



**Guide for the evaluation of
LIFE Integrated Project proposals 2015
Climate Action sub-programme**

This document aims at explaining to the public the criteria and procedures that will be used for the evaluation of LIFE proposals for integrated projects under the sub-programme for Climate Action submitted for the 2015 Call

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I. INTRODUCTION

The submission and selection process of Integrated Projects (hereinafter ‘IP’) has been designed based on a two stage procedure as foreseen in the LIFE Regulation¹. The details of this process as well as the specific eligibility and award criteria are defined in the LIFE multiannual work programme for 2014-2017 (MAWP)². The process should facilitate the work of potential applicants and ensure that they receive the best possible guidance during the process and thus optimise the quality of the projects that will eventually receive LIFE finance. The workflow is structured in a way to accompany the progressive development and fine tuning of each proposal.

For the proposals covered by these guidelines the Contracting Authority is the Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (EASME) of the European Commission.

Technical methodology for the project submission and selection procedure

Stage 1:

- Call for proposals
- Submission of a Concept Note

The applicant submits a short Concept Note outlining the project contents, and the plan or strategy it is intended to implement and a financial plan for the overall implementation of the action plan, strategy or roadmap.

- Concept Note evaluation and question answer phase

On the basis of the Concept Note, the Contracting Authority identifies and lists the proposals that comply with the eligibility criteria. Applicants of proposals that comply with these criteria will be invited to participate in a written question and answer phase, during which they can submit questions related to the preparation of a full proposal. During this phase the Contracting Authority will render public the questions and answers in an anonymised manner to equally assist all applicants prepare their full proposal. Where appropriate, the Contracting Authority will supplement the questions and answers with guidance regarding typical difficulties that applicants might have encountered and that became apparent in the Concept Notes.

Stage 2:

- Submission of the full proposal:

Applicants of eligible Concept Notes are invited to submit a full proposal.

¹ Regulation (EC) No 1293/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 on the establishment of a Programme for the Environment and Climate Action (LIFE) and repealing Regulation (EC) No 614/2007, OJ L 347 of 20/12/2013, p.185 (hereinafter “the LIFE Regulation”).

² Commission Implementing Decision of 19 March 2014 on the adoption of the LIFE multiannual work programme for 2014-17, OJ L116 of 17/04/2014, p. 1

- Full proposal evaluation

The Contracting Authority, following an in-depth evaluation, prepares a "preliminary long-list" of ranked proposals that may be considered for financing. The ranking is based on merit.. In total, the value of the projects included in this list will not be more than 130% of the available budget. The Contracting Authority also verifies the financial and technical capacity of the applicants to carry out the project.

- Preparation of the final list of projects to be funded and of the reserve list

After a revision phase successful projects will be proposed for funding, within the available budget. A reserve list will be constituted with the best-ranked projects that cannot be funded in view of the available budget. The reserve list will encompass additional 20% of the available LIFE budget.

- Signature of the grant agreement

While the two stage approach will be applicable throughout the duration of the MAWP, the Contracting Authority may adapt the process described above in view of the experience gained.

In ranking IPs, the Contracting Authority shall ensure geographical balance by indicatively allocating at least one to each Member State under the sub-programme for climate action during the duration of the present MAWP in order to ensure that over the entire funding period from 2014-2020 Article 19(4) of the LIFE Regulation is observed.

Proposals which fail to comply with one or several of the criteria described in this guide will be rejected. Their evaluation will be stopped at the step and stage where failure to comply will be first registered and applicants will be informed as soon as possible.

NB: The e-mail address of the coordinating beneficiary contact person indicated in form CNe will be used to send all official correspondence from the Contracting Authority. The applicants should ensure that it is an e-mail account which is valid, active and checked (including spam folders) on a daily basis throughout the whole selection period.

Selection and evaluation principles

The Contracting Authority is responsible for the whole evaluation process. External experts will be identified to support the Contracting Authority work.

All evaluators must base their assessment of the proposals on the provisions of this evaluation guide and of the application guide, using as a basis the questions established for each criterion. This evaluation guide should be understood to complement the application guide and both documents will be used as reference for the purpose of the evaluation.

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 by reasoned comments.

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

All evaluation comments and the related correspondence will be made in English.

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

II. FIRST STAGE: THE CONCEPT NOTE

1. Opening

Proposals will be checked for compliance with the following criteria:

1. The proposal has reached the Contracting Authority by **01 October 2015, 16h00 Brussels local time**.
2. The official LIFE 2015 application forms for Integrated Projects – Concept Note have been used for preparing and submitting the proposal.
3. The related action plan, strategy or roadmap and financial plan have been annexed to the proposal.
4. The proposal has been sent to the Contracting Authority on CD-ROM, DVD or USB stick, in PDF format. The related plan or strategy is also available in one of the following formats: PDF, GIF, WORD (for other formats please contact the Contracting Authority prior to submission).

