



**Guide for the evaluation of
Sub-programme Environment
LIFE project proposals 2015**

This document aims at explaining to the public the criteria and procedures that will be used for the evaluation of LIFE project proposals submitted for the 2015 Call for 'traditional projects' under the Environment sub-programme.

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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 2015 call for proposals. 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 **1 October 2015, 16:00** Brussels local time for Environment & Resource Efficiency and **7 October 2015, 16:00** Brussels local time for Nature & Biodiversity/Environmental Governance & Information and thereafter passing the Opening phase (see point 2) are registered in the LIFE ESAP (*Evaluation and Selection Award Procedure*) database.

Any information or documents submitted otherwise, or after the deadline, will not be taken into account unless explicitly requested by the 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 based on the contents of this document.

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 2(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.

Within the limits allowed for by thematic and national allocation rules of the LIFE Regulation, the principle of equal treatment between all proposals must be strictly applied throughout 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 admitted to 'revision', these suggestions will become essential.

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 demonstrative or innovative character for an Environment and Resource Efficiency proposal will be checked against the information available in form B2, 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 **1 October 2015, 16:00** Brussels local time for Environment & Resource Efficiency and **7 October 2015, 16:00** Brussels local time for Nature & Biodiversity/Environmental Governance & Information
2. The relevant LIFE 2015 application forms in eProposal have been used for preparing and submitting the proposal. Depending on the objectives of the proposal, the eProposal application forms used are those for "LIFE Nature and Biodiversity", "LIFE Environment and Resource Efficiency", "LIFE Environmental Governance and Information".

**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 eligibility criteria. Please refer to the "Guidelines for applicants 2015" 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 components

A proposal for a project 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 10, 11 and 12 of the LIFE Regulation,
- falls within the scope of the priority area (as set out in Article 9 of the LIFE Regulation) of the LIFE sub-programme for Environment under which the project proposal was submitted, 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 in the fields of the sub-programme for Environment.
- *has a focus different than on **research**¹ or on the construction of **large infrastructure**. Such projects do not fall within the scope of the LIFE programme and are therefore **not eligible**.*

¹ 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>.

- *takes place in the Union and/or territories to which the Treaties and relevant acquis apply or it fulfils one of the exceptions laid down in Articles 5 and 6 of the LIFE Regulation and specified in the Guidelines for applicants 2015.*

2. Operational capacity of the project participants

A proposal can only be rejected on the basis of this criterion if there is clear evidence that applicants do not have the professional competencies and qualifications required to complete the project. For GIE projects, the applicants must have competencies and qualifications in the specific issues targeted by the project.

3. Specific selection criteria for each of the LIFE priority areas

A proposal is rejected at this stage if it does not comply with all the relevant criteria that apply to its particular priority area. Please refer to the *Guidelines for applicants 2015* for the relevant LIFE priority area for detailed descriptions of, and exceptions to, each of these criteria:

3 1) Criteria applicable to all LIFE Nature and Biodiversity (NAT) proposals:

1. For pilot, demonstration and best practice projects in the area of nature conservation and biodiversity, the share of the proposal budget allocated to concrete conservation actions is at least **25%** (a "concrete conservation action" being defined here as any action that directly improves (or slows/halts/reverses the decline of) the conservation status / ecological condition of the species, habitats, ecosystems or services targeted by the proposal). Limited exceptions are possible in view of the specific policy needs. Please refer the *Guidelines for applicants 2015 – LIFE Nature and Biodiversity* for exceptions to this rule.
2. Is the project targeting the conservation of non-domestic species or varieties of plants or animals, since the conservation of domestic species and varieties is not eligible?

3 2) Criteria applicable to LIFE Nature proposals, only:

1. The proposed actions are aimed at implementing the objectives of the EU Birds and Habitats Directives and, more specifically, they concern conservation measures for species and/or habitat types that are covered by the relevant annexes of the Habitats or Birds Directive;

3 3) Criteria applicable to LIFE Biodiversity proposals, only:

1. Are the proposed actions aiming to fulfil targets 2 to 5 of the Communication "Our life insurance, our natural capital: an EU biodiversity strategy to 2020 (COM(2011) 244)" by improving or restoring natural biodiversity or ecosystems?

