



**Guide for the evaluation of
LIFE+ project proposals 2012**

This document aims at explaining to the public the criteria and procedures that will be used for the evaluation of LIFE+ proposals submitted for the 2012 round.

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1. General Remarks

The selection/evaluation/revision process is carried out by the European Commission, with the assistance of a company/consortium of independent expert evaluators, hereafter called 'the Contractor'. However, the Commission remains responsible for the rejection of the proposals during the process, the awarding of the final scores and the drawing up of the final list of proposals to be co-financed.

Only proposals received by the Commission through the online tool eProposal before the deadline of **2 October 2012, 23h59** Brussels local time via the competent national authorities are registered in the ESAP (*Evaluation and Selection Award Procedure*) database. Any information or documents submitted otherwise, or after the deadline, will not be taken into account unless explicitly requested by the Commission.

Once the registration of proposals in ESAP has been completed, the individual evaluators will have access to ESAP and may enter their comments and scores.

Basic selection and evaluation principles

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

Within the limits allowed for by thematic and national allocation rules of the LIFE+ Regulation, the principle of equal treatment between all proposals must be strictly applied throughout the technical selection, award, financial selection and admissibility and eligibility phases of the evaluation process. Evaluations and scores given to each proposal must be as objective and equitable as possible. Each decision (for the technical selection, financial selection and admissibility and eligibility criteria) and each score given (for the award criteria) must be clearly justified in ESAP by reasoned comments.

All comments in ESAP will be made in English. Evaluators must ensure that all their comments are concise, complete and comprehensible. All comments must make sense without any further need for explanation, and must always be directly relevant to both the proposal and the criterion applied. Evaluators must avoid vague, ambiguous assessments. Comments must be precise enough to allow the Commission to ask precise questions from the beneficiaries during the revision phase. For each evaluation criterion, evaluators must provide substantial comments "for" and "against", justifying the score proposed.

Evaluators must prepare detailed, unambiguous and realistic suggestions for possible amendments and improvements to the project proposal. If a project is pre-selected on the "long list", these suggestions will become essential for the subsequent revision phase.

Those award criteria that are evaluated by the Contractor will always be assessed independently by at least two expert evaluators. Each expert evaluator must elaborate an assessment report in ESAP for each proposal assigned to him/her. Based on these reports, the Contractor will provide a synthesis assessment for each proposal submitted for assessment. In case the two individual expert assessments for a given award criterion significantly diverge, the Contractor will conduct a third assessment of the proposal and will elaborate a new synthesis report on this particular criterion.

2. Technical selection phase

All proposals submitted to the European Commission via the competent national authority through eProposal are checked for their compliance with the technical selection criteria. Please refer to the "Guidelines for applicants 2012", Parts 1 and 2 regarding the use of eProposal and the information which must be provided.

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

1) **Technical reliability of the project participants**

A proposal can only be rejected on the basis of this criterion if there is strong positive evidence that any of the beneficiaries has been an unreliable manager in previous LIFE- or other European Union-financed projects and has given no proof that necessary initiatives have been taken to avoid similar problems in the future, or if there would be strong evidence that the beneficiaries do not have the technical competency to carry out the project.

2) **Scope of the LIFE+ proposal**

A proposal is rejected at this stage if it clearly falls outside the scope of LIFE+ funding, as defined by the Articles 1 and 4 of the LIFE+ Regulation.

3) **Specific questions for each of the LIFE+ components**

A proposal is rejected at this stage if it does not comply with all the relevant criteria that apply to its particular component:

1a) Criteria applicable to all *LIFE+ Nature and Biodiversity* proposals:

1. the share of the proposal budget allocated to concrete conservation actions is at least **25%** (a "concrete conservation action" being defined here as any action that is necessary to achieve any temporary or durable improvement of the conservation status of the species, habitat types or ecosystems targeted by the proposal). Please refer to sections 2.2 and 2.3 of the *Guidelines for applicants 2012 – LIFE+ Nature and Biodiversity, Part 1* for exceptions to this rule.

1b) Criteria applicable to *LIFE+ Nature* proposals only:

1. the proposed actions are aimed at implementing the objectives of the EU Birds and Habitats Directives and, more specifically, they concern conservation measures for species and/or habitat types that are covered by the relevant annexes of the Habitats or Birds Directive;
2. for site-related conservation actions, there is sufficient evidence for the long-term sustainability of the investments through an appropriate conservation status; please refer to section 2.2 of the *Guidelines for applicants 2012 – LIFE+ Nature and Biodiversity, Part 1* for further details.
3. the proposed actions are demonstration or best practice measures;
4. the proposed actions would take place on the territory of the Member States to which the Birds and Habitats Directives apply or are covered by the

exceptions foreseen in section 1.6.8 of the *Guidelines for applicants 2012 – LIFE+ Nature and Biodiversity, Part 1*.

1c) Criteria applicable to *LIFE+ Biodiversity* proposals only:

1. the proposed actions are related to the implementation of the Commission Communication "*Our life insurance, our natural capital: an EU biodiversity strategy to 2020 (COM(2011) 244)*";
2. the proposed actions are innovative or demonstration measures;
3. the proposed actions would take place on the Member State's territory or are covered by the exceptions foreseen in section 1.6.8 of the *Guidelines for applicants 2012 – LIFE+ Nature and Biodiversity, Part 1*.

2) Criteria applicable to *LIFE+ Environment Policy and Governance* proposals:

1. the proposed actions are innovative or demonstration measures related to any of the priority "areas of action" set out in the *Guidelines for applicants 2012 - LIFE+ Environment Policy and Governance*; or it is a proposal for forest monitoring within the meaning of Article 3.2. (d) of the LIFE+ Regulation;
2. the proposed actions would take place on the Member State's territory or are covered by the exceptions foreseen in section 1.6.8 of the *Guidelines for applicants 2012 – LIFE+ Environment Policy and Governance, Part 1*.