2. Admissibility and exclusion

2.1 Admissibility

All proposals that were not rejected at the end of the Opening phase are checked for their compliance with the following admissibility and exclusion criteria.

1. The signed declaration CNd is complete and signed (the scanned application forms CNd bear dated signatures with the status and full name of the signatory clearly in evidence on the document).
2. Form CNe (Summary description of the project) is completed in English. Applicants are encouraged to also complete all other forms in English.
3. All relevant forms and fields therein have been completed.
4. The coordinating beneficiary is legally registered in the EU.

All LIFE proposals that do not comply with criterion 4 are immediately declared not-admissible.

For proposals not fully complying with criteria 1,2,3 above but otherwise complete, the Contracting Authority will send a message to the coordinating beneficiary indicating the missing elements.

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

Those proposals for which all the requested missing/incomplete documents/forms have not been provided by the fixed deadline are declared inadmissible.

2.2 Exclusion

A proposal will be excluded when the declaration of compliance with the criteria set out in Article 106(1) and 107 of the Financial Regulation of the European Union³ has not been provided by the applicant. **Applicants must be ready to provide evidence to substantiate the declaration if requested.**

3. Selection

3.1 Technical reliability of the project participants

A proposal can be rejected on the basis of this criterion if:

- there is evidence that the beneficiaries do not have the technical competency to carry out the project
- there is evidence that the coordinating beneficiary has been an unreliable manager in previous LIFE- or other European Union-financed projects and has given no proof that necessary initiatives have been taken to avoid similar problems in the future.

3.2 Specific eligibility

A proposal is rejected, if it does not comply with one or several of the following criteria:

- Large territorial coverage: Implementation of the targeted Union plan, strategy or roadmap will cover a large territorial area, in particular, a multi-city, regional, multi-regional, national or trans-national scale.
- Mobilisation of other funds: Complementary to the IP itself and to the specific co-funding required for it under the LIFE Regulation (Article 20(1)(a) and (c)), at least one other relevant Union, national or private funding source will be mobilised for the implementation of the targeted Union action plan, strategy or roadmap.

³ Regulation (EU, EURATOM) No 966/2012 of the European Parliament and 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, OJ L 298 of 26.10.2014, p.1 (hereinafter referred to as “the Financial Regulation”)

- Involvement of key stakeholders: key stakeholders will be involved in the implementation of the targeted Union action plan, strategy or roadmap.
- The IP must aim at implementing one of the following climate action plans, strategies or roadmaps required under Union legislation, developed pursuant to other Union acts or developed by Member States' authorities:
 - (a) Transnational, national, regional or local specific adaptation strategy or action plan
 - (b) Urban action plan pioneering the transition to a low carbon and/or climate resilient society
 - (c) Transnational, national, regional or industry/sector specific greenhouse gas mitigation strategy, action plan or low carbon economy roadmap.

Aiming at implementing a climate action plan, strategy or roadmap means that:

- The IP is clearly designed with the aim of creating the conditions for the full implementation of the plan. This does not mean that the IP itself will cover all actions foreseen in the plan or that the plan will be fully implemented during the lifetime of the IP. However, the IP shall include strategic actions to catalyse a process and mobilise supplementary commitments and funding that will lead, in due time, to the full implementation of the action plan, strategy or roadmap.. The IP should therefore be designed in a way to address this long term objective.
- The actions included in the IP are clearly linked and identifiable in the plan which the IP targets.
- The action plan, strategy or roadmap must have been formally adopted by the competent authority (national, regional, local or sectoral) by the time of the submission and be considered by the Contracting Authority as being of acceptable quality. In case formal adoption has not yet taken place, the applicant has to provide a note informing of the status of adoption. In such cases the adoption must happen before the deadline for the submission of the full Integrated Project proposal. When no formal adoption is foreseen, the applicant should demonstrate that the plan has completed all procedural steps foreseen in the legal base for it to be considered as final.

4. List of proposals retained for the second stage

On the basis of the Concept Note, the Contracting Authority identifies and lists the proposals that comply with the eligibility criteria. Applicants of proposals that comply with these criteria will be invited to participate in a written question and answer phase, during which they can submit questions related to the preparation of a full proposal. During this phase, the Contracting Authority will render public the questions and answers in an anonymised manner to equally assist all applicants prepare their full proposal. Where appropriate, the Contracting Authority will supplement the questions and answers with guidance regarding typical difficulties that applicants might have encountered and that became apparent in the Concept Notes.

III. SECOND STAGE - THE FULL PROPOSAL

1. Opening

Proposals will be checked for compliance with the following criteria:

1. The proposal has reached the Contracting Authority by the date indicated in the invitation to submit a full proposal.
2. The official LIFE 2015 application forms for Integrated Projects - Full proposal have been used for preparing and submitting the proposal.
3. The proposal has been sent to the Contracting Authority on CD-ROM, DVD or USB stick, in PDF format with the financial forms also in Excel.

