



**LIFE**

**Climate Action**

**Guidelines for evaluation of project  
proposals 2014**

This document aims at explaining to the public the criteria and procedures that will be used for the evaluation of proposals submitted for the 2014 Call under the LIFE sub-programme for Climate Action.



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## 1. General Remarks

This evaluation guide **ONLY** concerns the selection of **LIFE pilot, demonstration, best practice, and information, awareness, and dissemination projects** within the meaning of **Article 2(a), (b), (c) and (h) of the LIFE Regulation**.

For the evaluation of LIFE Integrated Projects, Technical Assistance projects, Capacity-building Projects, Preparatory Projects, Operating Grants and Financial Instruments, please consult relevant documents available on the LIFE website.

The evaluation, selection and award procedure is carried out by the European Commission and the Executive Agency for SMEs (EASME), hereafter called 'the Contracting Authority' with the assistance of a Consortium of independent expert evaluators, hereafter called 'the Contractor'. However, the Contracting Authority remains responsible for the whole procedure, including, the awarding of the final scores, the drawing up of the list of proposals to be co-financed and the rejection of the proposals.

This document only refers to the 2014 call for proposals under the LIFE sub-programme for climate action. As mentioned in section 5 of the LIFE Multiannual Work Programme 2014-2017, a streamlining of the technical methodology may occur in future call for proposals.

Only proposals received by the Contracting Authority through the online tool eProposal before the deadline of 16 October 2014, 16:00 Brussels local time and thereafter passing the Opening phase (see point 2) are registered in the ESAP (***E**valuation and **S**election **A**ward **P**rocedure*) database.

Any information or documents submitted otherwise, or after the deadline, will not be taken into account unless explicitly requested by the Contracting Authority.

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

### ***Basic selection and evaluation principles***

#### **Projects pursuant to Article 2(a), (b), (c) and (h) of the LIFE Regulation**

The selection of **pilot, demonstration, best practice, and information, awareness, and dissemination projects** within the meaning of **Article 18(a), (b), (c) and (h) of the LIFE Regulation** follow the same technical methodology for project selection and are subject to similar eligibility and award criteria, as outlined in this document.

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

The principle of equal treatment between all proposals must be strictly applied throughout all phases of the evaluation process. Evaluations and scores given to each proposal must be as objective and equitable as possible. Each decision and each score given must be clearly justified in ESAP by reasoned comments.

Those Award quality criteria that are evaluated by the Contractor will always be assessed independently by at least two expert evaluators. For each assigned

proposal, the responsible expert evaluator must elaborate an assessment report in ESAP. All comments in ESAP will be made in English. For each evaluation criterion, evaluators must provide substantive comments “for” and “against”, justifying the score proposed. Evaluators must ensure that all their comments are concise, complete and comprehensible and must always be directly relevant to both the proposal and the criterion applied. Evaluators must avoid vague, ambiguous assessments.

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

Applicants should note that evaluators will check the information that is relevant for each step or criterion by concentrating their analysis on the specific application forms where that information should be available. For example the best practice, demonstration or pilot character of the project for a climate change adaptation proposal will be checked against the information available in form B3, etc. For this reason it is very important that the relevant information is written in the right form.

## **2. Opening phase\***

Proposals will be checked for compliance with the following criteria:

1. The proposal has been submitted before the deadline of **16 October 2014, 16:00** Brussels local time.
2. The relevant LIFE 2014 application forms in eProposal have been used for preparing and submitting the proposal. Depending on the objectives of the proposal, the eProposal application forms used are those for the LIFE sub-programme for Climate Action.

*\*The opening check will be performed through the eProposal application, not in ESAP.*

### 3. TECHNICAL SELECTION PHASE

All proposals that were not rejected during the Opening phase are checked for their compliance with the technical selection criteria. Please refer to the "Guidelines for applicants 2014" regarding the use of eProposal and the information which must be provided.

