LIFE+ Information and Communication

Guidelines for applicants 2012

Part 1 – Content of the proposal

The current guidelines apply to the preparation of project proposals to be submitted to the European Commission under *LIFE+ Information and Communication*. They are intended to help the applicant prepare the content of the project proposal.

Table of contents

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 2012 LIFE+ call for proposals has been set at EUR 276.710.000.

These guidelines for applicants only apply to this sixth call for LIFE+ project proposals ("LIFE+ 2012").

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 Habitats and Birds Directives (Council Directive 92/43/EEC and Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council).
- Demonstration and/or innovation projects contributing to the implementation of the EU 2020 Biodiversity Strategy outlined in the Communication "*Our life insurance, our natural capital: an EU biodiversity strategy to 2020*"[2]

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 2012".
- Projects contributing to the monitoring of the environmental status of forests within the European Union territory.

3. *LIFE+ Information and Communication*

- Information and communication actions and awareness raising campaigns related to the implementation, updating and development of European environmental policy and legislation set out in the present guidelines.
- Awareness raising campaigns for the prevention of forest fires and training for forest fire agents.

[2] COM(2011)244 is replacing the principle objective of halting biodiversity loss within the Community by 2010, as referred to in (EC) No 614/2007

1.3 How, where and when to submit a proposal?

LIFE+ beneficiaries must submit their proposals using the web tool eProposal available via the LIFE web page. The application contains all administrative (A), technical (B and C) and financial (F) forms required and functionalities to attach relevant documents (maps, photos, diagrams, graphs, mandatory administrative and financial annexes related to the legal status of the coordinating beneficiary according to section 1.5 below, other supporting documents, etc).

For complete details regarding the eProposal tool, please refer to the document *'LIFE+ Information and Communication, Guidelines for applicants 2012, Part 2 – Application forms'.*

The proposal will automatically be submitted (after clicking the 'Submit proposal' button and receiving a confirmation message) 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

LIFE+ beneficiaries must submit their proposals by **26 September 2012, 23h59 Brussels local time**.

The national authorities will then forward through the eProposal tool all LIFE+ project proposals to the Commission, by **2 October 2012, 23h59 Brussels local time**.

When preparing the proposal, the applicants are invited to consult the "Frequently Asked Questions" section on LIFE website at http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/funding/lifeplus2012/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 2012'*.

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 **May-June 2013** at the very latest (for a detailed timetable, see **Annex 1**).

The earliest possible starting date for projects is **1 July 2013**.

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*[3], (2) *private commercial organisations*[4] and (3) *private non-commercial organisations* (including NGOs)[5].

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".

<u>All beneficiaries</u> must show their <u>legal status</u> (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 <u>situations foreseen under Article 93(1) and 94</u> of the Financial Regulation (by signing the application form A3 or A4 – instructions for this are given in the document *'LIFE+ Information and Communication, Guidelines for applicants 2012, Part 2 – Application forms'*).

<u>All coordinating beneficiaries</u> that have declared themselves as being <u>public bodies</u> 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 <u>other</u> 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 2012'.*

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.

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

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 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 or 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 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.

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+. For specific guidelines and recommendation on how to fill in the technical and financial forms, please refer to the document *'LIFE+ Information and Communication, Guidelines for applicants 2012, Part 2 – Application forms'*.

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 European Union 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 European Union financial contribution. Furthermore it cannot act, in the context of the project, as a sub-contractor to any of the project's beneficiaries.

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 €, with Information and Communication projects often having a lower budget.

When preparing a project budget, beneficiaries should take into account the maximum ceilings for the LIFE+ allocation per Member State: a project proposal from one single Member State that requests an EC 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 *Guide for the evaluation LIFE+ project proposals 2012*).

1.6.5. What is the maximum rate of European Union 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 cannot be submitted 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 EC 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+ 2012 projects will be May-June 2013. Therefore, the earliest possible starting date for these projects is **1 July 2013**. 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+ project take place?

Projects submitted under the 2012 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 the *'LIFE+ Information and Communication, Guidelines for applicants 2012, Part 2 – Application forms'*, '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 European Union 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 2012'*).