2. Admissibility and exclusion

All proposals that were not rejected at the end of the Opening phase are checked for compliance with the following admissibility and exclusion criteria:

2.1 Admissibility

Where relevant, the **signed declarations** listed below are complete and signed. Failure to deliver these declarations may lead to an exclusion of the proposal from all further evaluation.

1. The scanned application forms A3, A3a and A4 bear dated signatures with the status and full name of the signatory.
2. Form B1 (Summary description of the project) is completed in English. Applicants are encouraged to also complete all other forms in English.
3. The three following mandatory financial annexes are provided for coordinating beneficiaries that are **private commercial or private non-commercial organisations.**

It should be noted that these annexes will be required by the 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 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 format. Where the coordinating beneficiary does not yet have an annual balance sheet and profit and loss account, because the organisation has been only recently created, it must provide a management plan (for at least 12 months in the future) with the financial data prepared in accordance with the standard required under national legislation.

- c. The most recent balance sheet and profit and loss account must either have an independent audit report certifying that they present a true and fair view of the coordinating beneficiary's financial situation or a certification by an independent auditor that the accounts give a true and fair view of the coordinating beneficiary's financial situation. This document must be annexed to the LIFE proposal as a scanned pdf file, printable in A4 paper format. In the case of a newly created organisation, the auditor's certificate provided is based on the management plan where the financial data are presented in accordance with relevant national provisions.
4. Form A3a titled "Public Body Declaration" is complete and signed if the coordinating beneficiary identifies itself as **public body** either because it is a public body or is equivalent to a "public law body".

For all LIFE proposals that do not fully comply with one or more of the above situations but are otherwise complete, the Contracting Authority will send a message to the coordinating beneficiary indicating the annexes that are missing.

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

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

Those proposals for which all the requested missing/incomplete documents/forms have not been provided by the fixed deadline are declared inadmissible.

2.2 Exclusion

A proposal will be excluded when the declaration of compliance with the criteria set out in Article 106(1) and Articles 107, 108 and 109 of the Financial regulation of the European Union⁴ has not been provided by the applicant. **Applicants must be ready to provide evidence to substantiate the declaration if requested.**

3. Selection

3.1 Technical reliability of the project participants

A proposal can be rejected on the basis of this criterion if:

- there is evidence that the beneficiaries do not have the technical competency to carry out the project
- there is evidence that the coordinating beneficiary has been an unreliable manager in previous LIFE- or other European Union-financed projects and has given no proof that necessary initiatives have been taken to avoid similar problems in the future.

⁴ Regulation (EU, EURATOM) No 966/2012 of the European Parliament and 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, OJ L 298 of 26.10.2014, p.1 (hereinafter referred to as "the Financial Regulation")

3.2 Financial reliability of the project participants

The purpose of the financial check is to verify the compliance of LIFE proposals with the provisions of Article 202 of the Rules of Application of the Financial Regulation (Commission Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1268/2012 of 29 October 2012). These require that: "*The applicant must have stable and sufficient sources of funding to maintain his activity throughout the period during which the action is being carried out ... and to participate in its funding*"

The Contracting Authority will use 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 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.

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 viability⁵;
- on the basis of the financial viability test, it is concluded that the coordinating beneficiary does not have the financial capacity to cover its share of co-financing within the proposed project period;
- on the basis of the financial viability test, it is concluded that the coordinating beneficiary does not have the capacity to manage the financial amounts provided for in the proposal budget within the proposed project period;

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

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 fewer than 2 of the following criteria are respected:

⁵ 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.

- a. the ratio "total grant requested divided by the number of project years" / "shareholders' equity" is lower than 1
 - b. the ratio "current assets" / "current liabilities" is higher than 1
 - c. the ratio "total debts" / "total assets" is lower than 0.8
 - d. there is a positive operational profit
2. proposals from **private non-commercial organisations (NGOs)** if none of the following 3 criteria are respected:
- a. the ratio "total grant requested divided by the number of project years" / "shareholders' equity" is lower than 1
 - b. the ratio "current assets" / "current liabilities" is higher than 1
 - c. 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.

When beneficiaries owe to the Contracting Authority any overdue debt, this will be carefully evaluated and the Contracting Authority will take the necessary precautionary measures including, in extreme cases, refusing the financial support requested if deemed necessary.

3.3 Specific eligibility

A proposal is rejected, if it does not comply with one or several of the following criteria:

1. Large territorial coverage: Implementation of the targeted Union action plan, strategy or roadmap will cover a large territorial area, in particular, a multi-city, regional, multi-regional, national or trans-national scale.
2. Mobilisation of other funds: Complementary to the IP itself and to the specific co-funding required for it under the LIFE Regulation (Article 20(1)(a) and (c)), at least one other relevant Union, national or private funding source will be mobilised for the implementation of the targeted Union action plan, strategy or roadmap.

