all possible **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 the decreasing order of importance. 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.

You are also strongly advised to include in this section any details on licences, permits, EIA, etc., and to indicate what support you have from the competent bodies responsible for issuing such authorisations.

Finally, please detail 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, and what actions are required to consolidate the results in order to ensure the favourable conservation status of the targeted species and/or habitats and/or biodiversity aspects. Please 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?** Please list such project actions indicating their reference (e.g. A1, A2…) and title.
- **How will this be achieved, what resources will be necessary to carry out these actions?** Please indicate how the above actions will be continued after the project, by whom, within what timeframe and with what financing.
- **Protection status under national/local law of sites/species/habitats targeted (if relevant):** Please indicate what protection status is expected to be acquired by or after the end of the project, and when.
- **How, when and by whom will the equipment acquired be used after the project end**: Please list the main pieces of equipment to be purchased under the project and provide details on their utilisation after the end of the project. Please bear in mind that, according to Article 25.9 of the Common Provisions, the eligibility of durable goods purchased under the project shall be subject to the beneficiaries undertaking to continue to assign these goods **definitively to nature conservation activities** beyond the end of the project.
- **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):** Please indicate how dissemination activities will continue after the end of the project. **This is of particular importance for all LIFE+ Biodiversity projects.** Please list the persons/organisations that have been so far identified as targets for these dissemination activities.

Part C – Detailed technical description of the proposed actions

<u>Guidelines for LIFE+ Nature projects</u>

Under this part, the applicant must list **all the actions which will be implemented under the project**. There are 6 types of actions:

A. Preparatory actions, elaboration of management plans and/or of action plans
B. Purchase/lease of land and/or compensation payments for use rights
C. Concrete conservation actions
D. Monitoring the impact of the project actions (obligatory if there are concrete conservation actions)
E. Public awareness and dissemination of results (obligatory)
F. Overall project operation and monitoring (obligatory).

Under each type of action (A, B, C…), the applicant must list the different actions: A1, A2 …, 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 a management plan, purchase of X ha of land, etc.) is presented as a **separate action**.

The actions must be described as precisely as possible, however the description of an action should not in general exceed 1 page. The descriptions may be accompanied by **maps** locating the actions, explanatory graphs, tables or pictures which may be included in the forms by using the "Pictures" check box. However, please note that detailed maps locating all the activities foreseen under the project must be submitted **in annex** (see below).

The description of each action should clearly indicate the links with other actions (e.g. action C2 follows the purchase of land in action B1 which follows the preparation in action A2) 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 200 characters) 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.
- **Beneficiary responsible for implementation:** Please indicate which of the project's beneficiaries will be in charge of the implementation of this action. 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. xx ha of grasslands restored or yy ha land purchased) and what deliverable products (e.g. management guide) will be produced.
- **Cost estimation**: Please summarise how you have estimated the cost of this action (eg no. of ha * cost / ha, 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.

Form C0 – List of all actions

This form allows the applicant to create all the actions foreseen in the project, per type of action (A, B, C,…)

- **Action number**: the number of each action, i.e. the letter of the category + its number in that category, e.g. A1, A2,…, C1, C2,… is automatically provided.
- **Name of the action**: Please ensure that the name is short (maximum 200 characters) and that it clearly reflects the objective(s) of the action.

Very important: **project actions have to be created before you are able to introduce any costs in the financial F forms**.

Form C1a – A. Preparatory actions, elaboration of management plans and/or of action plans

The preparatory actions should cover all that is needed to be completed to allow the start or proper implementation of other project actions indicated in sections B, C, D, E or F. This includes the preparation of technical documents (blueprints, preparation of inventories…) and any administrative or legal procedure needed to be carried out (consultation, call for tender, deliberations, training etc.).

If the elaboration of a management plan of the site and/or action plans are foreseen, the description of the corresponding preparatory action should specify what will be done to ensure that these plans will be implemented (e.g. competent authorities adopt the plan before the end of the project).

Where preparatory actions do not lead to direct implementation during the project, their description should include a sufficient set of explanations, commitments and guarantees to show that their full implementation after the project is effectively ensured. Otherwise, such actions may be deleted from the project.

Note: only concrete conservation actions should be listed as C actions and described on form C1c. Many applicants incorrectly list as C actions, actions that are not concrete conservation actions (e.g. actions related to inventories, management plans, monitoring, management guides, stakeholder communication, etc.).

Form C1b – B. Purchase/lease of land and/or compensation payment for use rights:

It is particularly important that the description of each action clearly indicates how **each** of the 11 eligibility conditions (listed above, see section 2.2.b on land purchase) is met.

For each action, please indicate the state of discussions with the landowners. Have they been consulted and do they agree in principle? Specify clearly what kind of habitats will be bought/leased and where they are located. Specify how much land will be bought/leased of each habitat types and justify the proposed cost/ha in relation to current land prices. If the land is to be bought for **land swaps**, specify this clearly (to be eligible the swap must be completed before the end of the project). If land is to be bought or leased in order to undertake other actions within the project, **indicate which actions** are dependent on the land purchase being achieved. If appropriate, please indicate **'alternative' land** which will be bought if there are difficulties with the prime target.