3 4) Criteria applicable to all LIFE Environment and Resource Efficiency (ENV) proposals:

1. The demonstrative and/or pilot nature of the proposal should be clearly outlined in the appropriate form B2 and/or B3 in eProposal.

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 Environment Sub-Programme.

Award Criteria	Minimum pass score*	Maximum score
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 the specific objectives of the priority areas of the LIFE sub-programme for Environment	10	20
4. Contribution to the project topics	-	10
5. EU added value: multipurpose, synergies, and integration	7	15
6. EU added value: replicability and transferability	5	10
7. EU added value: transnational, green procurement, uptake	-	5
Overall (pass) scores	55	100

*A project proposal has to reach at least the minimum pass score for each award criterion and also the sum of scores for criteria for which a minimum score has been fixed has to be equivalent to 55 points or more.

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 and, if necessary, accompanied by adequate maps. The proposal must clearly describe how, where, when and by whom each action in the proposal will be undertaken.

The proposal must be drafted so as to allow the evaluators to assess to what extent the 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. Value for money of the proposed project will also be assessed.

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 General Conditions of the LIFE Model Grant Agreement and the LIFE Regulation². 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 its financial part is poorly conceived and/or requires a considerable revision.

3. EU added value: extent and quality of the contribution to the specific objectives of the priority areas of the priority areas of the LIFE sub-programme for Environment

The extent to which each proposal contributes to one or several of the specific objectives of the priority areas of the priority areas of the LIFE sub-programme for Environment as set out in Articles 10, 11 and 12 of the LIFE Regulation and the quality of this contribution will be evaluated. Environmental benefits, presented in a life-cycle approach, where relevant, will be assessed under this criterion and considered as an indicator of the extent and quality of such contribution; they shall be clear, substantial, ambitious, as well as credible. In the case of LIFE Nature and LIFE Biodiversity proposals, they will also be assessed based on their impact on the conservation status of habitats and species.

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

4. EU added value: contribution to the project topics

²Annex X to the Model Grant Agreement, Financial and Administrative Guidelines:
http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/toolkit/pmtools/life2014_2020/financial_guidelines.htm

The specific criteria and scoring system under the sub-programme Environment reflect the fact that, under the Environment sub-programme, thematic priorities and related project topics were defined in the LIFE Regulation and the MAWP respectively. LIFE proposals clearly falling under the project topics implementing the thematic priorities set out in Annex III for the sub-programme Environment as defined in the LIFE multiannual work programme for 2014-2017 will receive additional points under criterion 4.

Proposals may receive up to 10 points for this criterion. In the case of NAT and GIE proposals, either 0 or 10 points will be awarded, based on whether or not the project fully complies with one or more of the priority project topics for the chosen priority area. In the case of ENV proposals, 5 points will be awarded if the project fully complies with one or more of the priority project topics. Such projects will be awarded an additional 5 points if the proposal is also new or unknown Union wide, but only under the condition that clear evidence of such novelty is provided (as compared to similar existing best practices).

There is no minimum pass score for this criterion.

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

Proposals that, while focussing on a specific area, include a well-conceived multi-purpose delivery mechanism and improve integration of specific environmental 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.

As a consequence the targeted contribution to economic and social objectives as well as to any other environmental objective in other policy areas and Union policies beyond those constituting the main focus of the proposals will be evaluated under this criterion.

On the other hand, proposals focussed on one priority area that might undermine environmental or climate objectives in another priority area will likely receive a lower score unless this impact is clearly explained and justified in the proposal and the possible alternatives and mitigation measures have been correctly foreseen.

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.

Replication and transferability go beyond dissemination and concern concrete project actions that replicate and transfer, for example, projects' solutions to other sectors, entities, regions and countries.

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: Transnational proposals shall be favoured and awarded extra points if there is sufficient evidence for an added value of the transnational approach.

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 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 in 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 general eligibility criteria and with the admissibility and exclusion criteria (see section 13 of the current guide for the detailed list of questions) as explained below:

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)**.³
 - The scanned and uploaded (in eProposal) application forms **A3, A4** (only if there is one or more associated beneficiaries) and **A6** (only if there is one or more co-financiers) bear dated signatures with the status and full name of the signatory clearly in evidence on the document. If the status of the co-financier commitment at this stage is 'not fully confirmed', the declaration must explain the current status of the commitment.
 - For *LIFE Nature and Biodiversity* proposals, if required (see Application Guide), a complete and uploaded (in eProposal) form **A8** with a dated signature should be provided from the competent nature conservation authority of the Member State where the proposal is submitted (and from all participating Member States in the case of multi-national proposals).
2. Form B1 (Summary description of the project) is completed in English.
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.