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

#### **1) Generic selection criteria for the LIFE Climate Action project proposals**

A proposal for a project within the meaning of Article 2(a), (b), (c), or (h) of the LIFE Regulation will not be retained for an evaluation of its merit, if the project proposal does not demonstrate that the project:

- contributes to one or several of the general objectives set out in Article 3 of the LIFE Regulation and of the applicable specific objectives in Articles 14, 15 and 16 of the LIFE Regulation,
- falls within the scope of at least one of the priority areas (as set out in Article 13 of the LIFE Regulation) of the LIFE sub-programme under which the project proposal was submitted,
- would take place in the territory of the European Union Member States or is covered by the exceptions foreseen in section 1.5.8 of the Guidelines for applicants 2014 - LIFE Climate Action, and
- corresponds to one of the following project types as defined in Article 2 (a), (b), (c) and (h) of the LIFE Regulation:
  - "Pilot projects" are projects that apply a technique or method that has not been applied or tested before, or elsewhere, that offer potential environmental or climate advantages compared to current best practice and that can subsequently be applied on a larger scale to similar situations.
  - "Demonstration projects" are projects that put into practice, test, evaluate and disseminate actions, methodologies or approaches that are new or unknown in the specific context of the project, such as the geographical, ecological, socio-economic context, and that could be applied elsewhere in similar circumstances.
  - "Best practice projects" are projects that apply appropriate, cost-effective and state-of-the-art techniques, methods and approaches taking into account the specific context of the project.
  - "Information, awareness and dissemination projects" are projects aimed at supporting communication, dissemination of information and awareness raising.

*N.B.: Projects focused on **research**<sup>1</sup> or dedicated to the construction of **large infrastructure** do not fall within the scope of the LIFE programme and are therefore **not eligible**.*

## **2) Technical reliability of the project participants**

A proposal can only be rejected on the basis of this criterion if there is clear evidence that any of the beneficiaries has been an unreliable manager in previous LIFE or other European Union-financed projects<sup>2</sup> and has given no proof that necessary initiatives have been taken to avoid similar problems in the future, or if there would be strong evidence that the beneficiaries do not have the technical competency to carry out the project.

## **3) Specific selection criteria for the LIFE Climate Action components**

A proposal is rejected at this stage if it does not comply with all the relevant criteria that apply to its particular component. Please refer to the *Guidelines for applicants 2014* for LIFE Climate Action for detailed descriptions of, and exceptions to, each of these criteria.

### **3a) Criteria applicable to LIFE Climate Change Mitigation (CCM) and Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) proposals:**

1. The proposed actions should enable the project to achieve its objectives in line with one or more of the specific objectives of the CCM or CCA priority area, in accordance with Articles 14 and 15 of the LIFE Regulation (see *Guidelines for applicants 2014 – LIFE Climate Action*). These actions must lead to a measurable impact which should be monitored during the project.
2. The pilot, demonstrative, and/or best practice nature of the proposal is clearly outlined in the appropriate form B2 and/or B3 in eProposal. Proposals failing to do so are declared not selected and are eliminated from all further evaluation.
3. Project proposals contain activities to monitor the project's impact on the climate problem targeted (see section 2.6.5 of the *Guidelines for applicants 2014 - LIFE Climate Action*).
4. Project proposals include climate change mitigation and adaptation indicators tailored to the project's objectives and expected results (see section 2.6.6 of the *Guidelines for applicants 2014 – LIFE Climate Action*).

### **3b) Criteria applicable to LIFE Climate Governance and Information (GIC) proposals:**

1. The proposed actions should enable the project to achieve its objectives in line with one or more of the specific objectives of the GIC priority area, in accordance with Article 16 of the LIFE Regulation (see *Guidelines for applicants 2014 – LIFE Climate Action*). These actions must lead to a measurable impact which should be monitored during the project.

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<sup>1</sup> Proposals dealing with research may be addressed to the relevant programmes of Horizon 2020: <http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/desktop/en/opportunities/index.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Like in the case of multiple technical failures in fulfilling substantial obligations of previous Grant Agreements (i.e.: termination).

2. The project partnership (coordinating beneficiary and associated beneficiaries, including external assistance) has the appropriate operational capacity/experience in the specific climate issue addressed by the project.
3. The project includes activities to monitor the impact of the project actions on the main targeted audience and on the climate problem targeted.
4. Project proposals include climate governance and information indicators, and where relevant adaptation and mitigation indicators tailored to the project's objectives and expected results (see section 2.6.6 of the Guidelines for applicants 2014 – LIFE Climate Action).



#### 4. AWARD PHASE

All proposals that were not rejected during the Opening and Technical selection phases are admitted to an in-depth evaluation of their quality in the Award phase using the specific criteria and scoring system for projects submitted under the LIFE Climate Action Sub-Programme.

➤ **Specific criteria and scoring system for projects submitted under the LIFE Climate Action Sub-Programme**

Projects under the sub-programme for Climate Action need to demonstrate a transformative impact on increased climate resilience and/or on the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. This should contribute to the shift towards a resource-efficient, low-carbon and climate-resilient economy. It will be assessed at the level of the project itself and at the level of the potential of wider replication/transferability of the project's results achieved during the project or in a post-project stage.