Form C1c – C. Concrete conservation actions

In case some of these concrete actions depend on preparatory actions or land purchase/leasing, please indicate this clearly.

For all concrete conservation actions to be carried out, please specify **which habitat types and/or species** are affected, and how this relates to the project's objectives. Provide clear information on the location and expected impact of each of these actions. Specify who will take care of the maintenance, if needed, after the end of the project.

If the beneficiaries need to build **infrastructure or purchase equipment or animals** (e.g. grazing cattle) for conservation management, 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 management actions that take place after the end of the project are not eligible for LIFE+ funding.

The output of all C actions should be **concrete, measurable and with a clear benefit** for the habitat, species targeted by the project. This benefit should be **measurable** and should be measured and evaluated under **monitoring actions(s) proposed in section D**. The output of each action should be indicated in the 'expected results' section. It should be quantified when possible.

Form C1d – D. Monitoring of the impact of the project actions (obligatory if there are concrete conservation actions)

All projects which foresee concrete conservation actions (i.e. that do not fall under one of the exceptions listed in section 2.2.a) shall include separate impact monitoring action(s) to measure and document the effectiveness of the project actions as compared to the initial situation, objectives and expected results. Specific indicators must be identified. Regular reporting on monitoring should be foreseen. A distinct “monitoring” action with an individual budget should therefore be proposed. In the description of this action, the "monitoring protocol", the “monitoring indicators” and “sources of verification” should be identified and described.

For projects that have a demonstration or innovation character, this action should also clearly include the evaluation of the technique or method demonstrated.

The following activity is considered obligatory and shall be included as a separate action(s) in form C1d: an assessment of the **socio-economic impact** of the project actions on the local economy and population, as well as on the **ecosystem functions restoration**. 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 C1e – E. Public awareness and dissemination of results (obligatory)

For each action please specify and justify the target audience. If an action involves meetings (e.g. with local stakeholders), you should specify how many meetings, where, when, who will attend, what will be discussed, how many persons are expected and how this will help 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 an action concern visitor access, specify what will be done, where, how many visitors, how this will help the project, 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 support from the local community, 2500 persons informed, 3000 newsletters circulated…), indicating how this serves the project's objectives.

The following dissemination activities are considered obligatory and shall be included as actions on form C1e:

- **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.
- 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 5-10 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:

- **Any media work** foreseen (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, films, visitor maps, 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.
- **Technical publications on project:** If already known, indicate in which journal the publication will take place. Such publications must acknowledge the EU financial support.

Form C1f – F. Overall project operation and monitoring (obligatory)

The applicant should list the different actions aiming at managing/operating the project and monitoring the impact of the concrete conservation actions on the habitat, species and/or biodiversity aspects targeted by the project.

Overall project operation:

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**.

Networking with other projects:

Networking with other projects (including LIFE III and/or LIFE+ projects), information exchange activities etc. should be presented as one distinct F category obligatory action with a separate budget.

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 LIFE+ Common Provisions. In the financial forms, the costs for the audit should be under the budget item "external assistance".

The coordinating beneficiary must produce an "**After-LIFE Conservation Plan**" as a separate chapter of the final report. It shall be presented in the beneficiary's language and (optionally) in English, in paper and electronic format. This plan shall set out how it is planned to continue and to develop the actions initiated in your LIFE project in the years that follow the end of the project, and how the longer term management of the site(s)/habitats/species will be assured. It should give details regarding what actions will be carried out, when, by whom, and using what sources of finance. A new and separate F action for this plan should be added to the proposal (with a cost of 0 €) and the plan must be added to the list of deliverables.

Guidelines for LIFE+ Biodiversity projects

Under this part, the applicant must list **all the actions which will be implemented under the project**. There are 5 types of actions:

A. Preparatory actions, elaboration of management plans and/or of action plans

(B. Note: There are NO B actions as land purchase or long-term lease / one-off compensation payments are not eligible)

C. Concrete conservation actions

D. Monitoring the impact of the project actions (obligatory if there are concrete conservation actions)

E. Public awareness and dissemination of results (obligatory)

F. Overall project operation and monitoring (obligatory).

Under each type of action (A, C, D…), the applicant must list the different actions: A1, A2 …, C1, C2 … D1, D2 … etc. It is recommended that each action which is expected to have an important output for the project (e.g. preparation of a management plan, organising a conference, etc.) is presented as a **separate action**.

The actions must be described as precisely as possible, however the description of an action should not in general exceed 1 page. The descriptions may be accompanied by **maps** locating the actions, explanatory graphs, tables or pictures which may be included in the forms by using the "Pictures" check box. However, please note that detailed maps locating all the activities foreseen under the project must be submitted **in annex** (see below).