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.

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.

³ O.J. L298 of 26.10.2012

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 with the LIFE Application Package, 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.

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 of the Rules of Application of the Financial Regulation⁴, 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 Regulation⁵;
- 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 viability⁶;

⁴ Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 1268/2012 of 29 October 2012 on the rules of application of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union, OJEU L362 of 31.12.2012, p.1.

⁵ Regulation (EU, EURATOM) No 966/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union and repealing Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002, OJEU L 298 of 25.10.2012, p.1.

⁶ 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.

- 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.

7. ESTABLISHMENT OF THE PRELIMINARY LONG LIST OF PROPOSALS TO BE ADMITTED TO THE REVISION PHASE

Following the conclusion of the Award phase, the Contracting Authority will establish a preliminary long list representing up to 130% of the available budget. The proposals will be ranked by their total score and taking into account, in order of priority, the following conditions set out in the LIFE Regulation:

- A. *"At least 55 % of the budgetary resources allocated to projects supported by way of action grants under the sub-programme for Environment shall be dedicated to projects supporting the conservation of nature and biodiversity". (Article 9(3)).* Note that the 55% rule is calculated taking into account also the evaluation results for Integrated Projects, Preparatory Projects, Capacity Building and Technical Assistance Projects (please consult relevant documents available on the LIFE website) in order to ensure that overall the 55-45% balance will be respected.

- B. "The Commission shall, for the duration of the first multiannual work programme, ensure geographical balance for projects other than integrated projects submitted under the sub-programme for Environment, by proportionately distributing funds among all Member States according to indicative national allocations established in accordance with the criteria set out in Annex I. Where indicative national allocations are not applicable, projects shall be selected exclusively on the basis of merit". (Article 19(4))⁷
- C. "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))

The following table summarises the indicative national allocation (in Euro) per Member State for the period **2014-2017**. The **four year indicative national allocations** have been calculated using the percentages established in the LIFE multiannual work programme for 2014-2017 and the expected 2014-2017 budget:

Member State	Allocation 2014-2017 (EUR)
AT	14,794,402
BE	16,450,424
BG	24,332,993
CY	10,607,005
CZ	16,258,612
DE	86,692,353
DK	12,892,175
EE	9,577,921
EL	26,195,332
ES	74,765,085
FI	19,587,370
FR	78,519,640
HR	20,219,269
HU	19,378,112
IE	11,458,751
IT	67,633,582

⁷ Please also note that "If the sum of co-financing that is necessary for funding projects, other than integrated projects, that are submitted by a Member State, and that are on the list compiled by the Commission at the end of the selection procedure is less than the indicative allocation for that Member State, the Commission shall, subject to the conditions laid down in paragraphs 1 and 2 being met, use the balance of that indicative national allocation to co-finance those projects submitted by other Member States, excluding projects in OCTs, that make the greatest contribution to the achievement of the general objectives set out in Article 3." (Article 19(6))

LT	8,161,876
LU	8,410,108
LV	7,698,323
MT	7,174,698
NL	23,578,781
PL	51,048,570
PT	20,085,627
RO	34,386,660
SE	24,846,796
SI	14,838,061
SK	17,231,744
UK	74,254,393

The indicative national allocation for the period **2015 – 2017** will be published on the LIFE website after the 2014 exercise is completed.

In determining the final allocations available for "traditional" projects, the Contracting Authority will take into account grants already awarded for Preparatory, Technical Assistance and Capacity Building projects.