<b>Award Criteria</b>	<b>Minimum pass score*</b>	<b>Maximum score</b>
1. Technical coherence and quality	10	20
2. Financial coherence and quality	10	20
3. EU added value: extent and quality of the contribution to an increased climate resilience and/or to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions	7	15
4. EU added value: Extent and quality of the contribution to the specific objectives of the priority areas of the LIFE sub-programme for Climate Action	7	15
5. EU added value: quality of multipurpose, synergies, and integration	7	15
6. EU added value: replicability and transferability	5	10
7. EU added value: transnational, green procurement, uptake	-	5
<b>Overall (pass) scores</b>	<b>55**</b>	<b>100</b>

\*A project proposal must reach at least the minimum pass score for each award criterion;

\*\*A project proposal must reach at least the overall minimum pass score of 55 to pass this evaluation stage.

### **1. Technical coherence and quality**

This criterion will focus on the clarity, feasibility and sustainability of the actions proposed in the proposal. The sustainability of the project results in the medium and long term is the capacity to maintain them after project implementation. Successful sustainability presupposes a strategy including tasks to ensure the continuation of necessary project actions and the related funding after the end of the project.

The pre-operational context must be thoroughly described and there should be a clear link in the proposal between the problems and threats, the project objectives, the proposed actions and their expected results. All actions should be properly described and quantified, accompanied by indicators, and if necessary adequate maps. The proposal must clearly describe how, where, when and by whom each action in the proposal will be undertaken.

The proposal must be drafted so as to allow the evaluators to assess to what extent the technical means and expertise of the consortium involved are adequate for implementing the project.

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

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

Proposals may receive up to 20 points for this criterion. The pass score for this criterion is 10 points.

### **2. Financial coherence and quality**

The proposed budget and its consistency with the actions proposed and with the applicable rules as well as the cost-effectiveness of the proposed approach will be evaluated.

The financial contributions of the beneficiaries/co-financiers, the proposed budget and the proposed project expenditures must comply with the rules and principles foreseen in the LIFE guidelines for applicants, the Common Provisions for LIFE projects and the LIFE Regulation. The budget must be transparent, coherent and cost-efficient, including for the management of the project.

Proposals may receive up to 20 points for this criterion. The pass score for this criterion is 10 points. A proposal would receive a score below the pass score if the financial part is poorly conceived and/or requires considerable revision.

### **3. EU added value: Extent and quality of the contribution to an increased climate resilience and/or to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions**

Projects under the sub-programme for Climate Action need to demonstrate a transformative impact on increased climate resilience and/or on the reduction of

greenhouse gas emissions. This should contribute to the shift towards a resource-efficient, low-carbon and climate-resilient economy. It will be assessed at the level of the project itself taking account of the potential wider impact of the project's results achieved during and after the project.

Proposals may receive up to 15 points for this criterion. The pass score for this criterion is 7 points.

***4. EU added value: Extent and quality of the contribution to the specific objectives of the priority areas of the LIFE sub-programme for Climate Action***

The extent to which each proposal contributes to one or several of the specific objectives of the priority areas of the LIFE sub-programme for Climate as set out in Articles 14, 15 and 16 of the LIFE Regulation and the quality of this contribution will be evaluated.

The contribution to the EU policy priorities for 2014 for each priority area as specified in the LIFE Climate Action Guidelines for applicants 2014 (section 2.3.3 for priority area Climate Change Mitigation, section 2.4.3 for priority area Climate Change Adaptation, section 2.5.3 for priority area Climate Governance and Information) will be taken into account during evaluation.

Proposals may receive up to 15 points for this criterion. The pass score for this criterion is 7 points.

***5. EU added value: multi-purpose, synergies, and integration***

Projects that, while focussing on a specific area, include a well-conceived multi-purpose delivery mechanism and improve integration of specific climate objectives in other policy areas and create synergies with the objectives of other Union policies without compromising the objectives pursued by the LIFE Regulation, will receive higher scoring.

Proposals may receive up to 15 points for this criterion. The pass score for this criterion is 7 points.