3) Criteria applicable to *LIFE+ Information and Communication* proposals:

1. the proposed actions are communication actions / awareness raising campaigns on environmental, nature protection or biodiversity conservation issues that help EU environment policy decisions and/or provide information to EU citizens; or they are awareness raising campaigns for the prevention of forest fires and/or training activities for forest-fire agents;
2. the project partnership (coordinating beneficiary and associated beneficiaries, including external assistance) has the appropriate technical capacity / experience in the specific environmental issue addressed by the project / forest fire prevention as well as some experience in communication;
3. the project includes activities to monitor the impact of the communication actions/ awareness raising campaigns on the main targeted audience and on the environmental problem targeted;
4. the proposed actions would take place on the territory of the Member States or are covered by the exceptions foreseen in section 1.6.8 of the *Guidelines for applicants 2012 – LIFE+ Information and Communication, Part 1*.

Guidance for the assessment of the innovative or demonstration character of LIFE+ Biodiversity proposals:

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.

Guidance for the assessment of the innovative or demonstration character of LIFE+ Environment Policy and Governance proposals:

Where the proposed actions are presented as **innovative**, the level of innovation can be evaluated from different perspectives:

- a) relative to the technologies applied by the project (technological innovation),
- b) regarding the way technologies are implemented (innovation in processes or methods) and,
- c) innovation concerning the business and economic models developed by the project (economic and business innovation).

These different dimensions of innovative nature have to be compared with the state of the art at a global (world) level. Innovation should not be restricted to pure technological breakthroughs. For instance, a new procedure may change one specific step in the process of manufacturing a product or, alternatively, it may bring about a more general transformation of the entire production cycle, and thus of that cycle's total impact. The same applies for a new economic or business model which would have the potential to turn a hitherto valueless waste into an input by means of business reengineering or change in the economic model. 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) cannot be considered innovative per se.

Where the proposed actions are presented as demonstration actions they can be considered as having a clear demonstration character if the underlying hypotheses are reliably validated or rejected as a result of the implementation of the proposal. The proposal should therefore demonstrate that the necessary steps have been taken to ensure that the foundations of these hypotheses have been appropriately secured (i.e. the type and amount of previous research

needed). As regards the demonstration scale, the project should be implemented on a technical scale that allows the evaluation of the technical and economic viability of the proposed pilot on a larger scale. The proposal must justify the choice of a particular scale for the project in the light of the above. In particular, for projects developing decision support systems, planning tools or the like, there has to be a specific project action implementing the tool to demonstrate its technical and economic viability and to enable a comparison with the baseline situation. Furthermore, a significant dissemination activity is essential for such proposals.

3. Award phase

All proposals that were not rejected by the end of the technical selection phase are admitted to an in-depth evaluation in the award phase. A proposal admitted to this phase will be given scores on the basis of the following six award criteria:

Name of the award criterion	Maximum score	Minimum pass score	Significant divergence
1. Technical coherence and quality	15	8	> 3
2. Financial coherence and quality	15	8	> 3
3. Contribution to the general objectives of LIFE+	25	12	> 4
4. European added value and complementarity and optimal use of the EU funding	30	15	> 6
5. Transnational character	5	-	> 1
6. Compliance with national annual priorities and national added value according to the LIFE+ national authority	10	-	> 2
Total	100		

For any given proposal, each of the above 6 criteria will be assessed and scored by two expert evaluators from the Contractor. On the basis of these two independent assessments, the Contractor will establish a synthesis report for each of the 6 criteria.

If an individual score would significantly diverge between the two individual assessments - significant divergence as defined in the above table or scores of opposite effect (pass and fail) -, the Contractor will have to conduct a third independent assessment of this criterion and elaborate a new synthesis report for this criterion.

1. Technical coherence and quality

A proposal should be clear, coherent, realistic and feasible in terms of actions, timetable, budget and value for money. The pre-operational context must be thoroughly described and there should be a clear link in the proposal between the problems and threats, the project objectives, the proposed actions and their

expected results. All actions should be properly described and quantified and, if necessary, accompanied by adequate maps. The proposal must clearly describe how, where, when and by whom each action in the proposal will be undertaken.

The proposal must be drafted so as to allow the evaluators to assess to what extent the financial and technical means involved are adequate for implementing the project, and whether the project can be considered value for money.

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

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

Proposals may receive up to 15 points for this criterion. The pass score for this criterion is 8 points. For this criterion, a proposal would receive a score below the pass score if it is poorly conceived and/or requires a considerable revision.

2. Financial coherence and quality

The proposal budget must be consistent with the actions described in the technical part of the proposal. The financial contributions of the beneficiaries/co-financiers, the proposed budget and the proposed project expenditures must comply with the rules and principles foreseen in the LIFE+ guidelines for applicants, the Common Provisions for LIFE+ projects and the LIFE+ Regulation. The budget must be transparent and coherent, cost-efficient and offer best value for money, including for the management of the project.

Proposals may receive up to 15 points for this criterion. The pass score for this criterion is 8 points. A proposal would receive a score below the pass score if its financial part is poorly conceived and/or requires a considerable revision.

3. Contribution to the general objectives of LIFE+

Under this criterion, a proposal may be considered for a higher scoring if the problem targeted is relatively important at the European level, if the proposal is expected to provide a significant contribution to solving the problem targeted, and/or if the project is expected to generate findings that are widely applicable.