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.

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. A recurring action is understood in the context of this application guide as "any day to day operation".

For that reason, any recurring activities that were already carried out prior to the project and/or need to be continued after the end of the project (at the same level of intensity, using the same techniques and material…) should not be included in the budget of Information and Communication proposals.

1.6.15. 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 European Union 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, the Civil Protection Financial Instrument 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 European 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 European Union budget, as well as any related ongoing applications for funding from the European Union 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 European Union financial instruments.

1.6.16. Role of national annual priorities

Article 6 of the LIFE+ Regulation allows Member States to submit national annual priorities – for 2012 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 2012*). 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/lifeplus2012/call/index.htm

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"[6] and to describe if and how their project is likely to support any of the objectives set out in this Communication.

[6] 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 European Union 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 European Union 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+ Information and Communication

2.1 What is *LIFE+ Information and Communication*?

The LIFE+ Regulation[7]

These guidelines concern uniquely ***LIFE+ Information and Communication.***

There are two types of LIFE+ Information and Communication projects:

1. LIFE+ Information & Communication projects aiming at **communication actions and awareness raising campaigns on environmental issues (Nature and biodiversity, climate change, water, air, soil, urban environment, noise, chemicals, environment and health, natural resources and waste, forests, innovation and strategic approaches)**. The actions and campaigns should be linked to the implementation, updating and development of EU environmental policy and legislation.

2. LIFE+ Information & Communication projects aiming at contributing to **forest fire prevention**[8] within the EU. Special training for agents involved in forest fire prevention and awareness raising campaigns for populations affected by forest and woodland fires can therefore be considered for funding under this heading.

Indicative list of themes

Whilst any application in line with the two abovementioned types of LIFE+ Information and Communication projects is welcome, for the 2012 call for proposals the European Commission would particularly like to see proposals dealing with the following themes:

1. Nature and biodiversity:

- Launching national public campaigns to promote Natura 2000;
- Skills development for Natura 2000 site managers;
- The implementation of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive with specific reference to the way the evaluation of incidence is carried out (e.g. developing and promoting a system for the accreditation of evaluators, sharing best practices, etc.);
- Halting the loss of biodiversity;
- The promotion of Green Infrastructure[9] by explaining it better to citizens;
- Integrating biodiversity and ecosystem services concerns into other sector policies by explaining the benefits (including financial) and providing solutions

[7] 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
[8] When not covered by the Civil Protection Financial Instrument – Council Decision No 2007/162/EC, Euratom
[9] More information on http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/ecosystems/index_en.htm

for key stakeholder groups including policy makers, businesses, local, regional or national authorities, where it has not been done before, with concrete applications of the ecosystem services approach during the project lifetime. This might be achieved i.e. by integrating the concept of ecosystems services in private companies management or in public spending in particular in connection to Green Public Procurement;

- Communication and awareness raising on proper integration of funding for biodiversity and nature within the 2014-2020 financial programmes, resulting in concrete technical assistance to authorities setting up the respective operational programmes.

2. Resource efficiency:

- Sustainable consumption and production.
- Natural resources and waste, to develop and implement policies designed to ensure sustainable management and use of natural resources and waste.
- Water scarcity/efficiency awareness raising campaigns focused on water-stressed Member States.

3. Climate change:

- Raising public awareness of climate change and its impacts, particularly in EU12 countries.
- Forests and climate change.

4. Other:

- Compilation and active transfer to relevant stakeholders that could usefully implement them of the techniques used and results and lessons learnt from a significant number of previous LIFE projects for a specific theme/habitat/species (e.g. rivers, bogs, bats).
- Projects related to the protection of the marine environment on issues targeted by the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (2008/56/EC).
- Increasing the awareness and knowledge about the importance of soil and soil biodiversity and its many ecological functions, and sustainable land use.
- Awareness raising and education on citizens' exposure to air pollutants through the comparative assessment of air pollution levels in various larger cities of the EU.
- Environmental noise.
- The broad and targeted dissemination of best practices (including best practices developed as part of previous LIFE projects).