***6. EU added value: replicability and transferability***

Replicability and transferability is the potential of the project to be replicated and transferred during and after its implementation. Successful replication and transferability require a strategy including tasks to multiply the impacts of the projects' solutions and mobilise a wider uptake, reaching a critical mass during the project and/or in a short and medium term perspective after the end of the LIFE project. This goes beyond transfer of knowledge and networking, and involves putting the techniques, methods or strategies developed or applied in the project into practice elsewhere.

Proposals may receive up to 10 points for this criterion. The pass score for this criterion is 5 points.

***7. EU added value: transnational, green procurement, uptake***

Transnational: The Contracting Authority shall have special regard to transnational projects, when transnational cooperation is essential to guarantee the achievement of the project's objectives. A transnational proposal that provides sufficient arguments for an added value of the transnational approach will receive a higher scoring.

Green procurement: Proposals that foresee a clear delivery mechanism to ensure an extensive application of green procurement concepts will receive a higher scoring.

Uptake of the results of EU Research and Innovation Programmes: Proposals that foresee to take up the results of environmental and climate-related research and innovation projects financed by Horizon 2020 or by preceding Framework Programmes will receive a higher scoring, if there is sufficient evidence for the added value of this uptake for the project.

Proposals may receive up to 5 points for this criterion: Maximum 3 for transnational, 1 for Green procurement and 1 for uptake of the results of EU Research and Innovation Programmes.

There is no minimum pass score for this criterion.

### ***Conclusion of the Award phase***

On the basis of the evaluations provided by the Contractor, the final approval on the scores to be awarded to each proposal will fall into one of the following situations:

- Any proposal that receives a final score below the pass score for any of the Award criteria for which a minimum pass level is indicated, or for which the total score is less than 55 points, will be declared "rejected at the Award phase".
- For all proposals not falling into the above situation, the total score to be awarded is calculated by summing up the final synthesis scores for the 7 Award criteria.

## 5. ADMISSIBILITY AND EXCLUSION PHASE

All proposals that were not rejected at the end of the Opening, Technical selection and Award phases AND that are furthermore eligible to be listed on the ranking list (see point 7) are checked for their compliance with the following general eligibility criteria:

All proposals in this phase are furthermore checked for their compliance with the following admissibility and exclusion criteria (see section 12 of this guide for the detailed list of questions):

1. Where relevant, the **signed declarations** (forms **A3, A4, A6, A8**) listed below are uploaded in the relevant eProposal sections (see application guide for instructions). Failure to deliver these declarations or to clearly indicate the financial contribution (forms **A3, A4 and A6**) may lead to an exclusion of the proposal from all further evaluation. Signing the forms A3 and A4 also confirms that the beneficiaries are not in one of the situations referred to in Articles 106(1) and 107 of the **Financial Regulation (Commission Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 966/2012 of 25 October 2012)**.<sup>3</sup>
  - The scanned and uploaded (in eProposal) application forms **A3, A4** (only if there is one or more associated beneficiaries) and **A6** (only if there is one or more co-financiers) bear dated signatures with the status and full name of the signatory clearly in evidence on the document. If the status of the co-financier commitment at this stage is 'not fully confirmed', the declaration must explain the current status of the commitment.
2. Form B1 (Summary description of the project) is completed in English. It is encouraged to provide other application forms in English also, but they may be completed in any official EU language, except Maltese and Irish, if necessary.
3. The coordinating beneficiary is legally registered in the EU.

**In case LIFE proposals do not fully comply with all the above criteria (e.g. mandatory signatures / dates of signatures are missing) the Contracting Authority will first send a message via eProposal to the coordinating beneficiary indicating which forms are missing.**

The coordinating beneficiary will have **5 working days** to reply and provide, through eProposal, the missing or incomplete documents and forms. In exceptional circumstances, the Contracting Authority may extend the deadline.

A copy of all formal communication will be sent to the relevant national LIFE contact point indicated on the LIFE website.

**By the end of this process, all LIFE proposals that do not fully comply with all the above criteria are declared *inadmissible* and are eliminated from all further evaluation.**

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<sup>3</sup> O.J. L298 of 26.10.2012

## **6. FINANCIAL SELECTION PHASE**

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

### **Step A:**

All applicants (coordinating beneficiaries) other than public bodies, 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), namely 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". Therefore, coordinating beneficiaries other than public bodies have to provide the following administrative and financial documents as annexes to their LIFE proposal. It should be noted that these annexes will be required by the Contracting Authority 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:

- A. The "LIFE Simplified Financial Statement", provided as a separate Excel file with the LIFE Application Package. The financial table in this statement must be completed and annexed (uploaded) to the proposal as an Excel file.
- B. 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. If the applicant 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/business plan (for at least 12 months in the future) with the financial data prepared in accordance with the standard required under national legislation.
- C. Where the total EU contribution requested in the application exceeds EUR 750,000, an audit report produced by an approved external auditor shall be submitted. That report shall certify the accounts for the last financial year available. This document can only be delivered by a professionally qualified auditor who is independent from the applicant's organisation. Persons responsible for carrying out independent audits of accounting documents must be listed in the registers held by Member States of auditors approved by them to carry out statutory audits of accounting documents.

