



LIFE+ Nature and Biodiversity

Guidelines for applicants 2013

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+ Nature and Biodiversity*. They are intended to help the applicant prepare the content of the project proposal.

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1. Introduction to LIFE+

1.1 What is LIFE+?

LIFE+ is the European financial instrument for the environment, for the period from 1 January 2007 until 31 December 2013. The legal basis for LIFE+ is the ***Regulation (EC) No 614/2007 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 May 2007¹***.

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 2013 LIFE+ call for proposals has been set at EUR 278,000,000. An indicative allocation for the Republic of Croatia of EUR 1,250,000 will be added to this amount, subject to the entry into force of the EU-Croatia Accession Treaty and the allocation of the corresponding funds in the EU budget.

These guidelines for applicants only apply to this seventh call for LIFE+ project proposals ("LIFE+ 2013").

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. In view of the expected accession to the EU by the Republic of Croatia, Croatian entities may also submit proposals to LIFE+ in 2013. However, project proposal acceptance is conditional on the entry into force of the EU-Croatia Accession Treaty. Project proposals can be either national or transnational, but the actions must exclusively take place within the territory of the Member States of the European Union or in Croatia. All references in these guidelines to "Member States" and "the European Union" should be understood to also include Croatia, subject to the entry into force of the above referred Accession Treaty.

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 2013".
- Projects contributing to the monitoring of the environmental status of forests within the European Union territory.

3. *LIFE+ Information and Communication*

- Communication and awareness raising campaigns related to the implementation, updating and development of European environmental policy and legislation set out in the document "LIFE+ Information and Communication, Guidelines for applicants 2013".
- 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 tool 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+ Nature and Biodiversity, Guidelines for applicants 2013, 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 Member States and Croatia 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 **25 June 2013 at 16:00 Brussels local time**.

The national authorities will then forward through the eProposal tool all LIFE+ project proposals to the Commission, by **5 July 2013 at 23:59 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/lifeplus2013/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 2013*'.

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. 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.

The individual grant agreements are expected to be signed in **April – May 2014** at the very latest (for a detailed timetable, see **Annex 1**).

The earliest possible starting date for projects is **1 June 2014**.

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".

All beneficiaries must show their legal status (by completing application forms A2 or A5) confirming that they are legally registered in the EU. In addition they must declare that they are not in any of the situations foreseen under art. 106(1) and 107 of the Financial Regulation n° 966/2012 of 25 October 2012 (JO L 298 of 26/10/2012) (by signing the application form A3 or A4 – instructions for this are given in the document '*LIFE+ Nature and Biodiversity, Guidelines for applicants 2013, Part 2 – Application forms*').

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

In addition all coordinating beneficiaries other than *public bodies*, that is to say the beneficiary types (2) and (3), must provide, as annexes to their proposal, evidence that they comply with the financial selection criterion set out in Article 202 of the Rules of Application of the Financial Regulation (Commission Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1268/2012 of 29 October 2012) 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 2013*'.

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 EUR 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 duly fill in the Excel table that is part of the application package. This document 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+ Nature and Biodiversity, Guidelines for applicants 2013, 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 applicants to fill in the technical part of the proposal also or only in clear English.

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

1.6.2. 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).

In view of the expected accession to the EU by the Republic of Croatia, Croatian entities may also submit proposals to LIFE+ in 2013. However, project proposal acceptance is conditional on the entry into force of the EU-Croatia Accession Treaty.

1.6.3. Who may participate in a project?

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

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

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

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

An **associated beneficiary** must be legally registered in the European Union. It shall always contribute technically to the proposal and hence be responsible for the implementation of one

or several project actions. An associated beneficiary must also contribute financially to the project. It cannot act, in the context of the project, as a sub-contractor to the coordinating beneficiary or to other associated beneficiaries. Furthermore it must provide the beneficiary with all the necessary documents required for the fulfilment of its reporting obligations 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 for regional development agencies.

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

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

For specific tasks of a fixed duration, a proposal may also foresee the use of **subcontractors**. Subcontractors cannot act as beneficiaries or vice-versa. Subcontractors provide external services to the project beneficiaries who fully pay for the services provided. Sub-contractors should not be identified by name in the proposal and, even if they are, Article 8 of the Common Provisions still has to be respected (in particular paragraph 8.3 on the selection of sub-contractors).

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

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

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

When preparing a project budget, beneficiaries should also take into account the maximum ceilings for the LIFE+ allocation per Member State: a project proposal from one single Member State that requests an EU financial contribution higher than the national allocation for that Member State may have a reduced probability of being selected for LIFE+ co-funding (for the national allocations see the '*Guide for the evaluation LIFE+ project proposals 2013*').

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

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

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

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

The coordinating beneficiary and (where 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 EUR 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 the civil servants⁶ charged to the project.

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

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

When preparing the project's time planning, beneficiaries should be aware that the expected date of the signature of the grant agreements for the LIFE+ 2013 projects will be April-May 2014. Therefore, the earliest possible starting date for these projects is **1 June 2014**. 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.

⁶ The definition of civil servants includes only permanent employees of public bodies.

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 2013 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+ Nature and Biodiversity, Guidelines for applicants 2013, 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 EU Directives on public tendering procedures.

For amounts exceeding EUR 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 2013*').

1.6.13. How voluminous should a LIFE+ proposal be?

A proposal should be as concise and clear as possible. Applicants should 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 (note that they are obligatory in some cases).

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

1.6.14. Recurring activities are ineligible for LIFE+ funding

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

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

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

1.6.15. Limited research activities are eligible

Whereas research activities are being funded in the EU under the Seventh Framework Programme for research, technological development and demonstration activities, limited research aimed to improve and enhance the knowledge data underpinning the project may be carried out within a LIFE+ project. Research must be strictly and intrinsically related to the project's objectives and the beneficiary shall explain in detail that the proper implementation of the project relies on these research activities, showing that the existing scientific basis is insufficient. In such case, scientific publications are considered important deliverables of the project.

1.6.16. Complementarity with other EU funding instruments must be ensured

According to Article 9 of the LIFE+ Regulation, LIFE+ may not finance any "measures which fall within the eligibility criteria and main scope of, or receive assistance for the same purpose from, other Community financial instruments". These include, amongst others, the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme, the European Fisheries Fund and the seventh Research Framework Programme.

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

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

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

1.6.17. Role of national annual priorities

Article 6 of the LIFE+ Regulation allows Member States to submit national annual priorities – for 2013 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 2013'*). 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/lifeplus2013/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 CO₂ 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"⁷ and to describe if and how their project is likely to support any of the objectives set out in this Communication.

⁷ http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/tourism/files/communications/communication2010_en.pdf

1.8 Personal Data Protection Clause

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

The same personal data of successful projects will be transferred to another database, BUTLER, which will be made available to the EU Institutions and to an external monitoring team who are bound by a confidentiality agreement. BUTLER is used exclusively to manage LIFE projects.