The current Communication Strategy of the European Commission's Directorate General (DG) Environment should also be taken into account when formulating proposals. This Communication Strategy is annexed to the Annual Management Plan of DG Environment, which is available here: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/environment/index_en.htm

2.2 General principles of LIFE+ Information and Communication funding

All actions financed under LIFE+ Information & Communication should have a European added value and should be complementary to those actions that can be financed under other European Union funds during the period 2007-2013.

Furthermore, in order to be eligible for LIFE+ funding, projects must be highly visible and technically and financially sound.

Geographical scope

All the proposed actions must take place on the territory of the Member States.

What is the maximum allowed co-financing rate?

LIFE+ projects are co-financed by the European Union at a maximum rate of 50% of eligible costs (article 5.2 of the LIFE+ Regulation).

Eligibility of costs

To be considered eligible, costs must comply with the provisions of Articles 25 and 26 of the Common Provisions.

Applicants should avoid presenting LIFE+ Information and Communication projects that include the following activities and related costs, as they are ineligible:

- Investments in major infrastructure and significant expenditure on durable goods.
- Land purchase or any other related costs.
- Research, development of knowledge base and technological development activities (studies, creation of complex databases etc.) that do not have a clear link with the project's objectives.
- Marketing activities for commercial products.
- Lobbying activities of NGOs.
- Information and dissemination actions and awareness raising campaigns related to EMAS and ECOLABEL registration procedures.
- Forest fire prevention actions covered by the Civil Protection Financial Instrument.
- Costs for the protection of intellectual property rights (e.g. patents).

Monitoring activities

Appropriate activities to measure the impact of the project both on the target audiences and on the environmental problem targeted must be included in the project proposal. Indicators and impacts must be monitored and evaluated throughout the duration of the project.

Technical capacity to implement the project

The project partnership composed of the coordinating beneficiary, the associated beneficiaries (if relevant) with the support of external assistance (if relevant) must demonstrate sufficient technical capacity to implement the project.

This includes primarily environmental know-how, in terms of knowledge of the environmental problem/issue targeted by the proposal, but also some communication/training know-how in terms of appropriate experience or expertise in communication/training actions/awareness raising campaigns.

2.3 Conceiving a LIFE+ INF project proposal

Logical steps

Applicants should consider the following logical steps in order to conceive a project proposal:

1. Identify **the environmental problem/issue** to be addressed by the project and describe the present situation. The environmental problem/issue must be well known by the beneficiaries at the application stage and must be clearly related to a specified EU environmental policy. The present situation should be described in such a way that it will be later possible to compare the situation during and after the project by way of (if possible) measurable indicators.

   Examples of environmental problems to be addressed by projects:

   1) *High mortality rate of the Golden Eagle due to poaching and illegal hunting.*
   2) *Very low level of recycling of a certain type of waste.*
   3) *Natura 2000 is either not known at all and/or frequently considered as hindering potential economic development. This is largely due to the lack of citizen awareness.*

      Example of description of the present situation: The most recent opinion poll by XXX shows that only 10% of the citizens know about the existence of Natura 2000. Of those only XX% could describe the main features of the network. Only XX% could name a Natura 2000 site , etc….

2. Define **what is to be achieved** at the end of the project in terms of progress towards solving the environmental problem targeted or significantly improving the current situation. Warning: A simple carrying out of the communication campaign (conferences, distribution of communication material etc.) without achieving anything specific cannot be considered to constitute a positive result of the project.

   Examples of objectives to be achieved by projects:

   1) *Reduction of the mortality rate of the Golden eagle by 10% in 3 years in a specific area through awareness raising activities.*
   2) *Increase in the rate of recycling from 20 to 40% in 3 years.*
   3) *Increased citizen awareness of Natura 2000 sites and network, their value, status etc.*

3. Define **who will be targeted** by the project and why these target audiences are relevant for addressing the environmental problem identified.

   Example of target audiences for projects:

1) *Potential poachers, hunters, public authorities and rural population of a defined area.*
2) *The relevant companies of the targeted area.*

4. Define the **actions** that will enable the objectives to be achieved. The actions must all be necessary and specific to both the identified problem and the target audiences identified. The key messages should be refined to suit the different target audiences and their respective level of awareness of the issue.