Proposals contributing to the updating or development of European Union environmental legislation may be considered for higher scoring, particularly if they contribute to the integration of the environment into other policies and/or if they contribute to sustainable development.

LIFE+ proposals related to any of the "indicative list of themes" set out in chapter 2 of the related Application Guidelines will be favourably considered.

Furthermore, LIFE+ Nature and Biodiversity proposals involving business-sector co-financing will be favourably considered.

Proposals should be designed so as to ensure that the proposed actions are sustainable and that continuity and permanence of the project results are ensured.

In particular, the Commission attaches great importance to the long-term sustainability of LIFE+ Nature projects. The sustainability of LIFE+ Nature project results will be carefully checked and weighed during the evaluation process.

Proposals may receive up to 25 points for this criterion. The pass score for this criterion is 12 points. A proposal may only be given a score below the pass score if the potential contribution of the proposal to the objectives of LIFE+ is low and if its improvement would either be impossible or require a considerable revision.

4. European added value and complementarity and optimal use of the EU funding

According to Article 3 paragraph 2 of the LIFE+ Regulation, there are different minimum requirements for different types of LIFE+ projects. This is evaluated under the technical selection criteria stage:

- 1) under *LIFE+ Nature*, best practice or demonstration actions must be proposed;
- 2) under *LIFE+ Biodiversity*, *LIFE+ Environmental Policy and Governance* and *LIFE+ Information and Communication*, demonstration or innovative actions must be proposed, except for the following 3 types of projects:
 - a) projects for awareness-raising campaigns (*LIFE+ Information and Communication*),
 - b) projects for the training of forest fire agents (*LIFE+ Information and Communication*)
 - c) projects for the long-term monitoring of forests (*LIFE+ Environmental Policy and Governance*)

Under this Award criterion, a proposal is evaluated as to what extent it shows European added value beyond the set minimum requirements.

Furthermore, in addition to these minimum requirements, LIFE+ proposals should also foresee the development and dissemination of lessons learnt. Monitoring, assessment, evaluation must therefore be specifically foreseen in the proposals, as is the case for communication, networking and dissemination activities.

The involvement or consultation of stakeholders in the project implementation process will also be positively considered under this criterion, as would be any other positive governance element included in the proposal.

Combating climate change is currently a high priority of European environmental policy. Therefore, projects that have specifically foreseen actions or management approaches for limiting their "carbon footprint", may also receive a higher scoring.

Article 9 of the LIFE+ Regulation specifies that measures shall not be financed under LIFE+ if they fall in the eligibility criteria and main scope of, or receive assistance for the same purpose from, other European Union financial instruments, including the ERDF, ESF, CIP, EFF and FP7. The beneficiaries must therefore justify in the proposal why the proposed actions do not fall into the main scope of other European Union programmes. In addition, care should also be taken to avoid the financing of recurring activities (unless these activities would be innovative and/or be included in the proposal for clear demonstration purposes). Finally, for LIFE-Nature projects, 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).

Proposals that develop synergies with other European Union financial instruments and/or focus on the financing of those actions that cannot be financed through these other funds may be considered for a higher scoring.

A proposal may be considered negatively regarding complementarity and optimal use of the EU funding if there is evidence that it falls into one or more of the 4 following situations:

1. LIFE+ is not the most suitable programme for financing the proposed actions.
2. The proposal includes recurring activities, which are neither innovative nor of demonstration character, nor (for LIFE+ Nature projects) intended only for a trial period.
3. The proposal includes compensation measures which are obligatory according to national legislation and/or there is evidence that the financial contributions to the proposal budget include a substantial share of funds that are earmarked for compensation measures.
4. There is evidence that a substantial share of the project budget is earmarked for actions that are financially secure without LIFE+ funding and would therefore anyway be carried out in the near future.

Proposals may receive up to 30 points for this criterion. The pass score for this criterion is 15 points.

5. Transnational character

According to Article 6 of the LIFE+ Regulation, transnational proposals shall be favoured under LIFE+ when the transnational cooperation is essential to guarantee the achievement of the project objectives. On the basis of this criterion, additional points may only be given to a proposal if there is sufficient evidence for an added value of the transnational approach.

Proposals may receive up to 5 points for this criterion. There is no minimum pass score for this criterion.

6. Compliance with national annual priorities and national added value according to the LIFE+ national authority

According to Article 6.3 of the LIFE+ Regulation, Member States may submit to the Commission a list of national annual priorities selected from the multi-annual strategic programme set out in Annex II of this Regulation. The national annual priorities for the LIFE+ 2012 selection round have been published and are available for consultation on the LIFE+ website.

A proposal with actions in one single Member State may receive between 0 and 5 points regarding compliance with the national annual priorities, depending on whether or not it falls into any of the priority areas published for the Member State in the year concerned.

A transnational proposal falling within the national priorities of more than one Member State may be more favoured.

According to Article 6.6 of the LIFE+ Regulation, Member States may provide written comments on individual project proposals. The relevant national authorities may comment, in particular, on whether a proposal corresponds to the national annual priorities selected from Annex II of the LIFE+ Regulation. Their comments may also indicate, for example, that the proposed actions are supported by national programmes, official management plans, or by any other legal framework at the national or sub-national level.

Any Member State comments submitted must also refer to the national authority's relationship with the project.

Any such comments by the relevant national authority can only be taken into account if they have been sent to the Commission by the deadline of **16 October 2012, 23h59 Brussels local time**.

Proposals may be given a higher score (out of a maximum of 5 points) regarding their national added value if the Member State comments provide additional positive elements that have not been considered so far in any of the other award criteria.

Member States should be aware that their comments would be forwarded to the concerned applicants of the proposals that are not retained for co-financing.