N.B. At least one corresponding letter of intent (A8 form) MUST unambiguously confirm the commitment to finance.

3. Involvement of key stakeholders: The key stakeholders will be involved in the implementation of the targeted Union action plan, strategy or roadmap.
4. The IP must aim at implementing one of the following climate action plans, strategies or roadmaps under Union legislation, developed pursuant to other Union acts or developed by Member States' authorities:
 - (a) Transnational, national, regional or local specific adaptation strategy or action plan
 - (b) Urban action plan pioneering the transition to a low carbon and/or climate resilient society
 - (c) Transnational, national, regional or industry/sector specific greenhouse gas mitigation strategy, action plan or low carbon economy roadmap.

Aiming at implementing a climate action plan, strategy or roadmap means that:

- The IP is clearly designed with the aim of creating the conditions for the full implementation of the plan. This does not mean that the IP itself will cover all actions foreseen in the plan or that the plan will be fully implemented during the lifetime of the IP. However, the IP shall include strategic actions to catalyse a process and mobilise supplementary commitments and funding that will lead, in due time, to the full implementation of the plan or strategy. The IP should therefore be designed in a way to address this long term objective.
- The actions included in the IP are clearly linked and identifiable in the plan which the IP targets.
- The action plan, strategy or roadmap must have been formally adopted by the competent authority by the time of the submission of the full proposal and be considered by the Contracting Authority as being of acceptable quality. When no formal adoption is foreseen, the applicant should demonstrate that the plan has completed all procedural steps foreseen in the legal base for it to be considered as final.

4. Award

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

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 objectives	15	20
4. EU added value: extent and quality of mobilisation of other funds, in particular Union funds	-	10
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
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

A proposal should be clear, coherent, realistic and feasible in terms of actions and timetable. The proposal should be carefully structured in relation to the pre-operational context, the problems and threats and the priorities as described in the related plan or strategy. Should additional information be required to complement the description given in the related plan or strategy these should be made available in the proposal. A clear link should exist between the elements listed above and the objectives, actions and expected results in the proposal.

The global project plan covering the whole duration of the integrated project should be sufficiently detailed and identify the key actions foreseen and provide sufficient elements to explain how project goals will be achieved.

The detailed project plan for the first implementation period (normally the first 2.5 years) should include a clear description of all actions foreseen during that period including how, where, when and by whom each action in the proposal will be undertaken and the detailed budgetary allocation.

The proposal must be drafted so as to allow the evaluators to assess to what extent the technical means 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.

When evaluating these elements due consideration will be given to the fact that the description for the first implementation period will be more detailed than for the overall project.

Actions in the IP may be inter-related or dependent on actions outside the IP but necessary for the implementation of the plan and financed with other means. The design of the IP should be done in a way as to minimize the risk that this interdependence might jeopardize the IP implementation if the actions outside the IP are not feasible anymore. This aspect will be considered under this criterion.

The involvement of stakeholders is a key element for integrated projects. This aspect will be considered in the evaluation to assess if and how the stakeholders involved will contribute to the project implementation and their added value.

Integrated projects are aimed at creating the long term capacity to implement the action plan, strategy or roadmap they address. A proposal should provide sufficient details and evidence to show that the necessary capacity building activities are foreseen and that all measures will be in place before the end of the IP to guarantee that the responsible authorities and stakeholders will be able to continue implementing the action plan, strategy or roadmap after the end of the IP.

2 - Financial coherence and quality

The provisional budget must be consistent with the actions described in the technical part of the proposal. Sufficient details should be available to understand how the provisional budget was built. This applies both to the first implementation period as well as for the remaining project duration.

When evaluating these elements due consideration will be given to the fact that the description for the first implementation period will be more detailed than for the overall project.

The budget must be transparent, coherent and cost-efficient, including for the management of the project.

The financial contributions of the beneficiaries/co-financers, the proposed budget and the proposed project expenditures must comply with the rules and principles foreseen in the LIFE guidelines for applicants, the model Grant Agreement for LIFE Integrated Projects and the LIFE Regulation.

The value for money of the proposal will be evaluated by analysing the cost of key actions and of the overall project in view of the expected results. This will also be further checked against the expected level of implementation of the related action plan, strategy or roadmap by the end of the IP.

3 - EU added value: extent and quality of the contribution to the objectives

The extent to which each proposal contributes to one or several of the general and specific objectives of LIFE as set out in articles 3, 14, 15 and 16 of the LIFE Regulation will be evaluated.