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

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

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

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

2. LIFE+ Nature and Biodiversity

2.1 What is LIFE+ Nature and Biodiversity?

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

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

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

LIFE+ Nature projects contribute to the **implementation of the Birds and/or Habitats Directives**⁸, including at local and regional level, and support the further development and implementation of the *Natura 2000* network, including coastal and marine habitats and species (Article 4.2 and Annex II.1 of the LIFE+ Regulation). The focus is on long-term sustainable investments in *Natura 2000* sites and on the conservation of species and habitats targeted by these Directives. **LIFE+ Nature** projects must be **best practice** or **demonstration** projects (Article 3.2a of the LIFE+ Regulation).

LIFE+ Biodiversity projects contribute to achieving the 2020 biodiversity headline target of "*halting the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services in the EU by 2020, and restoring them in so far as feasible, while stepping up the EU contribution to averting global biodiversity loss*" through the **implementation of the targets and actions of the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020**⁹. **LIFE+ Biodiversity** projects must be **demonstration** or **innovation** projects (Article 3.2b of the LIFE+ Regulation). They are different from **LIFE+ Nature** projects insofar as their focus is on the demonstration of measures and practices that contribute to halting the loss of biodiversity on the territory of the Member States, other than those related to the implementation of the objectives of the Birds and Habitats Directives. All biodiversity projects, whether innovative or demonstration, must have as an **integral part** of their project the evaluation and active dissemination of the results and lessons learnt during the project.

A nature conservation project that targets **exclusively** species/habitats of the Birds / Habitats Directives is more suited to be a **LIFE+ Nature** project (provided it meets the various requirements specified in this document). In all other cases, it can only be a **LIFE+ Biodiversity** project (provided it meets the various requirements specified in this document), and must therefore be an innovative / demonstration project.

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

⁸ Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on the conservation of wild birds
<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2010:020:0007:0025:EN:PDF>

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

⁹ COM (2011) 244 Final – Our life insurance, our natural capital: an EU biodiversity strategy to 2020
<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/biodiversity/comm2006/2020.htm>

<i>LIFE+ Nature</i>	<i>LIFE+ Biodiversity</i>
exclusively in relation to the objectives of the Birds and Habitats Directives	not restricted to the objectives of the Birds and Habitats Directives, but supporting the implementation of the Commission Communication "Our life insurance, our natural capital: an EU biodiversity strategy to 2020"
best practice and/or demonstration	demonstration and/or innovation
long-term, sustainable conservation measures and investments in <i>Natura 2000</i> sites, species and habitats	demonstration of the feasibility of measures in favour of biodiversity monitoring, evaluation and active dissemination of these measures are an integral part of the project
land purchase and long-term lease or compensation are eligible	only short term lease or compensation are eligible

LIFE+ Biodiversity should not be interpreted as an alternative to the restrictions imposed under *LIFE+ Nature* and its focus on *Natura 2000*. The EU network of protected areas is still the major EU contribution in our fight against the loss of biodiversity. Within the classic *LIFE+ Nature* projects most of the priorities listed in the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020 may be effectively addressed: e.g. invasive alien species through control and eradication in and around *Natura 2000* sites, green infrastructures through the connectivity dimension of the network, ecosystem services like flood protection, improving water quality etc. through nature conservation activities resulting in the preservation or enhancement of these functions for a site or for the whole network in a region.

The most appropriate use of *LIFE+ Biodiversity* would require proposals that address the targets of the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020 in an innovative way, exploring sectors and processes that have not been the classic target of *LIFE+ Nature* projects.

In line with the EU Business and Biodiversity Platform¹⁰, the Commission welcomes projects submitted by business stakeholders or in which business stakeholders are involved, aimed at integrating biodiversity concerns into their planning or functioning.

LIFE+ Nature and *LIFE+ Biodiversity* projects should be primarily focussed on nature protection and/or on halting the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services. A project that may have a positive but *secondary* impact on nature and biodiversity and whose main objective is in relation to another environmental theme (e.g. water quality) should not be submitted under *LIFE+ Nature and Biodiversity* (see the guidelines for applicants for *LIFE+ Environment Policy and Governance* to see whether the project may be eligible under this other strand of LIFE+).

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

A project on nature protection and/or on halting the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services that is essentially targeting awareness raising campaigns should be submitted under *LIFE+ Information and Communication*. The EC would, in particular, be interested to receive under LIFE+ Information and Communication, proposals that compile the techniques used, results and lessons learnt from a significant number of previous LIFE projects for a specific theme/ecosystem/habitat/species or group of habitats/species (e.g. rivers, bogs, bats) and actively transfer them to the corresponding key stakeholders that could usefully implement these techniques. The Commission would also welcome under *LIFE+ Information and Communication* projects aimed at:

1. Launching national public campaigns to promote *Natura 2000*;
2. Skills development for *Natura 2000* site managers;
3. 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.);
4. Halting the loss of biodiversity;
5. The promotion of Green Infrastructure by explaining it better to citizens;
6. Integrating biodiversity and ecosystem services concerns into other sector policies by explaining the benefits (including financial) and providing solutions 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 e.g. by integrating the concept of ecosystems services in private companies management or in public spending in particular in connection to Green Public Procurement;
7. 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.

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

Indicative list of themes for LIFE+ Nature and Biodiversity projects

In this section applicants will find a non-exhaustive list of themes for which the Commission would welcome receiving proposals. This does not exclude the possibility of submitting proposals for themes that are not listed here, but falling under the general remit and objectives of *LIFE+ Nature and Biodiversity*. For further details, please refer to the explanatory Annex no.3.

LIFE+ Nature

1. Projects aimed at the direct conservation of habitats and species covered by the Habitats and Birds Directives and, in particular, supporting the management and restoration of *Natura 2000*. These are the classic *LIFE+ Nature* projects (site or species related) that will remain the main pillar of *LIFE+ Nature* financing. Ex-situ actions are also possible if justified.
2. Projects for improving the ecological coherence/connectivity of the *Natura 2000* network
3. Projects aimed at the identification, designation and preparation of management plans for new marine *Natura 2000* sites in territorial or off-shore waters and/or the extension of existing marine sites, pursuant to Article 4 and 6.1 of Habitats Directive and Article 4 of the Birds Directive (Marine site designation projects)
4. Projects for the support and/or further development of surveillance of the conservation status of habitats and species deriving from Article 11 of the Habitats Directive (Article 11 projects)
5. Projects for the control and eradication of invasive alien species affecting either the *Natura 2000* network or species covered by the Habitats and Birds Directives
6. Projects aimed at developing national/regional management and restoration programmes for *Natura 2000* (*Natura 2000* management and restoration programme projects)

