

Frequently Asked Questions
2020 Call for Integrated Projects
Stage 1 – Concept Note

PRELIMINARY REMARKS:

- There is another document that includes questions & answers relevant to Integrated Projects (IPs): the questions & answers document for the IP full proposal stage of previous Calls. It complements this document and is recommended to consult it in <https://ec.europa.eu/easme/en/section/life/frequently-asked-questions-faqs#inline-nav-1>.
- Several relevant novelties of this Call are listed in <https://ec.europa.eu/easme/en/section/life/calls-proposals#inline-nav-0> (the first one on the increased first pre-financing does not apply to integrated projects).
- The [financial and administrative guidelines](#) (annex X to the Model LIFE Grant Agreement) have been updated in 2020, please check them. E.g., the 2% rule is now “easier” to comply with by public beneficiaries, as the co-financing by **public** third parties is now considered as “own contribution”.

1. Who can provide assistance and information on Integrated Projects in my country?

The [LIFE National Contact Points](#) can provide guidance to applicants. In order to enhance the chances of successful applications and in particular to avoid unintentional competition among projects having similar targets, potential applicants are encouraged to make use of this assistance.

Furthermore, the LIFE Units in DG Environment and EASME may also be contacted to provide guidance on the potential project concepts. Please write to EASME-LIFE-ENQUIRIES@ec.europa.eu.

2. Do I understand well that under award criterion 3 (EU added value: Extent and quality of the contribution to the objectives of LIFE) only the direct impact of the LIFE IP will be considered during the assessment of the full project proposal?

No. As indicated in the Evaluation Guide for IPs, the extent and quality of the contribution to the objectives of LIFE will be measured by evaluating several factors. As described in first bullet point under each type of IP, these factors include the expected level of implementation of the targeted plan/strategy/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. In addition, however, both the direct impact of the IP itself and the indirect impact resulting from actions catalysed by the IP project will be considered as described in the other bullet points. For instance, for applications related to PAFs, the evaluation will take into account the

overall expected improvement of the conservation status of species and habitats, or for water IPs, the overall impact in terms of addressing significant unaddressed pressures or improvements towards WFD good status/potential.

3. What does the 'large territorial coverage' foreseen for IPs mean in practice in the case of waste management plans? Could the IP be implemented in some separate provinces or should it be a geographically uniform/continuous area?

It is up to the applicant to decide upon its choice of regions or provinces to be covered by the IP but they should fall within the area covered by the plan(s) targeted by the project.

4. If the partners of the integrated project are preparing also LIFE traditional project applications as well as Horizon 2020 projects, parallel to the integrated one will this synergy contribute to a position evaluation of the integrated project? Is mentioning the complementarity between an integrated project and a traditional one necessary or not? Where and how should it be reported in the concept note?

Synergy with other EU funds is encouraged for integrated project proposals. While of course it is good to ensure complementarity between a LIFE IP and a running/future LIFE traditional project, it is primarily the complementarity with actions financed by other EU funds (including Horizon 2020 funds, regional development funds etc.) that would be positively evaluated. The information should be indicated in the concept note, under 'complementary actions' and 'funds requested' (forms CNd and CNf).

5. Can a Public Body (i.e. Regional Administrations) directly award a financial contribution to its Regional Agency for the Environment for the implementation of some project activities? If yes, what is the maximum amount?

Financial support of such nature is not eligible under LIFE as public bodies cannot work with the so called 'members'/'affiliates'. The only possibility would be that the Regional Agency participates as an associated beneficiary or as a subcontractor (in the last situation the procurement rules need to be respected).

6. Can the concept note refer to an environmental or climate plan or strategy or roadmap that has not yet been agreed with the EC or not yet adopted?

As indicated in the Application guides, if the formal adoption has not taken place at the time of the submission of the Concept Note, the applicant should explain the status of the adoption and demonstrate that this adoption will take place before deadline for submission of the full IP proposal.

7. What is the difference between plans/strategies and roadmaps, the latter only featuring under the Climate Action Integrated Projects application guidelines?

IPs implementing roadmaps is a specific feature of the Climate Action sub-programme.

The Communication on the 2050 Roadmap for a competitive low-carbon economy encourages industrial sectors to develop low carbon roadmaps, analysing how particular industries can contribute to reaching EU's 2050 climate action targets. These are the roadmaps to implement with IPs. Examples of sectoral roadmaps which exist under the 2050 Roadmap that could be implemented under LIFE Climate Action IPs, include:

- ceramic industry roadmap
- chemical industry roadmap
- steel industry roadmap.

Contrary to plans or strategies such as an adaptation strategy or a river basin management plan that are led and will be adopted by public authorities, industrial low-carbon Roadmaps will be adopted by industry itself. Moreover IPs implementing such roadmaps are encouraged pursuant to the Union act "Communication on the 2050 Roadmap" whereas for example an IP implementing a river basin management plan under the Environment sub-programme is a plan required by specific Union environmental legislation.