The following specific aspects will be checked depending on the priority areas within which the project falls:

IP dealing with the implementation of climate change adaptation strategies or action plans:

The EU added value will have to be argued with regard to the project's contribution towards supporting the implementation of adaptation strategies or action plans, including strategies or plans addressing specific climate change vulnerabilities in the priority areas identified under Article 2 of the EU Adaptation Strategy.

This will be measured by evaluating the following aspects:

- the expected level of implementation of the adaptation strategy/ plan as a direct consequence of the actions foreseen in the IP or through the complementary actions financed by other means mobilized in parallel to the IP,
- the geographical area covered by measures and the number of citizens reached under the adaptation strategy or action plan,
- the expected improvement on climate resilience in a region and economic sectors through actions funded under the IP and complementary projects,
- the expected improvement on climate resilience of particularly vulnerable areas identified in the EU Adaptation Strategy,
- the expected increase in the number of countries/regions/cities applying integrated approaches with support of the IP or replicating the results from the IP,
- the contribution to strengthening climate change adaptation management and governance, including the level of involvement and commitment of the relevant competent authorities and stakeholders at local, regional and national level.

IP dealing with the implementation of national, regional or industry/sector specific greenhouse gas mitigation strategies, action plans or low carbon economy roadmaps:

The EU added value will have to be argued with regard to the project's contribution to the EU's climate change mitigation objectives, including contributing towards:

- the implementation of LULUCF Information Action as required by Decision 519/2013;

- the implementation of the 2030 climate and energy framework, based on new technologies and processes, possibly derived from sectoral low-emission roadmaps and strategies.

This will be measured by evaluating the following aspects:

- the expected level of implementation of the mitigation strategy/ plan/ roadmap as a direct consequence of the actions foreseen in the IP or through the complementary actions financed by other means mobilized in parallel to the IP,
- the geographical area covered by measures and the number of citizens reached under the mitigation strategy or action plan,
- the expected decrease in GHG emissions in the region or economic sector covered,
- the increased number of innovative technologies, systems and instruments and/or best practice solutions for reduction of greenhouse gas emissions developed and/or implemented
- the expected increase in the number of countries/regions/sectors applying integrated approaches with support of the IP or replicating the results from the IP.
- the contribution to strengthening climate change mitigation management and governance, including the level of involvement and commitment of the relevant competent authorities and stakeholders at local, regional and national level,

IP dealing with the implementation of urban action plans implementing the transition to a low carbon and/or climate resilient society:

The EU added value will have to be argued with regard to the project's contribution towards supporting the implementation of urban action plans pioneering the transition to a low carbon and/or climate resilient society, including contributing towards:

- the implementation of urban or local adaptation strategies and action plans, that are linked to the urban adaptation initiative (Mayors' Adapt) and/or
- the implementation of urban or rural low-emission strategies, e.g. linked to implementation of Covenant of Mayors' low emission strategy

This will be measured by evaluating the following aspects:

- the expected level of implementation of the adaptation and/or mitigation action plan as a direct consequence of the actions foreseen in the IP or through the complementary actions financed by other means mobilized in parallel to the IP,
- the geographical area covered by measures and the citizens reached under adaptation and/or mitigation action plans,
- the expected contribution to a shift towards a low emission and climate-resilient economy in the cities targeted through actions funded under LIFE and complementary projects
- the expected increase in the number of cities applying integrated approaches with support of the IP or replicating the results from the IP
- the contribution to strengthening climate change adaptation and/or mitigation management and governance, including the level of involvement and commitment of the relevant competent authorities and stakeholders at local, regional and national level.

4 - EU added value: Extent and quality of the mobilisation of other funds, in particular Union funds:

The quality of the coordination with other funding mechanism(s) and the level of mobilisation of other funds complementary to the foreseen LIFE contribution (beyond the minimum necessary for eligibility) as well as the likelihood of their actual mobilisation and their functional link to the plan to be implemented will determine, whether an IP receives additional points under this criterion. IPs which are likely to mobilise Union funds with a functional link to the plan to be implemented and which foresee a satisfactory coordination mechanism will receive a higher score. The proposal should not only identify the funds that will be mobilised, but should also provide a summary description of all complementary actions that will be carried out during the project time by using these additional funding sources.

5 - EU added value: Quality of multi-purpose mechanism, synergies and integration:

IP proposals should present high quality multi-purpose delivery mechanisms (e.g. aiming at environmental and climate benefits and capacity-building) that make it possible to achieve results in other policy areas⁶, create synergies with these policies and to integrate environmental and climate action objectives in them.