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

LIFE+ Biodiversity

1. Projects targeting threatened species that are not included in the annexes of the Habitats Directive but that have a status of "endangered" or worse in the European Red Lists (http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/conservation/species/redlist/index_en.htm) or in the IUCN Red List for those species that are not covered by the European Red Lists (<http://www.iucnredlist.org/>)
2. Projects for the implementation of river basin management plans¹¹, or addressing marine regions, for the implementation of measures to guarantee a Good environmental status. Note: the main focus of such proposals **must be biodiversity** (otherwise such proposals should be submitted under the LIFE+ Environment Policy and Governance strand).
3. Projects to test fisheries management measures in line with the requirements of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive¹² and technical measures to reduce by-catch of species which are not commercially exploited. Note: the main focus of such proposals **must be biodiversity** (otherwise such proposals should be submitted under the LIFE+ Environment Policy and Governance strand).
4. Projects addressing the maintenance and enhancement of the services that ecosystems deliver to society. Projects using ecosystem-based approaches and contributing to the implementation of Green Infrastructure¹³ (other than those that can be financed under *LIFE+ Nature* or the LIFE+ Environment Policy and Governance strands), and the Danube Strategy¹⁴ and its Action Plan. Those projects must build evidence for biodiversity delivering benefits for key policy sectors such as agriculture and rural development, cohesion, fisheries.
5. Projects addressing biodiversity and soil. The Commission welcomes projects aiming at increasing the protection of soil biodiversity and its many ecological functions.
6. Projects addressing the threats posed by invasive alien species (1) by preventing the introduction of invasive alien species, in particular by tackling pathways of unintentional introduction, (2) by establishing an early warning and rapid response system and (3) by eradicating or controlling established invasive alien species¹⁵.

¹¹ Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2000 establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2000:327:0001:0072:EN:PDF>

¹² Directive 2000/56/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 June 2008 establishing a framework for Community action in the field of marine environmental policy

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2008:164:0019:0040:EN:PDF>

¹³ http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/ecosystems/index_en.htm

¹⁴ COM (2010) 715 final – European Union Strategy for Danube Region

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52010DC0715:EN:NOT>

¹⁵ In line with the dedicated legislative instrument which is currently under preparation, see http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/invasivealien/index_en.htm

2.2 LIFE+ Nature

2.2.a. General principles of LIFE+ Nature funding

General scope

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

Site-based actions:

- Bird species targeted by site-based actions must be listed in Annex I of the Birds Directive or be regularly occurring migratory bird species.
- Any habitat types / species (other than bird species) targeted must be listed in Annexes I or II of the Habitats Directive. Site-based actions for Annex IV species not listed in Annex II may be possible under certain conditions (see section 2.2.b).

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

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

Geographic scope

LIFE+ Nature projects must exclusively take place on the terrestrial and/or marine territory of the EU Member States where the EU Birds and Habitats Directives apply¹⁶ (see section 1.6.8. for possible exceptions).

Best practice and/or demonstration

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

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

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

¹⁶ Note that these two Directives do not apply to the French Overseas Departments (DOMs), and therefore *LIFE+ Nature* projects in the DOMs are not eligible

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

Recurring actions cannot be financed

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

Any **recurring** monitoring or management action that was already carried out prior to the start of the project and/or that needs to be continued after the end of the project (at the same level of intensity, using the same techniques and material...) cannot be included in the *LIFE+ Nature* proposal budget. For example, any recurring site surveillance, annual mowing or long-term monitoring actions (other than to evaluate the impact of the project) are in principle ineligible¹⁷.

For *LIFE+ Nature*, investments necessary to *facilitate recurrent management* that is not already ongoing (e.g. the purchase of grazing animals and related infrastructure or machinery) may be fully eligible for funding. Such investments must be clearly linked to the objectives and the management/restoration actions of the project. In such cases, however, the costs related to the use of this equipment remain, as above, ineligible as they concern recurring activities.

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

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

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

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

Preparatory actions (e.g. planning and preparation of the concrete conservation actions) and land purchase / lease / compensation payments count towards this 25% *insofar as they are*

¹⁷ Where a proposal includes actions that would normally be considered as recurring (e.g. mowing), the applicant must explain in detail why this is a restoration action and not a recurrent action.

directly necessary for the execution of concrete actions during the project's lifetime. Any investments necessary to facilitate recurring management (see above) are also considered as concrete actions.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- ***Natura 2000* management and restoration programme projects:** The aim of such projects is to prepare, on the basis of the approach of the Priority Action Frameworks (PAFs), concrete and operational measures. It is expected that proposals under this heading would mostly be set up by the authorities that are responsible for the elaboration of the PAFs (national and/or regional authorities). In exceptional cases, projects could also be prepared by NGOs, provided they are directly responsible to manage a significant number of sites.

Note that these programme projects shall bridge the gap between the preparation of the PAFs in 2012 and their future implementation, within the frame of the expected future LIFE programme for 2014-2020, through "Integrated projects". For further details please refer to Annex 3.

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

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

- **Marine site designation projects:** Projects for inventories and planning for the designation of new marine *Natura 2000* sites (either offshore or in territorial waters) or their extension do not need to include concrete conservation actions (for a definition of the term "offshore" within the context of *Natura 2000* marine sites please refer to page 7 and to section 2.6 of the document "Guidelines for the establishment of the *Natura 2000* network in the marine environment" - http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/marine/docs/marine_guidelines.pdf). Any such proposal must, however, include a commitment from the Competent Ministry/Authority to designate the site(s) concerned as *Natura 2000* sites before the end of the project and **the Competent Authority must be a beneficiary of the project** (coordinating or associated beneficiary). This paragraph also applies to marine extensions of existing coastal sites. Inventories for extending or designating additional terrestrial sites of marine/coastal species will not be considered.
- **Article 11 projects:** *Life+ Nature* projects for the support and/or the further development of the surveillance of the conservation status of natural habitats and species covered by the Birds and Habitats Directives (in the sense of Article 11 of the Habitats Directive) do not have to include concrete conservation actions. In any such cases, **the Competent Authority in charge of the Article 11 monitoring must be a beneficiary of the project** (coordinating or associated beneficiary). Proposals for routine monitoring or for merely local improvement in monitoring will not be considered as qualifying for this exception.

Long term sustainability of the project and its actions

LIFE+ Nature projects will often represent a considerable investment, and the Commission attaches great importance to the long term sustainability of these investments. For this reason, it is obligatory that throughout the duration of the project, the beneficiaries consider how these investments will be secured, maintained, developed and made use of after the end of the project. This should be built into the proposal. This aspect will be carefully checked during the evaluation process.

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

Maximum co-financing rates

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

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

- 50% maximum for projects investing less than 30% of the total cost estimated for concrete conservation, for activities directly benefitting priority habitats or species;
- 60% maximum for projects investing between 30% and 50% of the total estimated cost for concrete conservation, for activities directly benefitting priority habitats or species;
- 75% maximum for projects investing more than 50% of the total estimated cost for concrete conservation, for activities directly benefitting priority habitats or species.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Preparatory actions

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

In general, and amongst others, preparatory actions:

- should not be research actions, unless they fall under the exceptions described in point 1.6.15 of this Guide,
- should not be inventories of new or existing *Natura 2000* sites (unless they are new marine sites),
- should be of limited duration (i.e. should be significantly shorter than the project duration),
- should be clearly related to the objective(s) of the project.