Proposals may receive up to 10 points for this criterion. There is no minimum pass score for this criterion.

Conclusion of the award phase

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

- Any proposal that receives a final score below the pass score for any of the award criteria 1 to 4 will be declared "rejected at the award phase".
- For all proposals not falling into the above situation, the total score to be awarded is calculated by summing up the final synthesis scores for the 6 award criteria.

4. Admissibility, exclusion and eligibility phase

4.1. Admissibility and Exclusion

All proposals that were not rejected at the end of the technical selection and award phases are checked for their compliance with the following admissibility and exclusion criteria (see section 10 of the current guide for the detailed list of questions):

- 1) The proposal has been submitted by the applicant to the competent national authority until **26 September 2012, 23h59 Brussels local time** and forwarded to the Commission by the national authority before the deadline of **2 October 2012, 23h59 Brussels local time**.

- 2) The relevant LIFE+ 2012 application forms in eProposal have been used for preparing and submitting the proposal. Depending on the objectives of the proposal, the eProposal application forms used are those for "LIFE+ Nature", "LIFE+ Biodiversity", "LIFE+ Environment and Governance" or "LIFE+ Information and Communication".
- 3) All relevant application forms in eProposal are filled in.
- 4) Where relevant, the **signed declarations** (forms **A3, A4, A6, A8**) listed below are uploaded in the relevant eProposal sections (see application guide for instructions). Failure to deliver these declarations or to clearly indicate the financial contribution (forms A3, A4 and A6) may lead to an exclusion of the proposal from all further evaluation. Signing the forms A3 and A4 also confirms that the beneficiaries are not in one of the situations referred to in Articles 93(1) and 94 of the Financial Regulation (Commission Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 2342/2002 of 23 December 2002).¹
 - The scanned and uploaded (in eProposal) application forms A3, A4 (only if there is one or more associated beneficiaries) and A6 (only if there is one or more co-financiers) bear dated signatures with the status and full name of the signatory clearly in evidence on the document. If the status of the co-financier commitment at this stage is 'not fully confirmed', the declaration must explain the current status of the commitment.
 - For *LIFE+ Nature and Biodiversity* proposals, if considered necessary, a complete and uploaded (in eProposal) form **A8** with a dated signature should be provided from the competent nature conservation authority of the Member State where the proposal is submitted (and from all participating Member States in the case of multi-national proposals).
 - For *LIFE+ Information and Communication* proposals aiming at contributing to forest fire prevention a complete and uploaded (in eProposal) form **A8** with a dated signature is provided from the competent forest fire national central authority of the Member State where the proposal is submitted.
- 5) Form B1 (Summary description of the project) is completed in English. The other application forms may, however, be completed in any official EU language, except Maltese and Irish.
- 6) The beneficiaries are all legally registered in the EU.
- 7) The three following mandatory financial annexes are provided for coordinating beneficiaries that are **private commercial or private non-commercial organisations**. **It should be noted that these annexes will be required by the Commission irrespective of whether they are obligatory or not for the particular type of organisation, according to national legislation, in the coordinating beneficiary's Member State:**
 - The "LIFE+ Simplified Financial Statement", provided as a separate Excel file with the LIFE+ Application Package. The financial table in this statement must be completed and annexed (uploaded) to the proposal as an Excel file.

¹ O.J. L248 of 16.10.2002

- The most recent balance sheet and profit and loss account. This document must be annexed (uploaded) to the LIFE+ proposal as a scanned pdf file, printable in A4 format. Where the coordinating beneficiary does not yet have an annual 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.
 - 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 (uploaded) 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.
- 8) A mandatory annex (uploaded) to the LIFE+ proposal for coordinating beneficiaries that are **public bodies** is the "Public body declaration" stating that the coordinating beneficiary is a public body or equivalent to "public law body", fully completed, with a dated signature.

All LIFE+ proposals that do not fully comply with all the above admissibility and exclusion criteria are declared *inadmissible* and are eliminated from all further evaluation, unless they fall into one or more of the following cases:

1. one or more of the mandatory signatures / dates of signatures are missing (admissibility questions n° 3 and 7 where relevant)
2. one or more mandatory financial annexes are missing (admissibility question n° 5)

For all LIFE+ proposals that fall into one or more of the above two situations but are otherwise complete, the Commission will send an e-mail to the coordinating beneficiary indicating the annexes that are missing.

The e-mail address of the coordinating beneficiary contact person indicated in form A2 will be used for this and all subsequent contact, therefore applicants should ensure that it is an e-mail account which is valid, active and checked (including spam folders) on a daily basis.

A copy of this e-mail will be sent to the relevant national LIFE+ contact point indicated in the LIFE+ guidelines for applicants. The coordinating beneficiary will have **5 working days** to reply and provide, by e-mail, the missing/incomplete documents/forms.

The Commission will also use this period to request the necessary financial annexes set out under point 8 above in cases where it has doubt as to the status of any public body.

Those proposals for which all the requested missing/incomplete documents/forms have not been provided by the deadline indicated in this

e-mail are declared *inadmissible* and are eliminated from all further evaluation.

4.2. Eligibility

Proposals will be checked for compliance with the following eligibility criterion (see section 9 of the present guide for the detailed list of questions):

- Projects must fall within the scope of one of the three strands of the LIFE+ programme (Nature and Biodiversity, Environment Policy and Governance, Information and Communication)

By the end of the admissibility, exclusion and eligibility phase, the applicants of all inadmissible or ineligible proposals will be informed of the decision to eliminate their proposal. A copy of this letter will be sent to the relevant national LIFE+ contact point indicated in the LIFE+ guidelines for applicants.