   Example of communication and awareness raising actions in projects:

   1) *Organisation of targeted meetings and events, publication of brochures and leaflets for the target audiences.*
   2) *Companies' managers visit regions where the recycling is already in place and effective. Demonstration actions of recycling. Organisation of targeted meetings and events, publication of brochures.*

5. Define **indicators** that will enable to measure the impact of the project both on the target audiences and on the environmental problem/issue targeted. These indicators and impacts must be monitored and evaluated at appropriate regular intervals during the implementation of the project. The progress achieved is to be compared with the situation before the start of the project.).

   Example of monitoring indicators for projects:

   1) *Number of hunters reached, reduction of cases of poaching and illegal hunting in the defined area, improved sensitisation of the target audiences to the environmental problem as measured by polls etc.*
   2) *Increase of the recycling rate, number of companies reached/active in recycling activities.*

Example of a project: An EU awareness-raising campaign in a specific economic sector

What is the underlying environmental problem?

The applicant is a national or European Federation of companies of the industrial sector X or a Public Authority responsible for the same sector.

The applicant is aware of the fact that the companies of this sector will undergo a process of adaptation in order either to comply with the environmental legislation and/or because of competitive reasons (for example: reduction of consumption/cost of resources).

Nevertheless, the companies are not always aware of the most innovative technologies or of the best practices available in their sector to achieve their environmental objectives.

What is the campaign trying to achieve?

- Explain the need for environmental adaptation for legal and/or economic reasons;

- Disseminate among the companies the most innovative technologies and best available practices to meet the environmental needs in the relevant industrial sector;
- Motivate companies to undertake the adaptation process.

Who should the applicant target in order to achieve these objectives?

This campaign is ideally targeted to all the industries active in the sector X.

By convincing them that the implementation of innovative technologies and best practices will improve both economic and environmental performances as well as improve their image on the market, the applicant expects, as an objective, that the adaptation process (i.e. concretely implementing innovative technologies and best practices) will at first start in a certain number of more conscious companies (20% within the project lifetime) and then gradually expand to the other ones.

The project is also widely advertised, in order to stress the efforts the companies of sector X are doing for the environment.

How to structure a project proposal?

The following main categories/types of eligible actions may be distinguished in the project proposal:

A. Project management and monitoring of project progress (obligatory)

B. Preparatory actions (if needed)

C. Communication actions / awareness raising campaigns

D. Training activities (including those for forest fire prevention)

E. Monitoring of the project impact on the main target audiences and on the environmental problem/issue targeted (obligatory)

F. Communication and dissemination of the project and its results (obligatory for all LIFE+ projects)

Each project actions should be classified under one of the above categories.

It is strongly recommended that, if possible, the project includes **no more than 10 actions**, in addition to the A actions and F actions.

For Information and Communication proposals targeting biodiversity and nature issues, applicants are strongly advised to consult the document "Scoping study for an EU-wide communications campaign on biodiversity and nature"[10] which contains useful information and ideas on how to maximise the impact of this type of campaign.

[10] http://ec.europa.eu/environment/pubs/pdf/biodiversity/biodiversity_scoping_study.pdf

A. Project management and monitoring of project progress (obligatory)

Please find below instructions on some compulsory actions and information that have to be included in the proposal under A-actions:

- **Project management and monitoring of project progress:**

  The project proposal must contain the description of appropriate project management provisions, covering the management of the project's technical, financial and administrative aspects. The project management should be described even in cases where no costs are charged for this to the project.

  Project management shall ensure that the project is run in compliance with the LIFE+ obligations (Grant Agreement, LIFE+ Regulation and Common Provisions), in line with the revised project proposal. These obligations include reporting to the Commission according to art. 12 of the Common Provisions and according to the timetable indicated in the revised proposal (form C3).

  According to art. 4.1 of the Common Provisions, the coordinating beneficiary is solely legally and financially responsible to the Commission for the full implementation of the project. Project management may however be partially or fully delegated by the coordinating beneficiary to an associated beneficiary or be partially outsourced. However, in any case, the coordinating beneficiary must retain a full and day to day control of the project.