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

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

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

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

This includes:

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

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

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

1. The land purchase must be clearly related to the objectives of the project.
2. The purchase of land shall normally be restricted to lands that are located within an existing *Natura 2000* site.
3. The land purchase would contribute to maintaining or restoring the integrity of a *Natura 2000* site.
4. The purchase is the only or most effective way of achieving the desired conservation outcome.
5. The land purchased is reserved in the long-term for uses consistent with the implementation of the EU Birds and Habitats Directives. The beneficiaries must ensure that the sales contract and/or entry in the land register includes a guarantee that the land is assigned definitively (without time limitation) to nature conservation purposes consistent with the objectives of the EU Birds and Habitats Directives. Where both possibilities exist (sales contract and land registry entry), the beneficiaries must use the option that offers the strongest long-term protection. Note that with the final report, the beneficiaries will have to submit a copy of the sales contract and/or entry in the land register including the above mentioned guarantee. Should they fail to provide such documents, the corresponding land purchase costs and associated costs will be considered ineligible. For countries where it would be illegal to include such a guarantee both in the land register and in the sale contract, the Commission may accept an equivalent guarantee, provided it offers the same legal level of protection in the long term and complies with the requirement contained in Annex I of the *LIFE+ Regulation*.
6. The land must be purchased by one of the official project beneficiaries who is either a well-established private organisation (e.g. nature conservation NGO or other) or a public body with nature conservation tasks, and must remain in his ownership after the end of the project.
7. The proposal must demonstrate that each beneficiary carrying out land purchase has the necessary competence and experience in land purchase for nature conservation, and that the planned target is realistic within the time framework of the project,
8. If the purchasing body is a private organisation, its statutes must include a provision that, in case of dissolution, the land will be transferred to another legal body primarily active in the field of nature conservation (e.g. another conservation NGO or appropriate public body).
9. Evidence must be provided in the proposal that the purchase price is consistent with the current market prices for the type of land and the region concerned.
10. Evidence must be provided that the land purchased was privately owned prior to the project starting date. Purchase of land that has recently been transferred from public to private ownership will not be eligible.
11. Land purchased must be the subject of specific restoration and/or active management or restrictions of use that go beyond existing restrictions. The purchase of land that is in excellent conservation status (i.e. that requires no restoration or specific management or restrictions of use) is only eligible if strategic to the objectives of the project.

Long-term land lease and one-off compensation payments: The same conditions listed above apply, as and where appropriate, to long-term land lease and one-off compensation

payments. The applicant must address each of these conditions in his proposal, explaining how each condition is met or will be met during the project. The duration must be sufficient to guarantee the durability of the conservation investment, i.e. the principles of long-term sustainability and cost-effectiveness must apply.

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

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

Concrete conservation actions

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

The maintenance of the investments made through these actions must be ensured in the long-term after the end of the project. Amongst others, where actions take place on land that does not belong to any of the beneficiaries, they must establish a convention with the owner in which he/she commits not to take any action that would compromise the investments/restoration made by the project. This convention must be for a suitably long period (30 years or longer). The establishment of these conventions must appear explicitly in the description of a relevant action and in the corresponding "expected results" section of this action.

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

Site-related conservation actions inside Natura 2000 sites:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- Actions **aimed at improving** the long-term effectiveness, in terms of cost-efficiency and conservation benefit, of the management of *Natura 2000* sites, habitat types and species;
- **Investments necessary to facilitate recurring management** (e.g. the purchase of grazing animals and related infrastructure or machinery). These investments must be clearly linked to the objectives of the project. The equipment / infrastructure acquired through such investments must be used to a significant degree for the project objectives during the project. Note, however, that the **costs related to the use of such material are in principle ineligible** as they concern recurring management - see general principles – unless they relate to the demonstration of an innovative recurring management technique;
- Actions for **combating invasive alien species** or for **mitigating negative impacts of climate change**, insofar as they are not recurring actions and they directly benefit the species / habitats targeted by the project.

Site-related conservation actions outside Natura 2000 sites:

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

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

- Actions on strategic spots:

A strategic spot is defined here as an area with little or no natural value, but which is necessary for the implementation of key actions that result in a direct and significant benefit for the habitats/species targeted by the project within a *Natura 2000* site (e.g. a plot needed to relocate a damaging structure/device, creation or improvement of a hydraulic structure to control water influx in a nearby *Natura 2000* site, establishment of structures to prevent harmful access to protected habitats, etc.). Please note, however, that the mere creation of a buffer around a *Natura 2000* site does not qualify as a strategic spot action. Land purchase may, if clearly justified, be possible in this context.

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

- Habitat restoration:

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

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

- Please note that land purchase may, if clearly justified, be possible in this context.

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

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

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

Land purchase may, if clearly justified, be possible in this context (except when the actions target annex IV species not listed in annex II – see below). However, if land purchase is foreseen, the proposal should include a commitment from the Competent Authority to designate the sites concerned or at least the land that will be purchased as *Natura 2000* sites before the end of the project; **in all such cases, the Competent Authority must be a beneficiary of the project** (coordinating beneficiary or associated beneficiary).

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

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

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

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

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

- Actions related to the direct protection of animal species against unintentional or incidental disturbance, collection, capture, poisoning or killing. These may in particular concern wide-ranging or mobile species for which the designation of *Natura 2000* sites and the associated conservation and management of sites are not sufficient to ensure a favourable conservation status. For example, this may concern actions to remove or modify technical devices or infrastructures such as electric power lines, fishing gear, etc.;
- Actions for combating invasive alien species or mitigating the negative impact of climate change, insofar as they directly benefit the species targeted by the project.

- *Species re-introduction and other conservation translocations:*

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

1. they are justified, expected to yield quantitative conservation benefit based on a cost/benefit analysis and have a high chance of success based on a thorough risk and feasibility analysis;
2. the reintroduced/translocated organisms are likely to be able to cope with new pathogen and stresses encountered at the destination site and the risk of reintroducing new pathogens in the destination area are minimised;
3. alternatives to reintroduction/translocation have been assessed as less effective or infeasible as a means to reach the specific and clearly defined conservation objectives of the reintroduction/translocation;
4. they target areas where the causes of extinction of the species have been eliminated;
5. the removal of individuals for re-introduction is only considered if that would not endanger the captive or wild source populations;
6. they target areas whose habitats and climate for the foreseeable future meet the conditions necessary for the survival of a viable population of the species;
7. they establish and document a prior agreement between all parties involved (e.g. between the competent authority for the donor population and the manager of the area of reintroduction);
8. they target only areas where the attitude of the local population towards the planned reintroduction is favourable or there is a reasonable expectation that local acceptance can be achieved during the project;
9. in general, they only (re)introduce animals / plants that previously occurred in the area;

10. translocations involving the deliberate movement of organisms outside their indigenous ranges may be carried out 1) to avoid the extinction of populations of the focal species where protection from current or likely future threats in its current range is deemed less feasible than at alternative sites or 2) to re-establish an ecological function lost through extinction through introduction of organisms which are a close relative of the extinction species, within the same genus, and which belong to the closest and most similar population available (in terms of genetics, ecology, etc.);
11. in case of such conservation introduction/translocations, it must be possible to assess reliably that the conservations introduction presents low risks;
12. they include a preparatory phase, a re-introduction phase and a follow-up phase, as well as an exit strategy in case the translocation/reintroduction does not proceed according to plan.