The above-mentioned audit shall be carried out in accordance with the International Auditing Standards and Codes of Ethics. The audit 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 must be based on a management/business plan where the financial data are presented in accordance with relevant national provisions.

An applicant (coordinating beneficiary) that declared itself as being a public body (in application form A2) must provide as a financial annex the "Public body declaration", fully completed, with a dated signature. This annex is available as a separate word file with the LIFE application package.

**In case LIFE proposals are missing one or more mandatory financial annexes the Contracting Authority will first send a message via eProposal to the coordinating beneficiary indicating the annexes that are missing.**

**The Contracting Authority will also use this period to request the necessary financial annexes and/or supporting documentation in cases where it has doubt as to the status of any public body.**

**The coordinating beneficiary will have 5 working days to reply and provide, through eProposal, the missing or incomplete annexes. In exceptional circumstances, the Contracting Authority may extend the deadline.**

**A copy of all formal communication will be sent to the relevant national LIFE contact point indicated on the LIFE website.**

**By the end of this process, all LIFE proposals that do not fully comply with all the above criteria are declared inadmissible and are eliminated from all further evaluation.**

#### **Step B:**

The purpose of the financial check is to verify that: *"The applicant must have stable and sufficient sources of funding to maintain his activity throughout the period during which the action is being carried out ... and to participate in its funding"*.

The Contracting Authority will utilise all the information at its disposal to assess whether the applicant and the associated beneficiaries fulfil the selection and the exclusion criteria. On the basis of Article 202, a proposal will be rejected if the evaluator has strong evidence showing that it falls into any of the following situations:

- if there is information available to indicate that the coordinating beneficiary and/or one of its associated beneficiaries, contrary to the declaration for exclusion, are in one of the situations referred to in art. 106(1) and 107 of the Financial Regulation n° 966/2012 of 25 October 2012 (JO L 298 of 26/10/2012);
- the results of audits carried out by European Union Institutions in relation to the coordinating beneficiary and/ or one of its associated beneficiaries have clearly shown their inability to comply with the administrative rules regulating European Union grants and in particular those applicable to LIFE;
- the coordinating beneficiary has an unpaid debt owed to the Contracting Authority at the time of the submission of its application. The Contracting Authority will make this assessment based on a consultation of its "early warning system".

For private commercial and private non-commercial organisations:

- the auditor's report or auditor-certified balance sheet and profit and loss account provided with the project proposal has not given an "unqualified opinion" about the coordinating beneficiary's financial viability<sup>4</sup>;
- on the basis of the financial viability test, it is concluded that the coordinating beneficiary does not have the financial capacity to cover its share of co-financing within the proposed project period;
- on the basis of the financial viability test, it is concluded that the coordinating beneficiary does not have the capacity to manage the financial amounts provided for in the proposal budget within the proposed project period;

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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<sup>4</sup> i.e. a statement that the auditor has carried out the task in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards and without restriction as to the scope of the work necessary to express his opinion, that the financial statements audited were drawn up in accordance with appropriate or generally accepted accounting principles, and that they give a true and fair view of the organisation's financial situation and the results of the operation.



## **7. Set up of the ranking list of proposals to be admitted to the revision phase**

Following the conclusion of the Award Phase, the Contracting Authority will establish a ranking list composed of approved projects.

The ranking list will be composed of sublists for each priority area within the sub-programme. The Contracting Authority will rank the eligible proposals on the sublists for CCA, CCM and GIC priority areas based on merit, i.e. according to the received scores in the award phase ranking from highest to lowest within each priority area.

For each priority area it will be indicated in the sublist how many proposals may be funded according to the indicative budget split between the priority areas (see Guidelines for applicants 2014 - LIFE Climate Action). In the absence of enough acceptable proposals received under a priority area to allocate the indicative budget, the Contracting Authority may reallocate the budget to proposals submitted under another priority area, based on merit of the respective proposals.