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 200 characters) 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.
- **Beneficiary responsible for implementation:** Please indicate which of the project's beneficiaries will be in charge of the implementation of this action. 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 (quantitative information as far as possible):** Please indicate concisely what results will be achieved at the end of the action (e.g. xx ha of field surveys) and what deliverable products (e.g. management guide) will be produced.
- **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.

Form C0 – List of all actions

This form allows the applicant to create all the actions foreseen in the project, per type of action (A, C,…)

- **Action number**: the number of each action, i.e. the letter of the category + its number in that category, e.g. A1, A2,…, C1, C2,… is automatically provided.
- **Name of the action**: Please ensure that the name is short (maximum 200 characters) and that it clearly reflects the objective(s) of the action.

Very important: project actions have to be created before you are able to introduce any costs in the financial F forms.

Form C1a – A. Preparatory actions, elaboration of management plans and/or of action plans

The preparatory actions should cover all that is needed to be completed to allow the start or proper implementation of other project actions indicated in sections C, D, E or F. This includes the preparation of technical documents (blueprints, preparation of inventories…) and any administrative or legal procedure needed to be carried out (consultation, call for tender, deliberations, training etc.).

If the elaboration of a management plan of the site and/or action plans are foreseen, the description of the corresponding preparatory action should specify what will be done to ensure that these plans will be implemented (e.g. competent authorities adopt the plan before the end of the project).

Where preparatory actions do not lead to direct implementation during the project, their description should include a sufficient set of explanations, commitments and guarantees to show that their full implementation after the project is effectively ensured. Otherwise, such actions may be deleted from the project.

Note: only concrete conservation actions should be listed as C actions and described on form C1c. Many applicants incorrectly list as C actions, actions that are not concrete conservation actions (e.g. actions related to inventories, management plans, monitoring, management guides, stakeholder communication, etc.).

Form C1c – C. Concrete conservation actions

In case some of these concrete actions depend on preparatory actions, please indicate this clearly.

For all demonstration actions to be carried out, please specify **which biodiversity aspects** are tackled, and how this relates to the project's objectives. Provide clear information on the location and expected impact of each of these actions. Specify who will take care of the maintenance, if needed, after the end of the project.

If the beneficiaries need to build **infrastructure or purchase equipment or animals** (e.g. grazing cattle) for demonstration 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 management actions that take place after the end of the project are not eligible for LIFE+ funding.

The output of all C actions should be **concrete, measurable and with a clear benefit** for the biodiversity issues targeted by the project. This benefit should be **measurable** and should be measured and evaluated under **monitoring actions(s) proposed in section D**. The output of each action should be indicated in the 'expected results' section. It should be **quantified** when possible.

Form C1d – D. Monitoring of the impact of the project actions (obligatory if there are concrete conservation actions)

All projects which foresee concrete conservation actions (i.e. that do not fall under one of the exceptions listed in section 2.2.b) shall include separate impact monitoring action(s) to measure and document the effectiveness of the project actions as compared to the initial situation, objectives and expected results. Specific indicators must be identified. Regular reporting on monitoring should be foreseen. A distinct “monitoring” action with an individual budget should therefore be proposed. In the description of this action, the "monitoring protocol", the “monitoring indicators” and “sources of verification” should be identified and described.

Form C1e – E. Public awareness and dissemination of results (obligatory)

For each action please specify and justify the target audience. If an action involves meetings (e.g. with local stakeholders), you should specify how many meetings, where, when, who will attend, what will be discussed, how many persons are expected and how this will help 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 an action concern visitor access, specify what will be done, where, how many visitors, how this will help the project, 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 support from the local community, 2500 persons informed, 3000 newsletters circulated…), indicating how this serves the project's objectives.

The following dissemination activities are considered obligatory and shall be included as actions on form C1e:

- **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.
- 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 5-10 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:

- **Any media work** foreseen (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, films, visitor maps, 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.
- **Technical publications on project:** If already known, indicate in which journal the publication will take place. Such publications must acknowledge the EU financial support.

Form C1f – F. Overall project operation and monitoring (obligatory)

The applicant should list the different actions aiming at managing/operating the project and monitoring the impact of the concrete conservation actions on the habitat, species and/or biodiversity aspects targeted by the project.

Overall project operation:

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**.

Networking with other projects:

Networking with other projects (including LIFE III and/or LIFE+ projects), information exchange activities etc. should be presented as one distinct F category obligatory action with a separate budget.

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 LIFE+ Common Provisions. In the financial forms, the costs for the audit should be under the budget item "external assistance".

The coordinating beneficiary must produce an "**After-LIFE Communication Plan**" as a separate chapter of the final report. It shall be presented in the project's language and (optionally) in English, in paper and electronic format. It shall set out how you plan to continue disseminating and communicating your results after the end of the project. It should also indicate how you plan to continue / develop your actions in favour of biodiversity in the coming years. A separate action must be added to the proposal (with a cost of 0 €) and the plan must be added to the list of deliverables.