For example the following aspects may be relevant:

- for IPs dealing with the implementation of climate change adaptation strategies or action plans: their contribution to the objectives of the EU Adaptation Strategy, including ecosystem-based approaches to adaptation⁷ as well as support for improvements in biodiversity and nature conservation. Moreover, contributions to climate change mitigation, improved governance and capacity building or climate change as well as mainstreaming adaptation objectives across different sectors are relevant.
- for IPs dealing with the implementation of national, regional or industry/sector specific greenhouse gas mitigation strategies, action plans or low carbon economy roadmaps, their contribution to the implementation and development of Union policy and legislation on climate change mitigation including the EU ETS, the Effort Sharing Decision for sectors not covered by the EU ETS, the Renewable Energy Sources (RES) Directive and the decision governing the inclusion of remissions and removals related to Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF). Moreover, contributions to climate change adaptation, improved governance and capacity building in climate change as well as mainstreaming mitigation objectives across different policy areas are relevant.
- for IPs dealing with the implementation of urban action plans implementing the transition to a low carbon and/or climate resilient society: their contribution to the

⁶ in particular the marine environment in accordance with the objectives of Directive 2008/56/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 June 2008 establishing a framework for Community action in the field of marine environmental policy (Marine Strategy Framework Directive), OJ L 164, 25.6.2008, p. 19.

⁷ [Ecosystem-based approaches to adaptation or Ecosystem-based adaptation \(EBA\) is the use of biodiversity and ecosystem services as part of an overall adaptation strategy to help people to adapt to the adverse effects of climate change.\(Source: definition comes from the Convention on Biological Diversity's Second Ad-hoc Technical Expert Group on Biodiversity and Climate Change\)](#)

implementation of Covenant of Mayors' low-emission strategy and/or the Urban adaptation initiative ("Mayors Adapt"⁸). Moreover, contributions to improved governance, awareness raising and capacity building as well as mainstreaming of climate change action across different policy areas are relevant.

Also projects showing synergies with actions financed or submitted for financing under the sub-programme for Environment will be considered for higher scoring, particularly if these synergies are expected to have a positive effect on climate resilience and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

On the other hand, projects financed under 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 corrective measures have been foreseen in an appropriate way.

Furthermore, all projects will also be evaluated insofar as their contribution to economic and social objectives as well as any other environmental or climate objective beyond those directly targeted by the plan.

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.

7 - EU added value: other aspects

- Transnational: Transnational proposals shall be favoured, if transnational cooperation is essential to guarantee the achievement of the project's objectives. On the basis of this criterion, additional points may be given to a proposal 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'.

⁸<http://mayors-adapt.eu>

Conclusion of the Award phase

For each proposal, the above award criteria will be assessed and scored by two evaluators. On the basis of these two independent assessments a synthesis report will be prepared.

On the basis of the synthesis reports and scores, the final decision on the scores to be awarded to each proposal will be taken during a meeting ("Award Panel") chaired by the Contracting Authority and attended by its expert evaluators.

Any proposal receiving a final score below the pass score for any of the Award criteria for which a minimum pass level is indicated or a total score below 55 points will be declared "rejected at the Award phase".

5. Set up of the "Preliminary Long List"

The Contracting Authority will establish the "**Preliminary Long List**" of proposals to be admitted to revision once the final approval of the scores to be awarded to each proposal in the Award phase has taken place. Besides being based on the scores given to each proposal, this list must take into account the following conditions set out in the LIFE Regulation:

- *"The Commission shall ensure geographical balance for IPs by indicatively allocating at least three IP to each Member State, ensuring at least one IP under the sub-programme for climate action during the programming period" (Article 19.4)*

For setting up a "**Preliminary Long List**" of LIFE proposals, the following rules will be applied:

- In order to ensure a transparent and simple system to apply the geographical balance system, transnational proposals for IPs will be attributed to the Member State where the coordinating beneficiary is legally registered.
- In the process described hereafter, the EU financial contribution for a given proposal would normally be based on the EU co-financing amount requested for the project. However if the requested EU co-financing rate (in %) is higher than the allowed maximum rate according to the rules set in the LIFE Regulation and in the LIFE guidelines for applicants, the EU financial contribution to the project will be re-calculated on the basis of the maximum allowed EU co-financing rate.

The mechanism will work as follows:

1. Proposals ranked by quality (i.e. their Award score) will be listed.
2. Proposals (in any area) are then listed based on the sub-programme geographical distribution approach, i.e. proposals coming from Member States that have not yet received any financing for IPs under the sub-programme for Climate Action listing them in order of quality.
3. Proposals (in any area) are then listed based on the overall geographical distribution approach, i.e. proposals coming from Member States that have not yet received three IPs under the whole LIFE programme listing them in order of quality.
4. Further proposals (in any area) are then added to the list ranked by quality. This process stops when the entire budget available has been used.
5. The remaining proposals are then added in a reserve list accounting for an additional amount equivalent to of 30% of the available budget.
6. A list of proposals for a maximum of 100% of the budget together with a reserve list (up to 30% of the budget), is in this way established.