The three sublists will be combined into the ranking list of proposals, which will contain proposals for a maximum of 100% of the budget for the 2014 call ("short list") together with a reserve list (up to 30% of the budget for 2014).

In cases of proposals with equal scores in the list, priority will be given to proposals with the highest requested European Union contribution. The European Union contribution for a given LIFE proposal would normally be based on the EU co-financing amount requested for the project. However if the requested EU co-financing rate (in %) is higher than the allowed maximum rate according to the rules set in the LIFE Regulation and in the LIFE guidelines for applicants, the EU financial contribution to the project will be re-calculated on the basis of the maximum allowed EU co-financing rate.

Besides being based on the scores given to each proposal and the indicative budget allocation per priority area, the preliminary long list must take into account the following condition set out in the LIFE Regulation:

- *"The Commission shall have special regard to transnational projects where transnational cooperation is essential to guarantee environmental protection and climate objectives, and shall endeavour to ensure that at least 15 % of the budgetary resources dedicated to projects are allocated to transnational projects. The Commission shall consider the award of funding to transnational projects even in cases where the indicative national allocation balance of one or more Member States participating in those transnational projects has been exceeded". (Article 19(7))*

## 8. Award Decision and informing the LIFE Committee

After the formal endorsement (Award Decision) of the Contracting Authority of the selection results, applicants will be officially informed about the results of the evaluation of their proposals and, where appropriate, about the reasons for rejection. The LIFE Committee will be also informed about the results.

The proposals listed in the "short list" will thereafter enter into the revision phase.

## 9. Revision phase

The aim of the revision phase is to clarify, for the proposals listed on the "short list", all open questions regarding feasibility, cost-effectiveness and eligibility of individual actions, compliance with the LIFE Regulation and Common Provisions.

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

The applicant will have **15 calendar days** to reply to the questions and a further **15 calendar days** to introduce the requested modifications or improvements to its proposal. In exceptional circumstances, the Contracting Authority may extend the deadline.

The Contracting Authority will send all revision questions and instructions via eProposal (see also guidelines for the use of the eProposal Mailbox on the eProposal website) to the coordinating beneficiary.

**Applicants shall not introduce any modifications to their proposal other than those requested by the Contracting Authority.**

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

By the end of the revision phase, all projects retained are expected to be fully coherent and transparent, and in line with all technical and financial requirements of the LIFE Regulation and the Grant Agreement.

An applicant who has successfully completed the revision process will be asked to provide one **ORIGINAL** paper version of the final revised proposal, with all original signatures and stamps on the relevant forms and annexes and two additional paper copies of that final revised proposal. At this stage, all commitments from associated beneficiaries/co-financers **must be fully confirmed** in the relevant forms.

Applicants should not introduce any modifications at all to the revised proposal after the conclusion of the revision phase unless explicitly asked by the contracting authority.

## **10. Use of the reserve list**

As a result of the revision process or due to the withdrawal of one or several short-listed proposals, LIFE co-financing budget may become available for reserve-listed proposals.

In that case, a new Award Decision will be taken listing the proposals to be financed from the reserve list. These proposals will be identified by order of their ranking.

After selection, these proposals will then enter into the revision process phase with the objective to have them co-financed by LIFE. This process may be carried out several times in order to ensure full use of the available annual LIFE budget.

## **11. Signature of Grant Agreements**

The Contracting Authorities will prepare the Grant Agreement that will be signed by the Coordinating Beneficiary and Contracting Authority.

## 12. Detailed evaluation forms for Climate proposals

### Opening phase\*

#### Opening criteria

1. The proposal reached the Contracting Authority by the set deadline?	<b>Yes/No</b>
2. Have the relevant LIFE 2014 application forms in eProposal been used?	<b>Yes/No</b>

*\*The opening check will be performed through the eProposal application, not in ESAP.*

### Technical selection phase

#### 1. Generic selection criteria for the LIFE Climate Action sub-programme project proposals

1. Does the project correspond to one of the project types as defined in Article 2 (a), (b), (c) and (h) of the LIFE Regulation?	<b>Yes / No</b>
2. Does the proposal contribute to one or several of the general objectives set out in Article 3 of the LIFE Regulation?	<b>Yes / No</b>
3. Does the proposal fall within the scope of at least one of the priority areas (as set out in Articles 9 and 13 of the LIFE Regulation) of the LIFE sub-programme under which the project proposal was submitted?	<b>Yes / No</b>
4. Does the proposal contribute to one or several of the specific objectives in Articles 14, 15 and 16 of the LIFE Regulation?	<b>Yes / No</b>
5. Does the project take place in the territory of the European Union Member States or is covered by the exceptions foreseen in section 1.5.8 of the Guidelines for applicants 2014 - LIFE Climate Action?	<b>Yes / No</b>