For setting up the "**preliminary long list**" of proposals under the LIFE sub-programme for Environment, the following additional rules will be applied:

- Any proposal specifically supporting the conservation of nature and biodiversity objectives under the priority area Nature and Biodiversity and under Environmental Governance and Information will be taken into account for the 55% threshold for "nature and biodiversity" including any proposal submitted under LIFE Environmental Governance and Information that would primarily target a nature or biodiversity issue. These proposals will be tagged as "Nature" proposals.
- For each proposal, the Member States to which the EU financial contribution will be allocated must be clearly identifiable in the proposal. For the accounting of national allocation the EU financial contribution of each beneficiary counts towards its country.
- As foreseen in the LIFE regulation, a transnational proposal where at least one participating Member State has not yet consumed its indicative national allocation will NOT be excluded from qualitative ranking.

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

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 preliminary long list accounting for a maximum of 100% of the available budget (award 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 award list, all open questions regarding feasibility, cost-effectiveness and eligibility of individual actions, compliance with the LIFE Regulation and the General Conditions of the LIFE Model Grant Agreement.

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 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 PROPOSALS IN THE PRELIMINARY LONG LIST COVERING THE ADDITIONAL 30% BEYOND THE 100% AVAILABLE BUDGET

As a result of the revision process or due to the withdrawal of one or several proposals of the initial award list, LIFE co-financing budget may become

available for proposals initially listed in the preliminary long list and covering the additional 30% beyond the maximum 100% available budget.

In that case, a new Award decision will be taken listing the proposals to be financed. These proposals will be identified by order of their ranking and conditional to respecting the earmarking of 55% LIFE co-financing for proposals tagged as "Nature". This means that in the case where the reductions resulting from the revision process or withdrawals would reduce the total annual LIFE co-financing below 55%, the proposal(s) to be selected from will be proposals tagged as "Nature" to the point where the obligatory 55% earmarking has been reached.

The selected proposals will then enter into the revision process to ensure their full conformity with the conditions for co-financing by LIFE.

This process may be carried out several times in order to fully use the available annual LIFE budget.

11. FINAL LIST OF PROJECT TO BE FUNDED AND RESERVE LIST

Following the revision phase, a final list of successful projects within the available budget and a reserve list with best-ranked projects will be constituted.

12. SIGNATURE OF GRANT AGREEMENTS

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

13. DETAILED EVALUATION FORMS FOR ENVIRONMENT PROPOSALS

Opening phase*

Opening criteria

1. The Proposal was submitted through the eProposal tool by the set deadline?	Yes / No
2. Have the relevant LIFE 2015 application forms in eProposal been used?	Yes / No

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

Technical selection phase

1. Generic question for all of the LIFE components

1. Does the proposal fulfil the relevant project categories covered by Article 2(a), (b), (c), or (h) of the LIFE Regulation and does it aim at fulfilling the relevant LIFE objectives as laid down in Article 3 and Articles 9, 10, 11 and 12 of the LIFE Regulation?	Yes / No
2. Does the project not focus on research and is it not dedicated to the construction of large infrastructure?	Yes / No
3. Does the project take place in the Union and/or territories to which the Treaties and relevant <i>acquis</i> apply or does it fulfil one of the exceptions laid down in Articles 5 and 6 of the LIFE Regulation?	Yes / No

2. Operational capacity of the project participants

1. Is there clear evidence that applicants do not have the professional competencies and qualifications required to complete the project?	Yes / No
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3. Specific questions for each of the LIFE components

3.1 Criteria applicable to all LIFE Nature and Biodiversity proposals

1. Is at least 25% of the proposal budget allocated to concrete conservation actions (or, alternatively, does the proposal fall into any of the exceptions as indicated in sections 2.4.1 of the <i>Guidelines for applicants 2015 – LIFE Nature and Biodiversity</i> ?)	Yes / No/ n.a.
2. Is the project targeting the conservation of non-domestic autochthonous species or varieties of plants or animals or of natural or semi-natural habitats or ecosystems?	Yes / No/ n.a.