Guidelines common to LIFE+ Nature and LIFE+ Biodiversity projects

Form C2 – Deliverable products and milestones of the project, and activity reports foreseen

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. management plans, 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 land purchase", 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. The first report is the "Inception Report" (to be delivered within 9 months after the start date), which shall also provide a self-assessment of the viability of the project. If the project lasts more than 24 months and requests an EU contribution in excess of €300.000, 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. For projects with a duration exceeding 48 months and an EU contribution of more than € 2 000 000, the coordinating beneficiary shall provide two mid-term reports, to be delivered, together with the requests for mid-term pre-financing, after the thresholds defined in Article 29.3 of the Common Provisions have been reached. 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). Please consult Article 12 of the Common Provisions for full details on reporting obligations of LIFE+ projects.

Form C3 - Timetable

In the table, all actions are listed ordered by category. For each project action, please tick the action's implementation period.

When planning the implementation period of your project, please bear in mind that a LIFE+ 2011 project cannot start before 1 June 2012. Also, please add an appropriate safety margin at the end of the project, to allow for the inevitable unforeseen delays.

Annex:

Maps are **mandatory for projects including site-related actions**. One map per project site (sub-area) should be presented. Each map should include where appropriate:

- A title,
- If relevant, indication if the area is a SPA and or SCI, the name and code of the *Natura 2000* area,
- The location of the main habitats targeted by the project,
- Site-related activities, as planned in the proposal,
- The scale and legend of the map. The legend should include all project actions which have been located on the map, indicating its number and title (e.g. B1-Land purchase). The legend should also include the explanation of the habitats located on the map. Please indicate the official names and codes of these habitats,
- The boundary(ies) of the *Natura 2000* sites. If the proposal includes actions targeting species/habitats of the Habitats Directive, pSCI/SCI/SAC boundaries must be indicated. If the proposal includes actions targeting bird species of the Birds Directive, SPA boundaries must be indicated.
- The boundary(ies) of the project area(s), only if they are different from the *Natura 2000* site boundaries.
- For information, and only if useful, the boundaries referring to other protection status either at regional or national level,
- The location and extent of the main project actions listed in Part **C**. These actions must be specified in the legend.

Applicants shall make sure that maps are of **very good quality** and contain all the requisite information. Maps should be presented in **A4 or A3 formats only, as pdf documents**.

Note: A site-based LIFE+ Nature proposal may be rejected if the maps are of insufficient detail or quality to allow the evaluators to determine if the key actions will be implemented inside *Natura 2000* sites.

3.2 Financial application forms

<u>Guidelines common to LIFE+ Nature and LIFE+ Biodiversity projects</u>

The financial part of the *LIFE+ Nature* application file consists of 11 forms: FA, FB, FC, F1, F2, F3, F4 (F4a and F4b), F5, F6, F7 and F8.
The financial part of the *LIFE+ Biodiversity* application file consists of 10 forms: FA, FB, FC, F1, F2, F3, F4 (F4a, F4b and F4c), F6, F7 and F8.

<u>Important</u>: The project's budget must include only costs which are in accordance with Article 25 of the Common Provisions.

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.

The EU contribution will be calculated on the basis of eligible costs.

Please fill in the forms FC to F8 first.

<u>Form FA - Budget breakdown and project funding</u>

This form is filled in automatically, based on the data provided in the other forms in this section.

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

Overheads are eligible at a flat rate of up to 7% of total eligible direct costs of the entire project, excluding land purchase/lease (and the overheads themselves, which are indirect costs). The cell background will become red if the value derived from form F8 exceeds this threshold.

<u>Form FB – Cost breakdown for actions</u>

This form is filled in automatically, based on the data provided in the other forms in this section.

This form is very useful in order to link technical outputs and costs.

<u>Form FC – Project funding breakdown</u>

This form describes the funding of the project by the beneficiaries and/or co-financier(s), 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, are ineligible for EU co-financing and should not be included in the project's budget.

Coordinating beneficiary contribution: specify the amount of financial contribution provided by the coordinating beneficiary. This amount cannot include any funding obtained from other public or private sources specifically earmarked for the project or for a part of it (which should be declared as other co-financing).

Associated beneficiary contribution: Indicate the financial contribution from each associated beneficiary**.** These amounts cannot include any funding obtained from other public or private sources specifically earmarked for the project or for a part of it (which should be declared as other co-financing).

Amount of EU contribution requested: Specify the amount of financial EU contribution requested by the coordinating beneficiary and each of the associated beneficiaries. This amount must be in accordance with Articles 24 and 25.2 of the Common Provisions.

Amount of co-financing in €: Indicate the financial contribution of each co-financier**.**

General remarks on the forms F1 – F7

All costs must be rounded to the nearest Euro and must exclude recoverable value-added tax (VAT) when the beneficiary can recover this cost from its national authorities.

For each cost line, select from the drop-down menus the beneficiary short name and the action number to which the respective cost is related. To add a cost line use "+", to delete a cost line use "-".