#### 2. Technical reliability of the project participants

1. Are the beneficiaries technically reliable?	<b>Yes / No</b>
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#### 3 Specific questions for each of the LIFE Climate Action components

##### 3a. Criteria applicable to LIFE Climate Change Mitigation (CCM) and LIFE Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) proposals

1. Do the proposed actions enable the project to achieve its objectives in line with one or more of the specific objectives of the CCM or CCA priority area, in accordance with Articles 14 and 15 of the LIFE Regulation (see LIFE Climate Action Guidelines for evaluation of project proposals 2014). Do the actions lead to a measurable impact?	<b>Yes / No</b>
2. Is the pilot, demonstration and/or best practice nature of the proposal clearly outlined in the appropriate form B2 and B3 in eProposal?	<b>Yes / No</b>
3. Does the project partnership (coordinating beneficiary and associated beneficiaries, including external assistance) have the appropriate operational capacity / experience in the specific climate issue addressed by the proposal?	<b>Yes / No</b>
4. Does the project proposal contain activities to monitor the project's impact on the climate problem targeted?	<b>Yes / No</b>
5. Does the project proposal include climate change mitigation and adaptation indicators tailored to the project's objectives and expected results?	<b>Yes / No</b>

##### 3b Criteria applicable to all LIFE Climate Governance and Information

1. Are the proposed actions in line with one or more of the specific objectives of the GIC priority area, in accordance with Article 16 of the LIFE Regulation? Do these actions lead to a measurable impact?	<b>Yes / No</b>
2. Does the project partnership (coordinating beneficiary and associated beneficiaries, including external assistance) have the appropriate operational capacity / experience in the specific climate issue addressed by the proposal?	<b>Yes / No</b>

3. Does the project include activities to monitor the impact of the proposal's actions on the main targeted audience and on the climate problem targeted?	<b>Yes / No</b>
4. Does the project proposal include Climate Governance and Information indicators tailored to the project's objectives and expected results?	<b>Yes / No</b>

### ***Award phase***

#### **1. Technical coherence and quality**

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

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

#### **2. Financial coherence and quality**

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

1. To what extent do all beneficiaries provide an adequate financial contribution to the project budget?
2. To what extent is the budget balanced (income – excluding any in kind contribution – equals expenditure)?
3. Is the requested EU co-financing rate consistent with the rules for maximum co-financing rates, as indicated in Article 20 of the LIFE Regulation?
4. Are the personnel costs proposed on form F1 reasonable and sufficiently detailed?
5. Are the travel and subsistence costs on form F2 reasonable, sufficiently detailed and correctly allocated?

6. Are the costs for external assistance on form F3 reasonable, sufficiently detailed and correctly allocated? If relevant, is the information provided consistent with rules for public tendering?
7. Where costs for external assistance exceed 35% of the total project budget, has a coherent explanation been provided to justify this high level of sub-contracting?
8. Where relevant, are the costs for durable goods on form F4a, F4b and F4c reasonable, sufficiently detailed and correctly allocated? If relevant, are the depreciation rules correctly applied?
9. Where relevant, are the costs for land purchase, lease and one off compensation payments on form F5 reasonable and sufficiently detailed? In case of land purchase, has a letter been added from the competent authority or from a registered notary, confirming that the price per hectare is not above the average for this type of land and location? (if not, such a document needs to be provided during revision)
10. Are the costs for consumables on form F6 reasonable, sufficiently detailed and correctly allocated?
11. Are the "other costs" on form F7 reasonable, sufficiently detailed and correctly allocated?
12. Are the overhead costs on Form F8 and Report R1 consistent with the maximum threshold of 7% of total eligible direct costs (excluding land purchase costs)?
13. Does the proposed budget exclude ineligible costs as contained in the Common Provisions?
14. In cases of civil servant salary costs, has the "+2%" rule been applied?
15. Will costs be tendered wherever required and/or possible? Are costs reasonable with respect to national conditions? Are the project management costs reasonable given the project's size and ambitions?
16. Is only a minimal effort of financial revision needed?