5. Financial selection phase

All proposals that were not rejected at the end of the technical selection, award and Admissibility, exclusion and eligibility phases are checked for their compliance with the financial selection criteria. Proposals which do not comply with one or several of the financial selection criteria listed hereafter are declared not selected.

The purpose of the financial selection is to verify the compliance of LIFE+ proposals with the provisions of Article 176 of the Implementing Rules of the Financial Regulation (Commission Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 2342/2002 of 23 December 2002). These require that: "*The applicant must have stable and sufficient sources of funding to maintain his activity throughout the period during which the action is being carried out ... and to participate in its funding*"

The Commission will utilise all the information at its disposal to assess whether the candidate fulfils the selection and the exclusion criteria. On the basis of Article 176, a proposal will be rejected if the evaluator has strong evidence that it falls into any of the following situations:

- if there is information available to indicate that the coordinating beneficiary and/or one of its associated beneficiaries, contrary to the declaration for exclusion, are in one of the situations referred to in art. 93(1) and 94 of the Financial Regulation n° 1605/2002 (JO L 248 of 16/10/2002);
- the results of audits carried out by European Union Institutions in relation to the coordinating beneficiary and/ or one of its associated beneficiaries have clearly shown their inability to comply with the administrative rules regulating European Union grants and in particular those applicable to LIFE+;
- the coordinating beneficiary has an unpaid debt owed to the Commission at the time of the submission of its application. The Commission will make this assessment based on a consultation of its "early warning system".

For private commercial and private non-commercial organisations:

- the auditor's report or auditor-certified balance sheet and profit and loss account provided with the project proposal has not given an "unqualified opinion" about the coordinating beneficiary's financial viability²;
- on the basis of the financial viability test, it is concluded that the coordinating beneficiary does not have the financial capacity to cover its share of co-financing within the proposed project period;
- on the basis of the financial viability test, it is concluded that the coordinating beneficiary does not have the capacity to manage the financial amounts provided for in the proposal budget within the proposed project period;

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

² i.e. a statement that the auditor has carried out the task in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards and without restriction as to the scope of the work necessary to express his opinion, that the financial statements audited were drawn up in accordance with appropriate or generally accepted accounting principles, and that they give a true and fair view of the organisation's financial situation and the results of the operation.

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

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

1. the ratio "total grant requested divided by the number of project years" / "shareholders' equity" is lower than 1
2. the ratio "current assets" / "current liabilities" is higher than 1
3. the ratio "total debts" / "total assets" is lower than 0.8
4. there is a positive operational profit

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

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

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

6. Drawing-up of the long and reserve lists of proposals to be admitted to the revision phase

The Commission will establish the long list of proposals to be admitted to revision once the final approval of the scores to be awarded to each proposal has taken place and the Admissibility and Financial selection phases have been successfully concluded. Besides being based on the scores given to each proposal as a result of the previous award phase, this list must take into account the three following conditions set out in the LIFE+ Regulation:

- *"At least 50% of the budgetary resources for LIFE+ dedicated to project action grants shall be allocated to support the conservation of nature and biodiversity." (Article 11)*
- *"The Commission shall ensure a proportionate distribution of projects by establishing annual national allocations for the periods 2007-2010 and 2012-2013." (Article 6.2)*
- *"The Commission shall endeavour to ensure that at least 15% of the budget dedicated to project actions grants is allocated to transnational projects." (Article 6.7b)*

The following table summarises the indicative national allocation (in Euro) per Member state for the LIFE+ application round 2012:

Member State	Allocation 2012	Member State	Allocation 2012
Austria	5 353 492	Latvia	2 660 198
Belgium	5 762 614	Lithuania	3 038 780
Bulgaria	9 173 428	Luxembourg	3 021 649
Cyprus	2 681 299	Malta	2 614 074
Czech Republic	5 900 374	Netherlands	8 489 636
Denmark	4 782 488	Poland	18 379 918
Estonia	3 639 225	Portugal	7 391 578
Finland	7 356 827	Romania	11 669 142
France	27 975 307	Slovakia	6 365 639
Germany	31 356 448	Slovenia	5 598 674
Greece	9 814 377	Spain	27 219 926
Hungary	7 135 251	Sweden	9 143 758
Ireland	4 212 612	United Kingdom	21 648 405
Italy	24 324 882	TOTAL	276 710 000

For setting up a long list of LIFE+ proposals, the following additional rules will be applied:

- Any proposal specifically supporting the conservation of nature and biodiversity objectives will be taken into account for the 50% threshold for "nature and biodiversity". Therefore, this threshold will not necessarily encompass those projects submitted under LIFE+ Nature and Biodiversity

alone, but may also include any proposal submitted under LIFE+ Information and Communication that would primarily target a nature or biodiversity issue. These proposals will be labelled NAT/BIO proposals, as opposed to ENV/INF proposals.

- For each proposal, the Member States to which the EU financial contribution will be allocated must be clearly identifiable in the proposal. This EU financial contribution is either allocated to the Member State in which the coordinating beneficiary is registered, or, in case of a transnational proposal, to more than one Member State. In the latter case, the proportion of the EU financial contribution that needs to be allocated to a particular Member State is equivalent to the amount of the EU contribution requested by the partner(s) in that Member State.
- In the process described hereafter, the EU financial contribution for a given LIFE+ proposal would normally be based on the EU co-financing amount requested for the project. However if the requested EU co-financing rate (in %) is higher than the allowed maximum rate according to the rules set in the LIFE+ Regulation and in the LIFE+ guidelines for applicants, the EU financial contribution to the project will be re-calculated on the basis of the maximum allowed EU co-financing rate.
- The score applied to each proposal for its selection within the budgetary limits of the national allocations will be based on the pooled score for the award criteria 1 to 6. This score can be up to maximum 100 points. However, where proposals would need to be selected for funding outside of the budgetary limits as set by the national allocations (see notably Article 6(8) of the LIFE+ Regulation), the score applied to each proposal will be based on the pooled score for the award criteria 1 to 5 only, i.e. not taking into account the award criterion 6. This score can thus only be up to 90 points.