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

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

Further guidelines on conservation translocation and re-introduction can be found in the following documents:

<http://www.issg.org/pdf/publications/Translocation-Guidelines-2012.pdf>

<http://www.issg.org/pdf/publications/Translocation-Annexes-2012.pdf>

- Ex situ conservation actions:

These concern actions such as captive breeding, seed banks, etc., and may include sustainable investments in infrastructure / equipment. In order to be eligible as well as to be considered as a concrete conservation action, ex situ conservation must be linked to a reintroduction during the project. Exceptionally these investments will be considered eligible in the absence of a planned reintroduction if clear justification is given to prove that ex situ conservation is the only possible/useful type of conservation action at present for that/those species.

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

All projects including concrete conservation actions (i.e. that do not fall under one of the exceptions detailed in section 2.2.a), will have to foresee impact monitoring actions.

The concrete conservation actions (C actions) must lead to a measurable improvement of the conservation status of the species/habitats targeted by the project. Monitoring these

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

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

For this purpose, the proposal should identify specific indicators to be used to measure the impact of the project (or foresee an action to do so). These indicators should be coherent with the conservation problem addressed and the type of activities planned during the project. The initial situation from which the project starts should be assessed and progress should be regularly evaluated against it. For further guidance, please consult the LIFE website at <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/toolkit/pmtools/lifeplus/monitoring.htm>

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

Each proposal containing concrete conservation actions must also include an action aimed to assess the **socio-economic impact** of the project actions on the local economy and population, as well as on the **ecosystem functions**. This may, for example, take the form of a study consolidating the data and results over the project lifetime, to be delivered with the Final Report. Projects should aim to increase social awareness and acceptance of the benefits of *Natura 2000* network. Examples of positive effects of the project are: direct or indirect employment growth, enhancement of other activities (e.g. ecotourism) aimed to develop supplementary income sources, offsetting social and economic isolation, raising the profile of the area/region, resulting in increasing the viability of the local community (especially in rural areas). The direct linkages between *Natura 2000* management measures and key ecosystem services provided, such as carbon sequestration, water purification, pollination, etc. should be clearly assessed. Project actions aimed at restoring multi-functional ecosystems such as rivers, floodplains, forests, peatlands or mires should be valued in economic terms (monetary terms or if this is not possible there should be a qualitative estimation). For further guidance, please consult the LIFE website at <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/toolkit/pmtools/lifeplus/monitoring.htm>

Communication and dissemination actions (obligatory)

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

- information activities to the general public and stakeholders aimed at facilitating the implementation of the project;

- public awareness and dissemination actions aimed at publicising the project and its results both to the general public and to other stakeholders that could usefully benefit from the project's experience.

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

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

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

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

Please see also <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/toolkit/comtools/index.htm> for detailed advice on communication and dissemination actions, in particular Life-Nature: Communicating with stakeholders and the general public - Best practices examples for *Natura 2000* and the guidelines on [how to design a LIFE web-site](#).

Project management and monitoring of project progress (obligatory)

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

- Project management activities undertaken by the beneficiaries for the management of the project (administrative, technical and financial aspects) and for meeting the LIFE+ reporting obligations. The technical project management may be partially outsourced, provided the coordinating beneficiary retains full and day to day control of the project. The proposal should clearly describe how this control will be guaranteed. The project management structure must be clearly presented (including an organigram and details of the responsibilities of each person and organisation involved). It is strongly recommended that the project management staff has previous experience in project management.
- Training, workshops and meetings for the project beneficiaries' staff, where these are required for the achievement of the project objectives.

- **Obligatory action:** each proposal must include an action entitled "Networking with other LIFE and/or non-LIFE projects". This must include visits, meetings, exchange of information, and/or other such networking activities with an appropriate number of other relevant LIFE projects (ongoing or completed). It may also include similar exchanges with other non-LIFE projects and/or participation in information platforms related to the project objectives (including at international level where justified).

It is **strongly recommended** that the project manager be full-time. If a coordinator or project manager also directly contributes to the implementation of certain actions, an appropriate part of his/her salary costs should be attributed to the estimated costs of those actions.

2.3 LIFE+ Biodiversity

2.3.a. General principles of *LIFE+ Biodiversity* funding

General scope

LIFE+ Biodiversity projects must aim to implement the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020 targets and actions, with a view to achieving the objectives of the 2020 headline target of *"halting the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services in the EU by 2020, and restoring them in so far as feasible, while stepping up the EU contribution to averting global biodiversity loss"*, other than those already covered by *LIFE+ Nature*. They must be clearly different from *LIFE+ Nature* projects (i.e. they shall not be best practice projects primarily targeting species and/or habitat types of the Birds and Habitats Directives).

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

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

Geographic scope

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

Demonstration and/or innovation

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

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

An **"innovative" project** applies a technique or method that has not been applied / tested before or elsewhere and that offers potential advantages compared to current best practice. The monitoring, evaluation and active dissemination of the main project results and/or lessons learnt is an integral part of the project. An innovative project therefore aims to

evaluate whether the innovative techniques and methods for halting the loss of biodiversity work or not. Moreover, it aims to assess the effectiveness of the method, to inform other stakeholders of the results and to encourage them where appropriate to use the techniques and methods successfully tested in the project.

In order to be considered innovative/demonstrative, the overall character of the core project actions must be innovative/demonstrative. If best practice actions are part of the project proposal, the overall approach must clearly have an innovative/demonstrative character and this should be justified in detail in the proposal.

Recurring actions cannot be financed

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The core of such a project must focus on the development and testing of **new biodiversity and ecosystem indicators, or contribute to the improvement of existing EU-relevant biodiversity indicators**¹⁸. Proposals that, for example, involve much data collection or research, of which only a part is related to the development and testing of new indicators, will not benefit from this exception. Any such project should also provide clear operational guidelines on how these indicators should be applied.

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

Proposals that only develop and test new indicators for local use and that do not have a much wider applicability (e.g. at national or EU level) or that do not contain sufficient actions to disseminate their use on a wide scale will not benefit from this exception.

- **European Outermost Regions site designation projects:** *Life+ Biodiversity* projects for preparatory inventories and planning for the designation of sites in the European Outermost Regions (e.g. French overseas departments), on the basis of the voluntary scheme for biodiversity and ecosystem services which has been suggested in the paragraph 13 of the Message from Reunion Island <http://www.reunion2008.eu/pages/en/en-home.html>. Any such proposal must, however, include a commitment from the Competent National Ministry/Authority AND

¹⁸ Such as included in the SEBI work

http://www.eea.europa.eu/themes/biodiversity/indicators#c7=all&c5=all&c10=SEBI&c13=20&b_start=0

the Competent Regional Overseas Authority to join the scheme (commitment to be provided on form A8).