Form F1 – Direct personnel costs

General: Article 5(5) of the LIFE Regulation states that civil servants' salary costs 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 staff in question must be specifically seconded to a project (i.e. their contracts/personnel files must show that the individuals concerned have been working for x weeks/months on the project).

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 staff charged to the project. This will be checked during both the selection phase and at the time of the final payment.

Only the cost of temporary personnel specifically recruited for the duration of the project and exclusively dedicated to its implementation shall not be taken into account in the calculation of the minimum amount of the public bodies' contribution mentioned above, on condition that:

(a) The contracts of such personnel do not begin before the date of signature of the grant agreement, nor finish after the end date of the project.

(b) The contracts mention the LIFE+ project specifically.

(c) The personnel concerned are employed exclusively for the implementation of tasks foreseen in the LIFE+ project.

Type of contract: Indicate the exact legal denomination of the type of contract, civil servant / permanent contract / temporary contract / service contract / etc. **and** whether it is part time or full time. Indicating both details is absolutely necessary. (Ex. Temporary contract/Full time)

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 any daily rate over 400€ should be justified.

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	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 EC 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.

Destination (From / To): Identify the origin and destination of the trips. Specify the country and city name, if already known. If applicable, for repetitive visits to the project area, write 'project area'.

Outside Europe: Indicate 'Yes' for travel outside the European Union.

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', 'project area visit'). 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 reporting.

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 0.22 € / km. If only costs for fuel are foreseen, they should also be listed here.

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.

Form F3 – External assistance costs

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 or infrastructure. They are limited to 35% of the total budget unless a higher level can be justified in the proposal.

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. However, transportation of materials, printing of dissemination materials and others, even if done by an external company, should be reported under other costs.

Please note that any services supplied under subcontract, but which are **related to prototype** should be budgeted under prototype and not under external assistance. Costs related to the **purchase or leasing** (as opposed to renting) **of equipment and infrastructure** supplied under subcontract should be budgeted under those cost categories and not under external assistance.

Costs for the **lease of land use rights** must be charged under "external assistance" only if it concerns a **short-term** lease that expires prior to the project end date. Longer-term leases must be declared under land purchase.

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.

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 Article 8.4 of the Common Provisions.

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.

General comments on Forms F4.a, F4.b and F4.c - Durable goods

Please put in this category only those goods that the accounting rules of the beneficiary in question classify as durable goods. Conversely, do not put anything in this category that the accounting rules of the beneficiary in question do not classify as durable goods.

In the sub-categories equipment and infrastructure, you need to indicate the actual cost as well as the value of depreciation, in accordance with Article 25 of the Common Provisions. <u>Only the depreciation is an eligible cost for the project and the EU co-financing will be calculated on the basis of this amount.</u>

Important: Depreciation of durable goods already owned by beneficiaries at the start of the project is not eligible for LIFE+ funding.

Actual cost: Full cost of the infrastructure or 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 25% of the actual cost for infrastructure and a maximum of 50% of the actual cost for equipment.

Exception 1: For prototypes, the eligible costs are equal to real costs under the conditions set up in Article 25.7 of the Common Provisions.

Exception 2: for LIFE+ Nature and Biodiversity projects, the cost of durable goods purchased by beneficiaries which are public bodies or private non-commercial organisations shall be considered eligible at 100%, if the organisation complies with all conditions set under Article 25.9 of the Common Provisions. In this case, the depreciation amount indicated should be the same as the actual cost.

Form F4.a – Infrastructure costs

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 Article 8.4 of the Common Provisions.

Description: Give a clear description and breakdown of the infrastructure per cost item, e.g. 'supporting steel construction', 'foundation of installation', 'fencing' etc.

Important: *All the costs related to infrastructure, even if the work is carried out under sub-contract with an external entity, should be reported under this heading.*

Investments in large-scale infrastructure are considered ineligible.

Form F4.b – Equipment costs

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 Article 8.4 of the Common Provisions.

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

Form F4.c – Prototype costs

Prototype costs are only eligible for LIFE+ Biodiversity projects.

A prototype is an infrastructure and/or equipment specifically created for the implementation of the project and that has never been commercialised and/or is not available as a serial product. It may not be used for commercial purposes during the life of the project and for five years after the project ends. See article 25.7 of the Common Provisions.

Durable goods acquired under the project can only be accepted in this cost category when they are essential to the innovative or demonstration aspects of the project. See Article 25.7 of the Common Provisions for definition of prototype.

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 Article 8.4 of the Common Provisions.

Description: Give a clear description of the prototype.

Important: *All the costs related to the prototype, even if the work is carried out under sub-contract with an external entity, should be reported under this heading.*

Form F5 – Costs for land purchase or long-term lease of land/use rights

Costs for land purchase or long-term lease of lands/use rights are only eligible for Life+ Nature projects.

General: Please consult Article 26.1 of the Common Provisions, for the rules concerning land purchase. If short-term lease would be appropriate for achieving the project objectives, those costs should be presented under external assistance.