  The project management structure must be clearly presented in the project proposal and should be supported by a self-explanatory management chart (organigram). This chart should show the distribution of responsibilities within the project management team and show management interactions, how management decisions will be taken and how the coordinating beneficiary (Project Manager) will maintain a clear authority and an efficient control of the project management staff, even if part of the project management would be outsourced.

  It is strongly recommended that the project management staff has previous experience in project management and that the Project Coordinator or Project Manager be full-time. If a Project Coordinator or 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.

  The project management shall ensure proper consultation or involvement of the main stakeholders (see Form B4), for example, by involving them in a Project Steering Committee who would meet on a regular basis during the project.

- **Networking with other projects**: A project shall contain an obligatory set of measures for networking activities, unless the applicant duly justifies in the proposal why such activities are not appropriate for the type of project in question. These activities 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). These networking activities shall aim at ensuring an efficient transfer of know-how and experience in order to foster its replication in similar contexts. Networking activities etc. should be presented as one distinct action with a separate budget.

- **After-LIFE Communication plan:** 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 communicating on the environmental issues addressed by your project after the end of the project. A new and separate action must be added to the proposal for this plan (this action must be a zero cost action) and the plan must also be added to the list of deliverables.
- **Audit:** Where required (see Article 32 of the Common Provisions), an independent auditor nominated by the 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".
- **Monitoring of project progress:** In order to ensure that the project is implemented according to plan (scope of the actions, timetable etc.), the project management must set up appropriate procedures to measure the progress of the different project actions and the project as a whole. Progress must be measured by the management on a regular basis. This may involve regular meetings with action coordinators, the use of progress indicators etc. Monitoring of project progress should be <u>clearly distinguished</u> from the monitoring of the project *impact* on the target audiences and on the environmental problem targeted (E actions).

<u>B. Preparatory actions (if needed)</u>

In general, and amongst others, preparatory actions should:

- be directly related and necessary for the implementation of the communication / awareness raising or training activities of the project,
- be of limited duration (i.e. should be significantly shorter than the project duration).

Preparatory actions would typically include: preparatory studies, consultation of stakeholders, application for authorisations and permits etc.

As a general principle, preparatory actions must produce practical recommendations and/or information which <u>are necessary and will be directly used by the project</u>. The preparatory actions do not aim at completely preparing the project.

Research activities may not be included.

<u>C. Communication actions / awareness raising campaigns</u>

The actions included in this section should constitute the actual implementation of the communication actions / awareness raising campaign on environmental issues or on forest fire prevention.

Communication or awareness raising activities must specifically address the environmental problem identified (see Form B2). This involves addressing a specific problem related to topics such as nature and biodiversity, water, energy, waste and resources, forest fire etc.

<u>It must be ensured that the communication actions / awareness raising campaigns only disseminate information that is fully in line with EU environmental policy.</u>

The proposed actions must to be clearly related to the project's objective. They must be primarily aimed at the target audiences (see Form B4), which has a direct relation with or is directly responsible for the environmental problem/issue.

Such actions would cover, for instance:

- the organisation of awareness raising events for the target audiences, such as conferences, seminars, exhibitions, demonstrative actions, forums for exchange of experiences etc.,
- the publishing of communication material for distribution to the target audiences during the project. For example: brochures describing the environmental problem and how to address it, leaflets, posters, newsletters, stickers etc.,
- advertising campaigns in the media,
- the production of films or videos for demonstration to the target audiences during the project,
- on-line communication activities on the project's website,
- etc.

The Commission encourages the implementation of result-oriented *innovative* approaches in the awareness raising campaigns.

For projects falling in the policy area 'national or transnational communication actions or awareness raising campaigns related to nature protection or biodiversity matters', proposed actions should complement the EU biodiversity campaign.

Project actions must lead to <u>a measurable change of attitude in the daily life of the target audiences, to an improved implementation of European policy and legislation at national, regional and local level, and to an increased exchange of knowledge and best practices amongst stakeholders</u>.