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

In cases of proposals with equal scores and priority in the list, priority will be given to proposals targeting the thematic area with the lowest number of financed IPs (this verification will also consider the proposals retained in the preliminary long-list).

6. **Revision**

The aim of the revision phase is to clarify, for all proposals listed on the preliminary long list, all open questions regarding feasibility, cost-effectiveness and eligibility of individual actions, compliance with the LIFE Regulation and the conditions set in the Grant Agreement, etc.

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 Contracting Authority will send a letter to the coordinating beneficiary with all revision questions and inviting him to a revision meeting.

The scope of the revision meeting are the following:

- Discussing with the applicant every question or suggested change raised by the Contracting Authority in its letter.
- Agreeing with the applicant on the changes necessary to the proposal.
- Explaining to the applicant the following steps of the process
- Replying to any question the applicant may wish to raise

The following shall attend the meeting:

- Applicant - The representative of the coordinating beneficiary, the person who has drafted the full proposal and the person who will be responsible for the overall project supervision and the person who will be responsible for the administration and finance (if already identified). One representative for each associated beneficiary (associated beneficiary may decide to delegate the coordinating beneficiary to represent them). The travel and subsistence costs for 10 participants will be considered eligible as part of the project budget in case the proposal is financed. If the proposal is not financed the corresponding costs will be covered by the applicant and/or the other beneficiaries. The applicant may decide to include more than ten people in their delegation, but the additional cost shall be covered by own means.
- Contracting Authority - The technical desk officer that will be responsible for the evaluation and revision of the proposal; the policy officer from the relevant policy unit; a financial desk officer.

Other participants that may attend:

- The national contact point delegated for this purpose by the LIFE committee member. The cost for the participation shall be covered by own means,
- The management of the LIFE units,
- Any additional participants the Contracting Authority may deem necessary for advisory or support purpose.

Revision meetings will always be held in Brussels at the Commission premises and a session will usually last one day.

The Contracting Authority will prepare minutes of the session and a copy will be sent to the applicant for comments and approval.

At the end of each session, the applicants who confirmed their intention to submit a revised full proposal will be invited to do so by way of a formal invitation to submit the revised full proposal by a fixed deadline. This invitation will include the full set of instructions concerning all modifications agreed.

Applicants should not introduce any modifications to their proposal other than those agreed and 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 proposed budget or even exclude a proposal from financing.

By the end of the revision phase, all projects retained are expected to be fully coherent with all technical and financial requirements of the LIFE Regulation and the conditions set in the Model Grant Agreement for LIFE Integrated Projects.

The applicants of the revised proposals will then be informed about the outcome of the revision phase.

7. Set up of the "Final Short and Reserve Lists"

Once the revision of proposals has been concluded, a "**final short list**" of LIFE proposals for IPs under the sub-programme for Climate Action to be funded and a "**final reserve list**" of proposals will be set up.

These short and reserve lists will take into account possible budget reductions and/or the removal of proposals from the previous long and reserve lists as a result of the revision. It is therefore possible that one or more projects that were previously reserve-listed might be taken on board in the final short list.

The procedure applied is identical to the steps (1) to (5) described in chapter 5, except that the reserve list only encompasses an additional 20% of the available budget for IPs.

The applicants on the "**final short list**" falling within 100% of the available budget will be asked to provide 3 identical paper copies of the final revised proposals. Applicants should not introduce any unilateral modifications at all to the revised proposal after the

conclusion of the revision phase. At this stage, all commitments from associated beneficiaries/co-financers must be fully confirmed in the revised forms.

Proposals that were eventually not listed or are listed in the final reserve list will be informed at this stage.

8. Grant attribution

Based on the final short-list, grants will be awarded following the procedures established in the Financial Regulation and budgetary and legal commitments will be established for each project.

Each successful applicant will then receive the grant agreement for signature. Once the grant is signed by both parties it may be considered as legally valid and the first pre-financing payment can be released.

Projects on the reserve list may only be retained for co-financing if there is an unexpected withdrawal of a shortlisted proposal or in case the Contracting Authority decides to exclude a short-listed proposal for valid reasons. This will only be possible if the withdrawal or cancellation of the grant takes place at least one month before the end of the year in which the award attribution was taken.