3.2 Criterion applicable to LIFE Nature proposals only

1. Are the proposed actions aimed at implementing the objectives of the EU Birds and Habitats Directives and, more specifically, do they concern conservation measures for species and/or habitat types that are covered by the relevant annexes of the Habitats or Birds Directive, where relevant within the Natura 2000 network?	Yes / No
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3.3 Criterion applicable to LIFE Biodiversity proposals only

1. Are the proposed actions aiming to fulfil targets 2 to 5 of the Communication "Our life insurance, our natural capital: an EU biodiversity strategy to 2020 (COM(2011) 244)"	Yes / No
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3.4 Criterion applicable to LIFE Environment and Resource Efficiency proposals, only

1. Is the demonstrative and/or pilot character of the proposal clearly outlined in the appropriate form B2 and/or B3 in eProposal?	Yes / No
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Award phase⁸

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 including previous testing/research, authorisations, permits, etc.) ?
2. Is there a clear logical link between threats/problems, objectives, actions and expected results?
3. Do the actions clearly state how, when, where (maps, if relevant), why and by whom the actions will be undertaken?
4. In case land purchase is foreseen in the proposal, to what extent has the applicant taken into account the technical land purchase criteria mentioned in the LIFE guidelines for applicants? Additionally, in the case of land purchase, long term land lease and one off compensation payments: 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?
5. Are the expected results of the project properly described and quantified (e.g.: environmental impacts, replication impacts) both in the key indicators tables and in the text of the proposal? Are indicators included to assess the progress of the project? Is monitoring both of the impacts of the project and of the progress of the project foreseen?
6. Are the project operational and management structures well organised and controlled by the coordinating beneficiary? Are the necessary means proposed (equipment, personnel, etc.) for a correct implementation?
7. Is the partnership appropriate / sufficient / competent / coherent for the objectives and actions of the project?
8. Are deliverables, milestones and time planning comprehensive, realistic and coherent with the expected results? In particular, have the duration of preparatory actions and permit procedures; unfavourable weather conditions, etc. been adequately taken into account? Have implementation risks and contingent measures been identified? 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?
8. Is a realistic strategy and action plan in place to assure that project results will be maintained or improved in the medium/long term and actions will continue? Are actions foreseen to ensure funding of such activities after the project ends?
9. 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?
10. To what extent will a technical revision be needed to reach the full project potential (only a minimal effort of technical revision should be needed)?

2. Financial coherence and quality

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

1. Is the budget justified and coherent and are costs adequate to the actions and means proposed?

⁸ Please note that the following list of questions is indicative and not exhaustive. Reference text for the award criteria should remain the one contained in Section 4 of this document.

2. Is the project cost-efficient and does the project represent value for money?

In particular: To what extent does the proposal show that other EU funding sources have been considered in the preparation of the proposal? 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? 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)?

3. Are costs of all cost categories (direct personnel costs; travel and subsistence costs; costs for subcontracting (also referred to as “external assistance costs”); cost of durable goods: (depreciation) costs of infrastructure and equipment, prototype costs; costs for land purchase/long-term lease of land/one-off compensations for land use rights; costs of consumables; and other costs) reasonable, sufficiently described, correctly allocated and compliant with the rules and principles foreseen in the LIFE Guidelines for Applicants, and the Model LIFE Grant Agreement (in particular it Annex I - General Conditions and Annex X - Financial and Administrative Guidelines) and the LIFE Regulation (i.e. not ineligible)?

In particular: 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?

4. Is the co-financing foreseen compliant with maximum co-financing rates and is the budget allocation among beneficiaries justified?

5. Specific points:

5.1. Direct personnel cost: In cases of civil servant salary costs, has the "+2%" rule been observed?

5.2. External assistance costs: Where costs for external assistance exceed 35% of the total project budget, has a coherent explanation been provided to justify this high level of subcontracting?

6. To what extent will a financial revision be needed to reach the full project potential (only a minimal effort of financial revision should be needed)?

3. EU added value: extent and quality of the contribution to the specific objectives of the priority areas of the two LIFE sub-programmes

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

1. To what extent does the proposal contribute to the specific objectives of the priority area as set out in Art.10, 11 and 12 and to the thematic priority as set out in Annex III targeted by the project? To what extent does it contribute to one or several complementary specific objectives of the priority areas of the two LIFE sub-programmes as set out in Articles 10, 11 and 12 of the LIFE Regulation (for the LIFE Environment sub- programme) and Articles 14, 15 and 16 (for the LIFE Climate Action sub-programme) complementary to the thematic priority primarily targeted by the project?

2. To what extent does the proposal contribute to the implementation, updating and development of European Union Environmental policy and legislation relevant to the specific thematic priority primarily targeted? To what extent does the project achieve clear and substantial impacts, in a life cycle approach where relevant, on the environment and resource efficiency, nature and biodiversity, and/or governance and information problem mainly targeted?