Description of land purchase / long term lease / one-off compensation: Give a clear description of each item, e.g. "purchase of acidic grasslands on sub-site X", "one-off compensation for peat exploitation rights on sub-site Y", etc. Use different rows for different land uses/habitat types/sub-sites, if their prices diverge significantly.

Estimated Cost per hectare: Estimated cost, excluding taxes and other charges, rounded to the nearest €.

Your proposal has to include a letter from the competent authority or from a registered notary confirming that the price per hectare is not above the average for the types of land and locations concerned.

Form F6 – Costs for consumables

General: Consumables declared on this form must relate to the purchase, manufacture, repair or use of items which are not placed in the inventory of durable goods of the beneficiaries (such as materials for experiments, animal feeding stocks, materials for dissemination, repair of durable goods 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 costs may also be declared here. However, **general consumables/supplies** (as opposed to direct costs), such as telephone, communication costs, photocopies, etc. are covered by the overheads category.

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.

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 overheads category).

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 Article 8.4 of the Common Provisions.

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 F7 – 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. 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 Articles 25.1, 25.12 and 29.2 of the Common Provisions and to the evaluation guide for more information.

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 Article 8.4 of the Common Provisions.

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

Form F8 – Overheads

Overhead amount: Indicate the general indirect costs (overheads) for each beneficiary. Applicants benefiting from an operating grant from the Commission (such as for example LIFE+ NGO calls) are not entitled to claim overheads.

4. Admissibility checklist

A project may be declared inadmissible for one or more of the following reasons:

1. **Forms are partly or completely hand-written**
2. **Non-standard forms have been used**

   This does not refer to changes in font, size and layout, but to modifications of the format and content of the forms as presented in this application file.
3. **Obligatory forms or signatures are missing**

   Forms A1, A2, A3, A7, B1, B2 (B2a, B2b, B2c, B2d for LIFE Nature proposals), B3, B4, B5, B6 (for LIFE Biodiversity proposals) C1a, C1b (for LIFE Nature proposals), C1c, C1d, C1e, C1f, C2, C3, FA, FB, FC, F1, F2, F3, F4 a, b, F4c (for LIFE Biodiversity proposals only), F5 (for LIFE Nature proposals only), F6, F7 and F8 are mandatory for all projects.

   If the project involves associated beneficiaries, forms A4 and A5 are obligatory for each associated beneficiary.

   If the project involves co-financiers (other than the European Commission), a form A6 is obligatory for each co-financier.

   Detailed maps are mandatory where there are site-related actions (one map per site).

   All mandatory signatures should be present.
4. **The coordinating beneficiary is a private body, but has not submitted the obligatory balance sheet and profit and loss account and, where relevant, an audit report or auditor-certified balance sheet and profit and loss account.**
5. **The coordinating beneficiary is a public body, but has not submitted the obligatory public body declaration.**
6. **The coordinating beneficiary or any of the associated beneficiaries is not established in the European Union.**
7. **The project proposal was submitted to the European Commission after the deadline.**

Inadmissible proposals will not be assessed any further and will be rejected.

Informal check list for LIFE+ Nature and Biodiversity proposals

Note: The questions below aim to help you check that your application is as well prepared as possible. Your answers should in all cases be "yes". However, the list of questions is not exhaustive and the questions do not provide all the detailed information necessary (you must see the Guidelines for applicants).

1. Have you checked whether your project is a LIFE+ Nature project or a LIFE+ Biodiversity project?
2. Have you completely filled in all the obligatory forms?
3. Are forms A3, A4 and A6 signed and dated?
4. Is form B1 at least in English?
5. In case some forms or sections are blank, have you indicated "not applicable", "no relevant information" or an equivalent mention?
6. Is the start date not earlier than 01/06/2012?
7. Have you included a safety margin at the end of the project to allow for unforeseen delays?
8. Are all beneficiaries legally registered in the EU?
9. Have you determined whether they are "public bodies" or "private commercial organisations" or "private non-commercial organisations (including NGOs)"?
10. 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)?
11. Is the EU co-financing rate requested no greater than 50% (or no greater than 75% for Nature projects focussing on priority species / habitats)?
12. Is more than 25% of the budget devoted to concrete conservation actions (or does your proposal fall under the possible exceptions)? Have you allowed a safety margin?
13. For each action have you detailed the expected results as far as possible in quantitative terms?
14. Have you excluded recurring activities (only allowed in certain specific cases)?
15. Have you excluded preparatory actions that do not produce practical recommendations?
16. Have you included a coherent package of communication and dissemination actions?
17. Have you included indicators and actions to monitor the impact of the project and its actions on the species/habitats targeted?
18. 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?

19. Have you excluded all actions that can be funded by other EU funds? In case of doubt, have you foreseen complementary actions or objectives?
20. Have you detailed your efforts towards carbon neutrality?
21. Have you and your associated beneficiaries read the Common Provisions in full?
22. Is your application on a CD-ROM/DVD in the correct file format? Don't forget the financial forms and obligatory annexes (where required)!