The details are as follows:

- a) Projects ranked by quality in support of the conservation of nature and biodiversity will be assigned to the indicative national allocations. This process continues until a minimum of 50% (as required by Article 10(4) of the Regulation) of the total budget for the year is consumed at EU level. This process stops when no further projects in support of the conservation of nature and biodiversity can be assigned to national allocations or if during this process, allocating the next best project means that any national allocation to which the project is related is exceeded. In this case the project goes to a residual list.
- b) Further projects (nature and biodiversity, environmental policy and governance and information and communication) are assigned, in order of their relative quality, to the indicative national allocations. This process stops when all projects are allocated or all indicative national allocations are consumed. If during this process allocating the next best project means that any national allocation to which the project is related is exceeded, the project goes to a residual list.
- c) At this stage, if any budget remains available, further projects from the residual lists are then allocated on the basis of quality alone provided this is in line with the condition that 50% of the budget is allocated to projects in

support of the conservation of nature and biodiversity. The scores of these projects will not include any of the points awarded in respect of national priorities or Member States' comments.

- d) A list of projects for a maximum of 100% of the budget together with a reserve list (up to 30% of the budget), is in this way established.

Only those projects on this list representing up to 130% of the available budget will enter the revision phase.

In cases of proposals with equal scores in the list, priority will be given to proposals with the highest requested European Union contribution.

7. Revision phase

The aim of the revision phase is to clarify, for all proposals listed on the preliminary long and reserve lists, all open questions regarding feasibility, cost-effectiveness and eligibility of individual actions, compliance with the LIFE+ Regulation and Common Provisions, etc.

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

The applicant will have 15 calendar days to reply to the questions and/or to introduce the requested modifications or improvements to its proposal.

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

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

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

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

8. Set up of the final short and reserve list of proposals to be submitted to the LIFE+ committee

Once the revision of proposals has been concluded, a final short list of LIFE+ proposals to be funded and a final reserve list of proposals will be set up. These short and reserve lists will take into account possible budget reductions and/or the removal of proposals from the previous long and reserve lists as a result of the revision. It is therefore possible that one or more projects that were previously reserve-listed might be taken on board in the final short list. In cases of proposals with equal scores in the list, priority will be given to proposals with the highest requested European Union contribution.

The procedure applied is identical to the steps (a) to (d) described in chapter 5, except that the 2 reserve lists for NAT and ENV/INF only encompass each an additional **5%** of the available LIFE+ budget.

If there are not, at this stage, enough projects under nature and biodiversity to cover 50% of the available budget for project co-financing, the value of ENV/INF proposals to be co-financed is, in any case, limited to 50% of the available budget.

9. LIFE+ Committee meeting

The LIFE+ Committee will deliver an opinion on the final short list of the proposals that are retained for funding by the end of the revision phase, as well as on the final reserve list of proposals. The following documents will therefore be submitted to the LIFE+ Committee:

1. the list of all the proposals received, indicating, for each proposal, the results of the admissibility and eligibility, technical and financial selection (if evaluated) and the final scores for the 6 award criteria (if evaluated)
2. the short-list of proposals proposed for funding (proposal name, name of the coordinating beneficiary, requested EU funding, and national allocation of the EU funding)
3. a reserve list of proposals (proposal name, name of the coordinating beneficiary, requested EU funding, and national allocation of the EU funding)
4. a written explanation on how the Commission had regard to the allocation criteria established in accordance with Article 6 paragraph 2 of the LIFE+ Regulation, and national annual priorities and comments submitted in accordance with paragraphs 4 and 6 of Article 6 the LIFE+ Regulation, while respecting the objectives and criteria set out in Articles 1, 3 and 4 of the LIFE+ Regulation

Once the LIFE+ Committee has delivered its opinion on the final short and reserve list, applicants will be informed by letter about the results of the evaluation of their proposals and, where appropriate, about the reasons for rejection. A copy of this letter will be sent to the relevant national LIFE+ contact point indicated in the LIFE+ guidelines for applicants.

Projects on the reserve list may only be retained for co-financing if there would be an unexpected withdrawal of a proposal, between the date of the Committee meeting and the time when the individual grant agreements are signed. Applicants of the reserve-listed proposals can therefore only be informed about the final fate of their proposal in the spring of 2012.

After the LIFE+ Committee has delivered its opinion on the short and reserve list, it is the object of a Commission Decision before grant agreements can be issued.