4 Contribution to the project topics

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

1. For "NAT" and "GIE" priority areas: Does the project clearly and fully comply with one or maximum two of the project topics for the chosen priority area? Are the core actions of the project clearly focusing on at least one of the project topics targeted?
2. For "ENV" priority areas: Does the project clearly and fully comply with one or maximum two of the project topics for the chosen priority area? Are the core actions of the project clearly focusing on at least one of the project topics targeted?? If so, is the project a pilot project (i.e. does it apply a technique or method that **has not been applied or tested before, or elsewhere worldwide?**) or demonstrative Union wide (i.e. does it put into practice, test, evaluate and disseminate actions, methodologies or approaches that are **new or unknown Union wide**, as opposed to demonstrative in the specific context of the project, such as the geographical, ecological, socio-economic context)? Is a clear justification given that the actions, methodologies or approaches have not been applied or tested before in the world or in the European Union (e.g. by referring to a study or internet research on prior application or testing of the actions, methodologies or approaches to be put into practice in the project)?

5 EU added value: multipurpose, synergies, and integration

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

1. To what extent does the project, while focusing on one area, include a multi-purpose delivery mechanism? Are actions foreseen to keep track and, where possible enhance related complementary environmental, climate change, and governance and information impacts of the project?
2. To what extent does the project create synergies with the objectives of other Union policies (e.g. jobs and growth) without compromising the objectives pursued by the LIFE Regulation? What are the societal benefits not covered by the LIFE Programme, the economic benefits, and the benefits for other Union policies as a result of these synergies? To what extent the project represents an uptake of results of other funding programmes other than Union research and innovation programmes?
3. To what extent does the project integrate specific environmental objectives into other Union policy areas?
4. To what extent has the project included concrete actions dealing with these other Union policy areas?

6 EU added value: replicability and transferability

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

1. To what extent is there a realistic strategy and action plan in place to assure that project results will be maintained or improved in the medium/long term and actions will continue? Are actions foreseen to ensure funding of such activities after project ends? Does the project foresee that after the end of the project savings and/or income will be generated by the project's actions, methodologies, technologies etc. put into practice in the project and/or the solutions and results achieved by the project?
2. To what extent has the project included concrete actions to facilitate replication to other sectors, entities, regions and countries during and/or after its duration? Has transfer of actions, methodologies, technologies and, more generally, of project solutions and results been foreseen? To what extent such actions go beyond simple dissemination, transfer of knowledge and networking?
3. Is the proposed approach sufficiently ambitious and realistic in order to reach a critical mass and mobilise a wider uptake?

7 EU added value: transnational, green procurement, uptake

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

1. Is transnational cooperation foreseen in the project with multi country partnership and/or a transnational scope of the project actions? If so, is there an added value of the transnational approach to support the achievement of the project's objectives?

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| 2. Is green procurement used during the project and/or promoted through a clear delivery mechanism to ensure an extensive application of green procurement concepts? |
| 3. Does the Proposal foresee to take up results of EU Research and Innovation Programmes, in particular of environmental and climate-related research and innovation projects financed by Horizon 2020 or by preceding Framework Programmes? |

<i>Admissibility and exclusion phase</i>

<i>Admissibility selection criteria</i>	
1. Are the application forms A3, A4, A6 and A8 (where relevant) uploaded in the eProposal tool, signed and dated?	Yes / No
2. Has a summary in English been provided on form B1?	Yes / No
3. Have the proposal forms been completed in an official EU language?	Yes / No
4. Is the coordinating beneficiary legally registered in the EU?	Yes / No

Financial selection phase

Financial selection criteria	
<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"> • the "LIFE Simplified Financial Statement" • 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) • where the EU contribution requested exceeds 750,000 €, an auditor's certificate <p>For coordinating beneficiaries that are public bodies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the "Public body declaration" completed and with dated signature 	Yes / No
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?	Yes / No
3. According to the information available, is the coordinating beneficiary financially sound (based on profit and loss account, balance sheet, audit report) – where applicable?	Yes / No
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?	Yes / No
5. Do all beneficiaries contribute financially to the proposal budget?	Yes / No
6. Are all beneficiaries absent from the Contracting Authority 's Early Warning System?	Yes / No