- **Species Action Plan projects:** *Life+ Biodiversity* projects targeting only the preparation of Action Plans at regional, national or EU level for species that are not included in the annexes of the Habitats Directive but that have a status of "endangered" or worse in the **available European Red Lists** (http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/conservation/species/redlist/index_en.htm) **or in the IUCN Red List for those species that are not covered by the European red Lists**, may be eligible if such Action Plans are necessary to define the needs for further (concrete) measures.
- **Marine Region projects:** *Life+ Biodiversity* projects targeting Marine Regions in view of guaranteeing a Good environmental status, as defined in the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD). There is still a need for more work on Marine Regions, in terms of further refining the definitions 'good environmental status' the initial assessments already made, the environmental targets and their associated indicators and monitoring programmes. Such proposals do not need to include concrete conservation actions. Such proposals should normally be submitted by the competent authorities as defined in the MSFD. If not, they should at least be associated beneficiaries.

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

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

Complementarity with other EU funding instruments

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

Maximum co-financing rates

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

Some lessons from past Calls for Proposals

- A number of *LIFE+ Biodiversity* proposals were rejected because they were not innovation/demonstration. The core actions were best practice presented incorrectly as being innovation/demonstration. For example, simply applying best practice techniques at the scale of a river basin that are already applied in *Natura 2000* sites, is not demonstration.
- Some of these best practice proposals targeted mainly *Natura 2000* sites/species/habitats. Had they been clearly presented as a *LIFE+ Nature* proposal

(excluding as appropriate those actions outside *Natura 2000* sites or targeting other species/habitats), they may well have been accepted.

- Some proposals whose core actions were clearly demonstration/innovation were nevertheless rejected because they did not contain a coherent and sufficient set of actions for the evaluation and dissemination of the results to those stakeholders that could use the lessons learnt.
- A number of proposals simply did not comply with the requirement for a minimum of 25% concrete conservation actions (NB The mere listing of actions in the C1c section of the application on itself does not qualify them by default as concrete actions).
- Some proposals that sought to be exempted from the 25% concrete conservation actions requirement by presenting themselves as developing new biodiversity indicators were rejected because much of the effort concerned data collection / research unrelated to the testing and development of new indicators.
- Some proposals that were to take place on essentially agricultural/forest land were rejected because the measures proposed could have been financed by agri-environment / Rural Development Programmes.
- A number of proposals were rejected because they were not directly related to biodiversity or because the measures were poorly described.

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

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

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

Preparatory actions

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

In general, and amongst others, preparatory actions:

- should not be research actions, unless they fall under the exceptions described in point 1.6.15 of this Guide,

- should be of limited duration (i.e. should be significantly shorter than the project duration),
- should be clearly related to the objective(s) of the project.

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

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

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

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

Concrete actions aimed at halting the loss of biodiversity

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

In any case they must be *innovative and/or demonstration actions*.

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

They may concern *Species re-introduction and other conservation translocations*

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

1. they are justified, expected to yield quantitative conservation benefit based on a cost/benefit analysis and have a high chance of success based on a thorough risk and feasibility analysis;
2. the reintroduced/translocated organisms are likely to be able to cope with new pathogen and stresses encountered at the destination site and the risk of reintroducing new pathogens in the destination area are minimised;
3. alternatives to reintroduction/translocation have been assessed as less effective or infeasible as a means to reach the specific and clearly defined conservation objectives of the reintroduction/translocation;
4. they target areas where the causes of extinction of the species have been eliminated;
5. the removal of individuals for re-introduction is only considered if that would not endanger the captive or wild source populations;
6. they target areas whose habitats and climate for the foreseeable future meet the conditions necessary for the survival of a viable population of the species;
7. they establish and document a prior agreement between all parties involved (e.g. between the competent authority for the donor population and the manager of the area of reintroduction);
8. they target only areas where the attitude of the local population towards the planned reintroduction is favourable or there is a reasonable expectation that local acceptance can be achieved during the project;
9. in general, they only (re)introduce animals / plants that previously occurred in the area;
10. translocations involving the deliberate movement of organisms outside their indigenous ranges may be carried out 1) to avoid the extinction of populations of the focal species where protection from current or likely future threats in its current range is deemed less feasible than at alternative sites or 2) to re-establish an ecological function lost through extinction through introduction of organisms which are a close relative of the extinction species, within the same genus, and which belong to the closest and most similar population available (in terms of genetics, ecology, etc.);
11. in case of such conservation introduction/translocations, it must be possible to assess reliably that the conservation introduction presents low risks;
12. they include a preparatory phase, a re-introduction phase and a follow-up phase, as well as an exit strategy in case the translocation/reintroduction does not proceed according to plan.

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

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

Further guidelines on conservation translocation and re-introduction can be found in the following documents:

<http://www.issg.org/pdf/publications/Translocation-Guidelines-2012.pdf>

<http://www.issg.org/pdf/publications/Translocation-Annexes-2012.pdf>

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

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

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

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

For this purpose, the project management should identify specific indicators to be used to measure the impact of the project. These indicators should be coherent with the biodiversity problem addressed and the type of activities planned during the project. The initial situation from which the project starts should be assessed and progress should be regularly evaluated against it. For further guidance, please consult the LIFE website at <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/toolkit/pmtools/lifeplus/monitoring.htm>

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

Each proposal containing concrete conservation actions must also include an action aimed to assess the **socio-economic impact** of the project actions on the local economy and population, as well as on the **ecosystem functions**. This may, for example, take the form of a study consolidating the data and results over the project lifetime, to be delivered with the Final Report. Examples of positive effects of the project are: direct or indirect employment growth, enhancement of other activities (e.g. ecotourism) aimed to develop supplementary income sources, offsetting social and economic isolation, raising the profile of the area/region, resulting in increasing the viability of the local community (especially in rural areas). The direct linkages between the project measures and key ecosystem services provided, such as carbon sequestration, water purification, pollination, etc. should be clearly assessed. Project actions aimed at restoring multi-functional ecosystems such as rivers, floodplains, forests, peatlands or mires should be valued in economic terms (monetary terms or if this is not possible there should be a qualitative estimation). For further guidance, please consult the LIFE website at <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/toolkit/pmtools/lifeplus/monitoring.htm>

Communication and dissemination actions (obligatory)

LIFE+ Biodiversity projects are innovative or demonstration projects. As such they **must include a significant set of actions to evaluate and disseminate the results of the**

project so that the knowledge gained is actively communicated to those stakeholders that may apply the lessons from the project. Proposals that are insufficient in this respect will be rejected. A crucial element is active networking with, and dissemination to, other stakeholders that could apply the results.

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

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

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

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

Please see also <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/toolkit/comtools/index.htm> for detailed advice on communication and dissemination actions, in particular [Life-Nature: Communicating with stakeholders and the general public - Best practices examples for Natura 2000](#) and the guidelines on [how to design a LIFE web-site](#).

Project management and monitoring of project progress (obligatory)

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

- Project management activities undertaken by the beneficiaries for the management of the project (administrative, technical and financial aspects) and for meeting the LIFE+ reporting obligations. The technical project management may be partially outsourced, provided the coordinating beneficiary retains full and day to day control of the project. The proposal should clearly explain how this control will be guaranteed. The project management structure must be clearly presented (including an organigram and details of the responsibilities of each person and organisation involved). It is strongly recommended that the project management staff has previous experience in project management.
- Training, workshops and meetings for the beneficiaries' staff, where these are required for the achievement of the project objectives.