### **3. EU added value: Extent and quality of the contribution to an increased climate resilience and/or to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions**

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

1. To what extent does the proposal contribute to a shift towards a low-carbon and climate-resilient economy? To what extent does the proposal have a transformative impact on increased climate resilience and/or on the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions?
2. What quantitative impact on climate resilience and/or reduction of greenhouse gas emissions can realistically be expected from the project? What potential does the project have for a wider impact beyond project-level activities?
3. Where relevant, has the proposal considered obtaining other funding sources in the future?
4. Is there any indication that the proposal includes actions that would be financed anyway, i.e. even in case no LIFE funding would be made available for these actions?

### **4 EU added value: Extent and quality of the contribution to the specific objectives of the priority areas of the LIFE sub-programme for Climate Action**

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

1. To what extent is the proposal expected to provide a significant and sustainable contribution to one or several specific objectives of the priority areas of the LIFE sub-programme for Climate Action?
2. To what extent does the proposal contribute to the EU policy priorities for 2014 for one or several of the priority areas?
3. To what extent does the proposal show that other EU funding sources have been considered in the preparation of the proposal?

4. Is there a risk that some of the actions are obligatory compensation measures for other projects (Article 6 of the Habitats Directive), or that some of the co-financing might come from obligatory compensation payments from other projects (Article 6 of the Habitats Directive)?

#### **5 EU added value: multipurpose, synergies, and integration**

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

1. Does the project aim at integrating specific climate objectives into other policy areas and Union policies and creating synergies?
2. To what extent are stakeholders consulted or involved in the project?
3. To what extent does the project represent an uptake of results of other EU funding programmes?

#### **6 EU added value: replicability and transferability**

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

1. To what extent does the proposal include monitoring, assessment and evaluation measures for the proposed actions and for the purpose of disseminating the project results and lessons learnt? Are monitoring and assessment activities, including indicators, appropriate and well-designed for this purpose?
2. To what extent does the proposal include communication, experience-sharing, networking and dissemination activities? Are all obligatory communication requirements covered? Are these activities appropriate and well-designed for the purpose of communicating and disseminating the results and lessons learnt?
3. To what extent will the project replicate and transfer results during and after its implementation?
4. Is the proposed approach sufficiently ambitious and realistic in order to reach an adequate scale?
5. To what extent is the project expected to generate findings that are widely applicable?

#### **7 EU added value: transnational, green procurement, uptake**

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

4. To what extent is transnational cooperation foreseen in the project with multi country partnership and/or international scope of the project actions?
5. To what extent is green procurement used during the project and/or promoted?
6. To what extent is the project's "carbon footprint" taken into account in its implementation and management?

### **Admissibility and exclusion phase**

#### **Admissibility selection criteria**

1. Are the application forms A3, A4, A6 and A8 (where relevant) uploaded in the eProposal tool, signed and dated?	<b>Yes / No</b>
2. Has a summary in English been provided on form B1?	<b>Yes / No</b>
3. Have the proposal forms been completed in one of the official EU languages other than Maltese or Irish?	<b>Yes / No</b>
4. Is the coordinating beneficiary legally registered in the EU?	<b>Yes / No</b>

**Financial selection phase**

<b>Financial selection criteria</b>	
<p>1. Have the following mandatory annexes been uploaded in the eProposal application in the requested electronic format?</p> <p>For coordinating beneficiaries that are not public bodies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the "LIFE Simplified Financial Statement"</li> <li>most recent balance sheet and profit and loss account (or if the applicant has been only recently created, it must provide a management/ business plan for at least 12 months in the future)</li> <li>where the EU contribution requested exceeds 750,000 €, an auditor's certificate</li> </ul> <p>For coordinating beneficiaries that are public bodies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the "Public body declaration" completed and with dated signature</li> </ul>	<b>Yes / No</b>
2. Have all beneficiaries completed the declaration that they are not in one of the situations listed in Articles 106 (1) and 107 of the Financial Regulation?	<b>Yes / No</b>
3. According to the information available, is the coordinating beneficiary financially sound (based on profit and loss account, balance sheet, audit report) – where applicable?	<b>Yes / No</b>
4. According to the information available, does the coordinating beneficiary have the capacity to finance the project and/or to manage the financial amounts provided for in the proposed budget, within the proposed project period?	<b>Yes / No</b>
5. Do all beneficiaries contribute financially to the proposal budget?	<b>Yes / No</b>
6. Are all beneficiaries absent from the Contracting Authority's Early Warning System?	<b>Yes / No</b>