Nature projects only:

1. Do all concrete conservation actions take place within officially designated *Natura 2000* sites? If not, do they fall into the exceptions foreseen? Are the actions clearly located with respect to the *Natura 2000* sites on the maps provided?
2. Do these actions target exclusively *Natura 2000* species and habitats (for site based actions: Annex I of the Birds Directive and/or Annexes I or II of the Habitats Directive; for species based actions: Annex I or II of the Birds Directive and/or Annexes II, IV or V of the Habitats Directive)?
3. Do the actions all take place in the European territory of the EU where the Birds and Habitats Directives apply (or are covered by the exceptions foreseen)?
4. Have you included detailed maps (size A3 or A4)? Do they include a readable scale, title and background details (e.g. village names, rivers, etc.)?
5. For land purchase/compensation payments have you clearly explained how you meet all of the 11 eligibility conditions?

Biodiversity projects only:

1. Does your project integrate monitoring, evaluation and active dissemination of the project's results and lessons learnt (see definitions of "demonstration" and "innovation")?
2. Do the actions all take place in the European territory of the EU (or are covered by the exceptions foreseen)?

5. ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: Contact address of the European Commission

All LIFE+ project proposals must be submitted via the national competent authorities.

The national competent authorities must use the following address to submit the proposals to the European Commission:

LIFE+ 2011 call for proposals Avenue du Bourget, n° 1 (BU-9 2/1) B - 1140 Brussels BELGIUM

ANNEX 2: Calendar of the LIFE+ 2011 evaluation and selection procedure

Date or period	Activity
18/07/2011	Deadline for applicants to send proposals to Member State authorities
09/09/2011	Deadline for the Member States to forward proposals to the European Commission
September 2011 to March 2012	Admissibility, exclusion and eligibility, evaluation and revision of the proposals
May-June 2012	Signature of individual grant agreements
01/06/2012	Earliest possible starting date for the 2011 projects

ANNEX 3: Important links

a) *General documents for all applicants:*

- **Regulation 614/2007 of the European Parliament and the Council of 23/05/2007 (LIFE+)**
- **Link to the LIFE+ Communication toolbox**
- **National Annual Priorities http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/funding/lifeplus2011/call/index.htm#nap**
- **Financial Regulation**

b) *LIFE+ Nature and Biodiversity:*

- **Commission Communication COM (2006) 216 final: Halting the loss of Biodiversity by 2010 – and beyond**
- **Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild flora and fauna**
- **Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the conservation of wild birds**
- **List of priority bird species of Directive 79/409/EEC considered as priority for funding under LIFE+**

- **Website providing a geographical view of the *Natura 2000* ecological network http://natura2000.eea.europa.eu**
- **Commission Communication "Options for an EU vision and target for biodiversity beyond 2010" http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/biodiversity/policy/pdf/communication_2010_0004.pdf**

ANNEX 4: Explanatory note regarding the indicative list of themes

LIFE+ Nature:

Green Infrastructure projects

Connectivity is a priority and therefore project proposals focusing on connectivity, corridors, buffer zones, stepping stones, etc., are actively encouraged. In the past, projects focusing on corridors and stepping stones, for example, were viewed as an exception. A good connectivity project should include solid scientific evidence showing the added value these areas may have for the *Natura 2000* sites/network. Many projects failed to prove their case in the past as they fell short providing such evidence (e.g. maps, data on species, carrying capacity, connectivity potential, expected impact on species/habitats, value for money, etc). It is not sufficient to state that an area might be a corridor between two sites!

The connectivity approach is particularly relevant for those sites or part of the network where the necessary site protection and management are already in place and the time has come to invest more on the "network" component.

Note that if you wish to promote ecological coherence/connectivity not necessarily in respect to the *Natura 2000* network, you should consider submitting a biodiversity proposal (which must be innovative/demonstrative). Please also look at the LIFE+ Environment application guide where all other innovative or demonstrative "green infrastructures" projects (i.e. those not aimed directly at *Natura 2000*), are welcome, such as green infrastructure elements in urban, peri-urban, rural and other extra-urban areas and projects that enhance permeability of the countryside. In addition it can promote ecosystem based approaches to tackle fragmentation and support the multi-purpose use of land. In such LIFE+ Environment proposals, the biodiversity aspect must not be the main thrust of the proposal.

Article 8 projects

In parallel with their submission of sites for protection under the Habitats Directive Member States should send the Commission their estimates of EU co-financing required and work with the Commission on identifying the essential conservation measures, for the successful management and restoration of sites in the *Natura 2000* network. The opportunities presented by Article 8 in defining a prioritised framework for action have still to be fully realised. LIFE+ aims at providing strategic funds to help the Member States carry out the necessary work foreseen under this Article. These projects must aim at carrying out all actions that would enable a Member State to fulfil its obligations as set in article 8 (1) and (2). Therefore national authorities must have a key role in these projects either as coordinating or associated beneficiary. These projects should include the delivery/notification to the European Commission of the relevant information as per Article 8 before the end of the project.