10. Detailed evaluation forms

Technical selection phase	
Technical reliability of the project participants	
1. Are all beneficiaries technically reliable?	Yes / No
Scope of the LIFE+ proposal	
1. Does the proposal fall within the scope of the Articles 1 and 4 of the LIFE+ Regulation?	Yes / No
Specific questions for each of the LIFE+ components	
1a. Criteria applicable to all LIFE+ Nature and Biodiversity proposals	
1. Is at least 25% of the proposal budget allocated to concrete conservation actions (or, alternatively, does the proposal fall into any of the exceptions as indicated in sections 2.2 or 2.3 of the <i>Guidelines for applicants 2012 – LIFE+ Nature and Biodiversity, Part 1</i> ?	Yes / No
1b. Criteria applicable to LIFE+ Nature proposals only	
1. Are the proposed actions aimed at implementing the objectives of the EU Birds and Habitats Directives and, more specifically, do they concern conservation measures for species and/or habitat types that are covered by the relevant annexes of the Habitats or Birds Directive?	Yes / No
2. For site-related actions, is the long-term sustainability of the project investments ensured through an appropriate conservation status?	Yes / No / n.a.
3. Are the proposed actions best practice or demonstration measures?	Yes / No
4. Are the proposed actions taking place on the territory of the EU Member states to which the EU Birds and Habitats Directives apply or are covered by the exceptions foreseen in section 1.6.8 of the <i>Guidelines for applicants 2012 – LIFE+ Nature and Biodiversity, Part 1</i> ?	Yes / No
1c. Criteria applicable to LIFE+ Biodiversity proposals only	
1. Are the proposed actions related to the objectives of the Communication "Our life insurance, our natural capital: an EU biodiversity strategy to 2020 (COM(2011) 244)"?	Yes / No
2. Are the proposed actions innovative or demonstration measures?	Yes / No
3. Are the actions taking place on the EU Member states territory or are covered by the exceptions foreseen in section 1.6.8 of the <i>Guidelines for applicants 2012 – LIFE+ Nature and Biodiversity, Part 1</i> ?	Yes / No
2. Criteria applicable to all LIFE+ Environmental policy and governance proposals	
1. Are the proposed actions innovative or demonstration measures related to any of the "priority areas of action" set out in the guidelines for applicants for <i>LIFE+ Environment Policy and Governance</i> , or is it an action "... for the development and implementation of ... broad-based, harmonised, comprehensive and long-term monitoring of forests and environmental interactions" (LIFE+ Regulation, Article 3.2.(d))?	Yes / No
2. Are the actions taking place on the EU Member states territory or are covered by the exceptions foreseen in section 1.6.8 of the <i>Guidelines for applicants 2012 – LIFE+ Environment Policy and Governance, Part 1</i> ?	Yes / No
3. Criteria applicable to all LIFE+ Information and Communication proposals	

1. Are the proposed communication actions/ awareness raising campaigns on environmental, nature protection or biodiversity conservation issues, that help EU environment policy decisions and/or provide information to EU citizens; or are they awareness raising campaigns for the prevention of forest fires and/or training activities for forest-fire prevention agents?	Yes / No
2. Does the project partnership (coordinating beneficiary and associated beneficiaries, including external assistance) have the appropriate technical capacity / experience in the specific environmental issue addressed by the project / forest fire prevention <u>as well as some experience in communication</u> ?	Yes / No
3. Does the project include activities to monitor the impact of the communication actions/awareness raising campaigns on the main targeted audience and on the environmental problem targeted?	Yes / No
4. Are the actions taking place on the EU Member states territory or are covered by the exceptions foreseen in section 1.6.8 of the <i>Guidelines for applicants 2012 – LIFE+ Information and Communication, Part 1</i> ?	Yes / No

Award phase

1. Technical coherence and quality

In evaluating this criterion, the following points should be taken into account:

1. Is the pre-operational context well described (problems and threats, status of preparatory activities, authorisations, permits, etc.)?
2. Is there a clear logical link between threats and problems, objectives, actions and expected results?
3. Do the actions clearly state how, where, when and by whom they will be undertaken? Are they properly described and quantified, and is there sufficient information to assess their eligibility? Are adequate maps provided, if relevant?
4. Are the expected results of the project properly described and quantified? Are indicators included to assess the progress of the project?
5. Is the budget justified and coherent and are costs adequate to the actions and means proposed (i.e. is the project cost-efficient)?
6. Are the project operational and management structures well organised and controlled by the beneficiary? Are the necessary means proposed (equipment, personnel, etc.) for a correct implementation? Is the partnership appropriate / sufficient / competent / coherent for the objectives and actions of the project?
7. Are the lists of deliverable products and milestones comprehensive and coherent with the expected results?
8. Is the time planning realistic (duration of preparatory actions and permit procedures; unfavourable weather conditions, etc.)?
9. Are potential difficulties correctly assessed (feasibility of the actions, potential risks, etc.) and has sufficient preparation been undertaken to pre-empt these, for example through prior stakeholder consultation, a contingency plan, etc.? Are there still any permits, authorisations or EIAs required prior to the project implementation, or are they already available?
10. In case land purchase is foreseen in the proposal, to what extent has the applicant taken into account the land purchase criteria mentioned in the LIFE+ guidelines for applicants?
11. Can the project be approved with a minimal effort of technical revision?

Award phase

2. Financial coherence and quality

In evaluating this criterion, the following points should be taken into account:

1. To what extent do all beneficiaries provide an adequate financial contribution to the project budget?
2. To what extent is the budget balanced (income – excluding any in kind contribution – equals expenditure)?
3. Is the requested EU-co-financing rate consistent with the rules for maximum co-financing rates, as indicated in Article 5.3 of the LIFE+ Regulation?
4. Are the personnel costs proposed on form F1 reasonable and sufficiently detailed?
5. Are the travel and subsistence costs on form F2 reasonable, sufficiently detailed and correctly allocated?
6. Are the costs for external assistance on form F3 reasonable, sufficiently detailed and correctly allocated? If relevant, is the information provided consistent with rules for public tendering?
7. Where costs for external assistance exceed 35% of the total project budget, has a coherent explanation been provided to justify this high level of sub-contracting?
8. Where relevant, are the costs for durable goods on form F4a, F4b and F4c reasonable, sufficiently detailed and correctly allocated? If relevant, are the depreciation rules correctly applied?
9. Where relevant, are the costs for land purchase, lease and one off compensation payments on form F5 reasonable and sufficiently detailed? In case of land purchase, has a letter been added from the competent authority or from a registered notary, confirming that the price per hectare is not above the average for this type of land and location? (if not, such a document needs to be provided during revision)
10. Are the costs for Consumables on form F6 reasonable, sufficiently detailed and correctly allocated?
11. Are the "other costs" on form F7 reasonable, sufficiently detailed and correctly allocated?
12. Are the overhead costs on Form F8 and Report R1 consistent with the maximum threshold of 7% of total eligible direct costs (excluding land purchase costs)?
13. Does the proposed budget exclude ineligible costs as contained in the Common Provisions?
14. In cases of civil servant salary costs, has the "+2%" rule been taken into account?
15. Does the project represent value for money? Will costs be tendered wherever possible? Are costs reasonable with respect to national conditions? Are the project management costs (both for the beneficiaries and for the Commission) reasonable given the project's size and ambitions?