- **Obligatory action:** each proposal must include an action entitled "Networking with other LIFE and/or non-LIFE projects". This must include visits, meetings, exchange of information, and/or other such networking activities with an appropriate number of other relevant LIFE projects (ongoing or completed). It may also include similar exchanges with other non-LIFE projects and/or participation in information platforms related to the project objectives (including at international level where justified).

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

5. ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: Calendar of the LIFE+ 2013 evaluation and selection procedure

Date or period	Activity
25 June 2013	Deadline for applicants to submit proposals to Member State authorities
5 July 2013	Deadline for the Member States to forward proposals to the European Commission
19 July 2013	Deadline for the Member States to comment on individual project proposals
July 2013 to March 2014	Evaluation and revision of the proposals
April-May 2014	Signature of individual grant agreements
1 June 2014	Earliest possible starting date for the 2013 projects

ANNEX 2: Important links

a) General documents for all applicants:

- [Regulation 614/2007 of the European Parliament and the Council of 23/05/2007 \(LIFE+\)](#)
- Link to the [LIFE+ Communication toolbox](#)
- National Annual Priorities
<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/funding/lifeplus2013/call/index.htm>
- [Financial Regulation](#)

b) LIFE+ Nature and Biodiversity:

- [Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild flora and fauna](#)
- [Council Directive 2009/147/EC on the conservation of wild birds](#)
- [List of priority bird species of Directive 2009/147/EC considered as priority for funding under LIFE+](#)
- Website providing a geographical view of the *Natura 2000* ecological network
<http://natura2000.eea.europa.eu>
- Commission Communication COM (2011) 244 final Our life insurance, our natural capital: an EU biodiversity strategy to 2020
<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/biodiversity/comm2006/2020.htm>
- Biodiversity Information System for Europe <http://biodiversity.europa.eu/>
- Biodiversity baseline <http://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/eu-2010-biodiversity-baseline/>
- IUCN Guidelines for reintroduction and other conservation translocations:
<http://www.issg.org/pdf/publications/Translocation-Guidelines-2012.pdf>
<http://www.issg.org/pdf/publications/Translocation-Annexes-2012.pdf>

ANNEX 3: Explanatory note regarding the indicative list of themes provided at the end of section 2.1

LIFE+ Nature:

Natura 2000 site based projects (theme 1)

With an area that is currently covering almost 18% of the terrestrial surface of the EU Member States, plus over 217,000 square kilometres of marine area, *Natura 2000* is the central backbone for biodiversity in the European Union. However, even within the *Natura 2000* network, a substantial part of flora, fauna and natural habitat types of European importance, as defined by the EU Birds and Habitats Directives, are still in an unfavourable conservation status. *Natura 2000* is also at the heart of Europe's Green Infrastructure, providing multiple benefits for countless ecosystems services.

For the years to come, any projects (site or species related) for improving the management and/or for restoring sites of the *Natura 2000* network will therefore remain the first priority for *LIFE+ Nature* funding.

LIFE+ Nature projects targeting *Natura 2000* are usually focussing on concrete conservation measures and are result-oriented, i.e. their implementation leads to direct and sustainable improvements of the conservation status of species and habitats for which sites are proposed or designated.

Projects for improving the ecological coherence/connectivity of the Natura 2000 network (theme 2)

In those Member States or regions of the EU where the *Natura 2000* network is now largely completed and where sites are well managed with regard to their conservation objectives, additional measures might still be required outside of the *Natura 2000* network, to achieve favourable conservation status. In any such cases, project proposals aimed at improving the coherence of the *Natura 2000* network and the connectivity between existing *Natura 2000* sites by creating corridors, stepping stones, etc., are actively encouraged.

Any *LIFE Nature+* proposal dealing with such "*Green Infrastructure*" elements outside of the *Natura 2000* network should include solid scientific evidence showing the added value these elements may have for the *Natura 2000* sites/network. Many projects failed to prove their case in the past as they fell short providing such evidence (e.g. maps, data on species distribution and movements, connectivity potential, expected impact on species/habitats, value for money, etc). It is not sufficient to state that an area might be (or become) a corridor between two sites!

Note that if you wish to promote ecological coherence/connectivity where it is not linked to the *Natura 2000* network, you should consider submitting a *LIFE+ Biodiversity* proposal (which must be innovative/demonstrative). Please also look at the *LIFE+ Environment Policy and Governance* application guide where all other innovative or demonstrative Green Infrastructure projects (i.e. those not aimed

directly at *Natura 2000* or biodiversity enhancement), are welcome, such as green infrastructure elements in urban, peri-urban, rural and other extra-urban areas and projects that enhance permeability of the countryside. In addition LIFE+ Environment strand can promote ecosystem based approaches to tackle fragmentation and support the multi-purpose use of land. In such proposals, the biodiversity aspect shall not be the main thrust of the proposal.

Projects on Invasive Alien Species (theme 5)

The spread of invasive alien species is posing a major threat to many species and habitats of European importance (as defined by the EU Birds and Habitats Directives), both in and outside of the *Natura 2000* network of sites.

The problem of IAS can be approached at three levels¹⁹:

1. Prevent the introduction of alien species in the environment, with a risk-based prioritisation towards priority IAS, priority pathways and priority ecosystems. This can be attempted by (1) trade restrictions, (2) restrictions to release in the environment and (3) managing pathways (limiting escapes from contained holding, limiting contaminants in commodities, limiting stowaways in transport vectors and limiting spread to manmade corridors).
2. Establish an early warning and rapid eradication system to quickly eradicate new alien species before they establish and spread in the environment, with a risk-based surveillance towards priority IAS, priority pathways and priority ecosystems.
3. Organise management of established IAS to eliminate, minimise or mitigate their adverse impacts on species and habitats of European importance, both within and outside of the *Natura 2000* network of sites.

A *LIFE+ Nature* project addressing Invasive Alien Species should include solid scientific evidence showing the added value these actions may have for the *Natura 2000* sites/network and include an awareness raising component, in particular towards stakeholders involved in the introduction of IAS. Note that if you wish to tackle Invasive Alien Species not necessarily in respect to the *Natura 2000* network, you may consider submitting a biodiversity proposal (which must be innovative/demonstrative).

Natura 2000 management and restoration programme projects (theme 6)

In its Staff Working Paper "Financing *Natura 2000*"²⁰ (SEC (2011) 1573 final) of 12.12.2011, the Commission has outlined its views on the need for a more integrated approach towards managing the *Natura 2000* network. In particular, the Paper explains how the Prioritised Action Frameworks (PAFs) required under Article 8 (4) of the Habitats Directive shall serve as strategic planning tools to strengthen the integration of *Natura 2000* financing into the use of relevant EU financial instruments for the next programming period (2014-2020). This approach should take the format of national/regional financing plans and programmes with clear objectives, priorities

¹⁹ In line with the dedicated legislative instrument which is currently under preparation, see

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/invasivealien/index_en.htm

²⁰ http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/financing/docs/financing_natura2000.pdf

and measures as well as an identification of the contribution from EU financial instruments and domestic financing (public and private). PAFs would cover large portions of the network (e.g. all sites in a given region) and all elements necessary to generate a long-term capacity to manage all sites, to restore the sites, habitats and species to favourable status, as well as the features needed to guarantee the connectivity and functionality of the network.