IV. DETAILED EVALUATION FORMS

<i>Opening (for Stage 1 and 2)</i>	
Opening criteria	
1. The proposal reached the Contracting Authority by the set deadline?	<i>Yes/No</i>
2. The relevant LIFE application forms been used?	<i>Yes/No</i>
3. The relevant plan and financial plan have been annexed	<i>Yes/No</i>
4. The proposal has been sent in PDF format using the appropriate support (together with the financial forms in Excel for Stage 2)	<i>Yes/No</i>
<i>Admissibility and exclusion (for Stage 1 and 2)</i>	
Admissibility criteria	
1. The signed declaration forms are completed and signed	<i>Yes/No</i>
2. The summary in English has been provided	<i>Yes/No</i>
3. All relevant forms and fields have been completed	<i>Yes/No</i>
4. The coordinating beneficiary is legally registered in the EU	<i>Yes/No</i>
5. The mandatory financial annexes have been provided if required (only applicable to Stage 2)	<i>Yes/No</i>
6. The mandatory "Public body declaration" has been provided if required (only applicable to Stage 2)	<i>Yes/No</i>
Exclusion criteria	
7. All beneficiaries completed the declaration of compliance concerning the exclusion criteria	<i>Yes/No</i>
<i>Technical selection (for Stage 1 and 2)</i>	
Technical reliability of the project participants	
1. Are the beneficiaries technically reliable?	<i>Yes / No</i>
<i>Financial selection (for Stage 2 only)</i>	
Financial reliability of the project participants	
1. Are the beneficiaries financially reliable?	<i>Yes / No</i>
<i>Eligibility (for Stage 1 and 2)</i>	
Eligibility criteria	
1. The IP covers a large territorial area	<i>Yes/No</i>
2. The IP mobilises at least one other fund for complementary activities	<i>Yes/No</i>
3. The IP involves the key stakeholders	<i>Yes/No</i>
4. The IP aims at the implementation of one of the listed and adopted climate plans	<i>Yes/No</i>

Award phase⁹

1. Technical coherence and quality

In evaluating this criterion, the following points will be considered:

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?
5. 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?
6. Are the lists of deliverable products and milestones comprehensive and coherent with the expected results?
7. Is the time planning realistic (duration of preparatory actions and permit procedures; unfavourable weather conditions, etc.)?
8. 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.?
9. Are the key stakeholders involved?
10. To what extent are continuity and permanence of the project results ensured in the long term?
11. Will the IP have a long lasting capacity building effect?

2. Financial coherence and quality

In evaluating this criterion, the following points will be considered:

1. Is the budget consistent with the actions foreseen?
2. Is the budget sufficiently detailed?
3. Is the beneficiaries contribution adequate and in compliance with the applicable rules?
4. Are the personnel costs reasonable and sufficiently detailed?
5. Are the travel and subsistence costs reasonable, sufficiently detailed and correctly allocated?
6. Are the costs for external assistance 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. Are the costs for durable goods reasonable, sufficiently detailed and correctly allocated? If relevant, are the depreciation rules correctly applied?
9. Are the costs for land purchase, lease and one off compensation payments 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 reasonable, sufficiently detailed and correctly allocated?

⁹ 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.

11. Are the “other costs” reasonable, sufficiently detailed and correctly allocated?
12. Are the overhead costs consistent with the maximum threshold of 7% of total eligible direct costs (excluding land purchase costs) per beneficiary?
13. Does the proposed budget exclude ineligible costs?
14. In cases of civil servant salary costs, has the "+2%" rule been taken into account?
15. Does the project represent good value for money also considering the expected level of implementation of the related plan or strategy?

3. EU added value: Extent and quality of the contribution to the objectives of LIFE In evaluating this criterion, the following points should be taken into account:
1. To what extent does the proposal contribute to one or several general and specific objectives of LIFE? NB This will be measured using the specific aspects applicable to each type of IP.

4. EU added value: Extent and quality of the mobilisation of other funds In evaluating this criterion, the following points should be taken into account:
1. Is a coordination mechanism with other relevant funding mechanisms foreseen/described in the proposal? Is it convincingly explained and likely to deliver effective results?
2. To what extent are other EU (and non-EU) funds mobilised beyond the minimum level for eligibility?
3. Is the functional link between these complementary funds and the IP clear and logical?
4. How sure is it that these complementary funds will be made available, when and to which extent?

5. EU added value: Quality of multi-purpose mechanism, synergies and integration In evaluating this criterion, the following point should be taken into account::
1. Does the proposal foresee a multi-purpose delivery mechanism?
2. Is this mechanism well described and likely to achieve results, create synergies and integration with and into other policy areas? NB This will be measured using the specific aspects applicable to each type of IP.

6. EU added value: Replicability and transferability In evaluating this criterion, the following points should be taken into account:
1. Does the proposal foresee a strategy to ensure that actions and results could be replicated and/or transferred to similar situations?
2. How likely is it that project results may be transferred and replicated during and after the project time?

7. EU added value: Other aspects In evaluating this criterion, the following points should be taken into account:
1. <u>Transnational</u> : 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?
2. <u>Green procurement</u> : does the proposal foresee a clear delivery mechanism to ensure an extensive application of green procurement?
3. <u>Uptake of results of EU Research and Innovation Programmes</u> : does the proposal foresee taking up results from projects financed by Horizon 2020 or preceding Framework Programmes in a way that this would represent an added value for the project?