Award phase

3. Contribution to the general objectives of LIFE+

In evaluating this criterion, the following points should be taken into account:

1. To what extent is the problem targeted by the proposal of European importance, taking into account the objectives of European environmental policy and legislation and the indicative list of themes as set in the Guidelines?
2. To what extent is the proposal expected to provide a significant and sustainable contribution to solving the problem targeted?
3. To what extent is the project expected to generate findings that are widely applicable?
4. To what extent does the proposal contribute to the implementation, updating and development of European Union Environmental policy and legislation, including the integration of the environment into other policies?
5. To what extent are continuity and permanence of the project results ensured in the long term?

Award phase

4. European added value and complementarity and optimal use of the EU funding

In evaluating this criterion, the following points should be taken into account:

1. To what extent does the proposal satisfy the criteria (a), (b), (c) or (d) of Article 3. 2. of the LIFE+ Regulation? I.e., to what extent does it show the European added value beyond the set minimum requirements?
2. To what extent does the proposal include monitoring, assessment and evaluation measures for the proposed actions and for the purpose of disseminating the project results and lessons learnt? Are monitoring and assessment activities appropriate and well-designed for this purpose?
3. To what extent does the proposal include communication, experience-sharing, networking and dissemination activities? Are all obligatory communication requirements covered? Are these activities appropriate and well-designed for the purpose of communicating and disseminating the results and lessons learnt?
4. To what extent are stakeholders consulted or involved in the project?
5. To what extent is the project's "carbon footprint" taken into account in its implementation and management?
6. To what extent does the proposal show that other EU funding sources have been considered in the preparation of the proposal?
7. Has the proposal considered using LIFE+ funding to make the project results sustainable and, where relevant, to obtain other funding sources in the future?
8. Is there a risk that some of the actions are obligatory compensation measures for other projects (Article 6 of the Habitats Directive), or that some of the co-financing might come from obligatory compensation payments from other projects (Article 6)?
9. Is there any indication that the proposal includes actions that would be financed anyway, i.e. even in case no LIFE+ funding would be made available for these actions?

Award phase

5. Transnational character

In evaluating this criterion, the following point should be taken into account::

1. If relevant, what is the added value of the transnational approach of the proposal?

Award phase

6. Compliance with national annual priorities proposed by the Member State(s) and national added value according to the comments made by the LIFE+ national authority

In evaluating this criterion, the following points should be taken into account:

1. If annual priorities have been proposed for LIFE+ 2012 by the Member State(s) where the project is foreseen to take place, to what extent does the proposal fall into any of these national priorities?
2. To what extent do the comments on the project by the national authority add arguments regarding the proposal that are not already addressed in the other award criteria?

Admissibility, exclusion and eligibility phase

Admissibility and exclusion criteria

1. Was the proposal sent to the European Commission via the competent national authority through the online tool "eProposal" and has it been received by the Commission before the submission deadline?	Yes/No
2. Have the relevant LIFE+ 2012 eProposal Component forms been used for the proposal?	Yes/No
3. Are the application forms A3, A4, A6 and A8 (where relevant) uploaded in the eProposal tool, signed and dated?	Yes/No
4. Has a summary in English of the proposal been provided on form B1 and have the proposal forms been completed in one of the official EU languages other than Maltese or Irish?	Yes/No
5. Have the following mandatory annexes been uploaded in the eProposal application in the requested electronic format? For coordinating beneficiaries that are not public bodies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the "LIFE+ Simplified Financial Statement" (Excel file) • the profit and loss account (pdf file) • where the EU contribution requested exceeds 300.000 €, an auditor's certificate (pdf file) For coordinating beneficiaries that are public bodies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the "Public body declaration" completed and with dated signature (pdf file) 	Yes/No
6. Are all beneficiaries legally registered in the EU?	Yes/No
7. Have all beneficiaries completed the declaration that they are not in one of the situations listed in Articles 93(1) and 94 of the Financial Regulation?	Yes/No

Eligibility criteria

1. Does the project fall within the scope of one of the three strands of the LIFE+ programme (Nature and Biodiversity, Environmental Policy and Governance, Information and Communication)?	Yes/No
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Financial selection phase

Financial selection criteria	
1. Is the information available consistent with the beneficiaries' declarations in relation to question n°7 of the Admissibility phase?	Yes / No
2. According to the information available, is the coordinating beneficiary financially sound (based on profit and loss account, balance sheet, audit report) – where applicable?	Yes / No
3. According to the information available, does the coordinating beneficiary have the capacity to finance the project and/or to manage the financial amounts provided for in the proposed budget, within the proposed project period?	Yes / No
4. Do all beneficiaries contribute financially to the proposal budget?	Yes / No
5. Are all beneficiaries absent from the Commission's Early Warning System?	Yes / No

ANNEX: NATIONAL ALLOCATION CHART

This pictogram describes the project allocation process set out in chapter 5. It does not replace Commission decision C(2008)1246.