The main aim of the PAFs is to provide an overview of the measures that are necessary to manage or restore species and habitats of EU conservation concern to a favourable conservation status, and to link these measures to the corresponding EU funds (e.g. rural development under Common Agriculture Policy, Structural and Cohesion funds, European Maritime and Fisheries Fund). Since the Member States will still need to specify their financing needs for *Natura 2000* under the relevant plans or programmes, the PAFs are likely to have a greater impact if prepared well in advance of Member State operational programmes.

Even though Member States were expected to submit their initial PAFs by the end of 2012, it is already agreed that the PAFs may require regular updating later on, in light of improved knowledge about management and restoration needs as well as experience with the implementation of different funding mechanisms. These future updates are notably expected to bring the action frameworks closer to the operational level.

It is the Commission's opinion that the updating process of the PAFs should also be used as an opportunity for preparing "integrated projects", to be implemented under the proposed future LIFE Regulation (2014-2020)²¹. An early preparation of these projects will be necessary to optimise take up and strengthen integration in different key sectors during the next programming period.

In line with the PAF approach, a *Natura 2000* management and restoration programme project could, and in most cases should, contain the following elements:

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

²¹ The new 'Integrated projects' are to be implemented under the Biodiversity component of the future LIFE Regulation. Whilst clearly designed for delivering concrete conservation achievements within an area covering a significant part of a national or regional territory, their implementation should also, as a major output, strengthen the capacity for management of *Natura 2000* at this scale.

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

Such LIFE+ projects are mainly addressing those beneficiaries that are also responsible for developing the PAFs at national or regional level. Nevertheless, in order to ensure they receive the widest and strongest possible support to guarantee their future implementation, the development of such financing plans and programmes should aim to also involve from the start the key stakeholders, and in particular those in charge of the management and restoration of the *Natura 2000* network and those responsible for regional, agricultural, social and fishery policies.

Further information about the structure of the Prioritised Action Frameworks, including an indicative list of elements to be considered for preparing the *Natura 2000 management and restoration programmes*, can be found on the Commission website on Financing *Natura 2000*:

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/financing/index_en.htm

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

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

LIFE+ Biodiversity:

Projects targeting threatened species that are not included in the annexes of the Habitats Directive but that have a status of "endangered" or worse in the available European Red Lists

(http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/conservation/species/redlist/index_en.htm)

or in the IUCN Red List for those species that are not covered by the European red Lists (theme 1)

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

Projects addressing ecosystem functions and services (theme 4)

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

Green Infrastructure projects (theme 4)

Green Infrastructure is the network of natural and semi-natural areas, features and green spaces in rural and urban, terrestrial, freshwater, coastal and marine areas, which together enhance ecosystem health and resilience. It contributes to biodiversity conservation (thus *Natura 2000* is in the heart of it), benefiting human populations through the maintenance and enhancement of multiple ecosystem services. It involves the more intelligent use of land, ensuring the necessary space for ecosystem protection and enhancement, climate change mitigation and adaptation, including disaster prevention. Examples show that such ecosystem-based solutions bring multiple benefits and are often cheaper to install and to maintain than purely technical alternatives, "grey infrastructure", which mostly serve only one defined purpose and often have unintended side effects. Green infrastructure can be strengthened through strategic and co-ordinated initiatives that focus on maintaining, restoring, improving and connecting existing areas and features as well as creating new areas and features.

Green infrastructure serves the following purposes: (a) to strengthen, and where possible, to restore the good functioning of ecosystems; (b) to contribute to biodiversity conservation by increasing spatial and functional connectivity between natural areas and improving landscape permeability and mitigating fragmentation (e.g. by ecological corridors, stepping stones, hub and buffer areas); (c) to mitigate and adapt to climate change and thereby to increase resilience and to reduce the vulnerability to natural disaster risks – floods, water scarcity and droughts, coastal erosion, forest fires, mudslides and avalanches – as well as urban heat islands; by making best use of the scarce land resources²².

A major principle for achieving this multi-functionality is integrated land management and spatial planning – it allows the more intelligent use of land, ensuring the necessary space for ecosystem protection, climate change mitigation and adaptation, including disaster prevention. There is a need to develop a strategic approach for maintaining, restoring and enhancing ecosystems and their services in the EU based on existing experience, particularly in spatial planning, including coastal, of basic

²² More information on http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/ecosystems/index_en.htm

requirements for the delivery of the necessary ecosystem services and on the importance of Green Infrastructure in terms of climate change adaptation.

LIFE+ Biodiversity Green Infrastructure proposals must be innovative/demonstrative. They should have a clear multi-functional character, with measurable biodiversity benefits as one of their main outcomes, but also prove to have further environmental, economic and social benefits, and not replicating connectivity measures for protected areas outside the *Natura 2000* network.

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

Projects addressing biodiversity and soil. The Commission welcomes projects aiming at increasing the protection of soil biodiversity and its many ecological functions (theme 5)

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

Projects on Invasive Alien Species (theme 6)

Alien species are species introduced outside their natural past or present distribution that might survive and subsequently reproduce. Species migrating through climate change are not considered as alien species. Alien species are considered invasive when their introduction or spread threatens biodiversity and ecosystem services or has other negative consequences. Invasive Alien Species (IAS) are recognised as one of the five major pressures directly causing biodiversity loss. Lost output due to IAS, health impacts and expenditure to repair IAS damage has already cost the EU at least 12 billion EUR / year over the past 20 years. Trade in species and other commodities, as well as travel, are the driving forces behind the introduction of alien species in the EU. As those driving forces are expected to continue their increase, the threat by IAS will similarly increase.

The problem of IAS can be approached at three levels²³:

1. Prevent the introduction of alien species in the environment, with a risk-based prioritisation towards priority IAS, priority pathways and priority ecosystems. This can be attempted by (1) trade restrictions, (2) restrictions to release in the environment and (3) managing pathways (limiting escapes from contained holding, limiting contaminants in commodities, limiting stowaways in transport vectors and limiting spread to manmade corridors).

²³ In line with the dedicated legislative instrument which is currently under preparation, see http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/invasivealien/index_en.htm

2. Establish an early warning and rapid eradication system to quickly eradicate new alien species before they establish and spread in the environment, with a risk-based surveillance towards priority IAS, priority pathways and priority ecosystems.
3. Organise management of established IAS to eliminate, minimise or mitigate their adverse impacts on biodiversity, ecosystem services and other affected parties and restore the resilience of ecosystems, with a risk-based prioritisation towards priority ecosystems. These actions should be targeted towards the achievement of the 2020 Biodiversity Strategy.

LIFE+ Biodiversity Invasive Alien Species proposals must be innovative/demonstrative. They should include an awareness raising component, in particular towards stakeholders involved in the potential introduction of IAS and should have measurable biodiversity benefits as one of their main outcomes. Note that if you wish to tackle Invasive Alien Species in respect to the *Natura 2000* network, you should consider submitting a *LIFE+ Nature* proposal.