Natura 2000 management and restoration programme projects

These projects aim at helping Member States, local authorities and NGOs to adopt and implement a programmatic approach to ensure the long term management and restoration of their part of the *Natura 2000* network.

The management and restoration of *Natura 2000* mostly falls under the responsibility of national or regional/local authorities. In certain cases, NGOs also manage a large number of sites. The situation in terms of management capacity is very heterogeneous among Member States and within them. To address in a comprehensive and durable way the needs of *Natura 2000* at territorial level a more strategic approach at national/regional level is needed. This approach should take the format of national/regional financing plans and programmes with clear objectives, priorities and measures as well as an identification of the contribution from EU financial instruments and domestic financing (public and private). Such programmes would cover large portions of the network (e.g. all sites in a given region) and all elements necessary to generate a long-term capacity to manage all sites, to restore the sites, habitats and species to favourable status, as well as the features needed to guarantee the connectivity and the functionality of the network, thus covering aspects like green infrastructures and ecosystem services. The elements described above are only given for the purpose of this call and they do not pre-empt the results of the discussions currently ongoing between Member States and the Commission on the possible future priority action framework (PAF) approach. Results from this call might be useful in the framework of that discussion.

Indicative list of elements for National/Regional *Natura 2000* management and restoration programmes

Natura 2000 measures eligible for financing are those considered essential to manage or restore the species and habitats of EU conservation concern to a favourable conservation status. It is for the Member States concerned to decide on whether national or regional plans are to be submitted, having regard to their administrative systems for managing *Natura 2000* (below referred to as the 'territory').

A *Natura 2000* management and restoration programme could contain the following elements:

- A general description of the nature conservation values of the territory concerned by the plan, and its contribution to the biodiversity of the EU
- The specific legal, administrative and other provisions for the conservation of species, habitats and *Natura 2000* sites of the Birds and Habitats Directive in the territory
- A list of all the *Natura 2000* sites present in the territory, and an assessment of their contribution to the conservation of species and habitats of EU concern (at regional, national and biogeographical levels)
- Information on the results of the Article 17 conservation status assessment for the species and habitat types, with particular regard to priority species and habitat types, as well as conservation status assessments for Annex I and migratory birds subject to *Natura 2000* protection in the territory
- Information on the main risks and threats to the habitats and species

- Information on relevant governmental and non-governmental plans and other arrangements for the conservation and recovery of different habitat types and species
- The strategic conservation objectives and priorities for the period 2014-2020
- Sufficient detailed information on the measures to achieve the objectives and priorities including
  - What, where and when: A description of the objectives, expected results and measures, sites concerned and corresponding time plan
  - How: A plan of financing for the measures including details on the estimated costs and the EU and domestic sources planned to be used
  - Who: The body or bodies that would be in charge of implementing the measures
  - The link with EU policy sectors other than that for the environment
- The procedural provisions and co-operation between public authorities as well as between them and private bodies, technical and scientific institutions, and if applicable with other regions and transborder or international co-operation, for the appraisal, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of measures to be undertaken
- An outlook for the financing of *Natura 2000* beyond this funding period (i.e. after 2020).

The "After LIFE" plan should be carefully prepared. LIFE+ co-financing will be released at the end of the project only if the Commission is reasonably reassured that *Natura 2000* management and restoration programme will be implemented before or shortly after the end of the project. In particular the proposal shall provide clear and exhaustive elements showing how the content of these programmes will subsequently be used to:

- Prepare future applications for domestic or EU support programmes (including LIFE+) to implement parts of them or their totality,
- Contribute to the development of future national or regional programmes as part of the structural funds or rural development planning process,

In order to ensure they receive the widest and strongest possible support to guarantee their future implementation, the development of such financing plans and programmes should involve from the start all key stakeholders and in particular those in charge of the management and restoration of the *Natura 2000* network and those responsible for regional, agricultural, social and fishery policies.

LIFE+ Biodiversity:

Projects targeting threatened species that are not included in the annexes of the Habitats Directive but that have a status of "endangered" or worse in the available European Red Lists (http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/conservation/species/redlist/index_en.htm) or in the IUCN Red List for those species that are not covered by the European red Lists

This item opens the possibility to work on additional endangered species not listed in the Habitats Directive. At the same time it limits this possibility to species that are recognised as endangered or worse at European or global level. In other words, a proposal on a species locally threatened, but not listed in the reference lists above is unlikely to receive any funding.

Projects addressing ecosystem functions and services. The focus of LIFE-Nature has been, until now, on the conservation of habitats and species, for themselves and not for the functions and the services they deliver to society

Under this item the Commission hopes to receive proposals addressing in an innovative/demonstrative way this particular aspect of biodiversity.

Projects addressing biodiversity and soil. The Commission welcomes projects aiming at increasing the protection of soil biodiversity and its many ecological functions

Soil biodiversity has traditionally been neglected and the Commission wishes to reverse this tendency. Please also look at the LIFE+ Environment Policy and Governance guidelines where soil and biodiversity is one of the targets, but under a more production-oriented approach (through agriculture).