The project must therefore:

- Effectively inform the target audiences of the environmental issue targeted by the project,
- provide guidance to the relevant target audiences on how they can individually (or collectively) take concrete actions to address or influence positively the environmental issue in question,
- identify potential partners, provide them with the relevant information and turn them into multipliers of the awareness raising activities beyond the LIFE+ project.

If necessary, the implementation of the communication actions / awareness raising campaign may be partially outsourced.

When implementing the campaign, the beneficiaries shall always clearly display the LIFE logo and mention the European Union support.

<u>**D. Training activities**</u>

These activities should aim to develop the specific skills on environmental issues of the target audience (for example, training of forest fire agents in order to improve their capacity to prevent forest fires). The typology of the proposed training should be described in detail.

Projects aiming to train forest fire agents in forest fire prevention should not include activities aiming at improving the operating conditions during forest fire assistance interventions, the improvement of the command chain or addressing the issue of public preparedness in the case of forest fire emergencies. (ref. Civil Protection Financial Instrument).

When implementing these actions, the beneficiaries shall always clearly display the LIFE logo and mention the European Union support.

E. Monitoring of the project impact on the main target audiences and on the environmental problem targeted (obligatory)

The awareness raising, communication and training actions (C and D actions) must lead to a measurable change of attitude in the daily life of the target audiences, to an improved implementation of European policy and legislation at national, regional and local level, and to an increased exchange of knowledge and best practices amongst stakeholders.

In this view, every project proposal must contain an appropriate amount of monitoring activities in order to measure the concrete *impact* of the communication actions, awareness raising or training activities on the main target audiences and on the environmental issue targeted.

These activities are distinct of the monitoring of the project progress (A 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 environmental 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 main target audiences should allow the project management either to confirm the adequacy of the developed means to address the specific problem, 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, both in terms of impact on the main target audiences and in terms of environmental improvement.

It should be noted that, in specific cases, the environmental impact of a Communication and Information project may be difficult to measure (e. g. when the environmental problem addressed is climate change or biodiversity loss). In such cases, the project should at the very least attempt to assess the change in the attitude of the target audiences, describing a clear methodology and indicators.

F. Communication and dissemination of the project and its results (obligatory for all LIFE+ projects)

These communication and dissemination activities refer to activities to publicise the project and its results, and should not be confused with the activities (C- and D-actions) that constitute the core of a LIFE+ Information and Communication project. They are required in order to give visibility to the existence of the LIFE+ project, its key actions, objectives and results, as well as the EU financial support it receives. Such activities include both obligatory and non-obligatory communication and dissemination actions. The following dissemination activities are considered obligatory and shall be included as F-category actions:

- **Notice boards** describing the project shall be displayed at strategic places accessible to the public. The LIFE logo should always appear on them (see Common Provisions).
- A description of the project shall be included in a newly-created or existing **project website** (with the LIFE logo), and full details of its objectives, actions, progress and results should be provided. The website shall be online at the latest six months after the start of the project, shall be regularly updated during the project period and shall be kept for at least five years after the end of the project (see Common Provisions).

- 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 beneficiary's language. It is aimed at a broader target group and serves to inform decision-makers and a non-technical audience on the objectives and the results achieved by the project. It shall be 5-10 pages long and present the project, its objectives, its actions and its results to a general public. This report shall be submitted with the project's Final Report and should be included on the project's website.

Other non obligatory activities may include:

- Media work (press articles, etc.).
- Workshops, seminars, conferences relating to the project's activities and results.
- Production of brochures, booklets, films, etc. relating the project's activities and results.

3. ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: Calendar of the LIFE+ 2012 evaluation and selection procedure

Date or period	Activity
26/09/2012	Deadline for applicants to submit proposals to Member State authorities
02/10/2012	Deadline for the Member States to forward proposals to the European Commission
16/10/2012	Deadline for the Member States to comment on individual project proposals
October 2012 to April 2013	Evaluation and revision of the proposals
May-June 2013	Signature of individual grant agreements
01/07/2013	Earliest possible starting date for the 2012 projects

ANNEX 2: Important links

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/lifeplus2012/call/index.htm

- **Financial Regulation**