8. What does "partial" implementation mean in the context of a Climate Action Integrated Project?

Integrated Projects shall aim towards the full implementation of the targeted action plan, strategy or roadmap. The term "partial" implementation referred to in the application guides relates to specific types of action plans/strategies/roadmaps that given their very broad scope, an IP could focus strategically on part of the action plan/strategy or roadmap. This would need to be duly explained and justified. For example in the implementation of an adaptation strategy, an IP could fund actions for a selection of vulnerable sectors addressed in an adaptation strategy. However, the IP needs to include strategic actions and mechanisms to catalyse a process that will lead to (in due time) the full implementation of the action plan, strategy or roadmap.

Contrary to the Environment sub-programme, this wording on "partial" implementation was included given the divergence between types of IPs within the Climate Action sub-programme with some IPs types such as an adaptation strategy or industrial roadmap being much broader in scope than for example a GHG mitigation strategy for the dairy sector which is much more focused. However, the underlying philosophy behind IPs which is working towards the ultimate full implementation of the plan, is the overriding principle for both sub-programmes.

9. According to the guidelines for applicants the Integrated Project should aim towards the full implementation of the targeted plan or strategy. However, given the broad scope of the Strategy that we intend to target, it is more realistic to focus only on part of the Strategy. Is it allowed?

Indeed, the long term objective for any Integrated Project should full implementation of a targeted Strategy / Plan. This is exactly why Integrated Projects have been introduced - to

catalyse full implementation of plans and strategies and to help Member States to achieve this ambitious task.

With the limited budget of the Integrated Project it is not possible to fully implement most of the strategies within LIFE budget only. That is why the complementary actions are very important and that is why many of the Integrated Projects funded so far focus on removing obstacles for the implementation of the full strategy (by capacity building, preparation of management plans, stakeholder engagement etc.) rather than focusing on one theme of the strategy.

However, it is also possible to conceive an Integrated Project that focuses on one element of the strategy and uses it a vehicle to achieve remaining objectives of that strategy. When that is the case the concept note should clearly justify such approach and convince the evaluators that even with this narrower focus of the Integrated Project, the full plan will be eventually implemented.

10. According to the guidelines “It is strongly recommended that the competent authority or entity responsible for the implementation of the plan or strategy targeted by the Integrated Project submits (the project)...” However, in my Member State there are different authorities that are responsible for the elaboration of the Plan/Strategy, and several actors that are responsible for its implementation. How should we approach it?

Please note that both the evaluation and application guide emphasise the implementation of the plan as the objective (not the elaboration). Therefore the project should be designed with this long term objective in mind and both the concept note / full proposal should clearly explain which authority or authorities are responsible for the full implementation and what are the roles of other authorities and stakeholders in the implementation of the plan. That share of responsibilities should be also adequately reflected in the project partnership. While there can be only one coordinating beneficiary, other actors responsible for the implementations of parts of a Plan should ideally be involved as associated beneficiaries.

On the related note, please pay attention to the following eligibility criterion listed in evaluation guides: *involvement of key stakeholders*. It is verified both at the concept note stage as well as full proposal stage. It is important to consider when preparing the project application and intervention logic in order to make sure that all the stakeholders that are instrumental for the implementation of the plans are involved in the project.

11. We have a wide-ranging Plan /Strategy in our Member State, covering different sectors. Would it be appropriate to have an Integrated Project with one or two concrete actions relating to each of those areas? And then complementary actions relating to each area? Or might that be considered insufficiently coherent for an Integrated Project?

The key objective of an Integrated Project is the full implementation of a Strategy / Plan. So, if your strategy covers several sectors we would like to see in your application how the strategy will be implemented for each sector, either through actions included in the Integrated Project or through complementary actions. This does not mean that the Integrated Project itself will

cover all actions foreseen in the plan and we understand that most of the actions will be implemented through complementary funding.

You could also consider the availability of funding for complementary activities. For activities in some sectors it might be easier to mobilise complementary funding, while for others this might be more difficult and you may even choose to cover more actions from these sectors from the Integrated Project (LIFE funded) if needed. So in that sense, the weight in the Integrated Project might be, but does not have to be, in equally distributed among all the sectors covered the strategy depending on the specific context of your Member State.

12. We wish to apply for a Climate Change mitigation IP. While preparing to address Climate Mitigation aspects as per guidance notes, however we are noticing that for project to be more successful, a small number of actions related to climate adaption should also feature. Would such actions be eligible for LIFE Integrated Project funding?

If the adaptation actions are in the plan or strategy your Integrated Project would be addressing, then it is all right to have these actions in the project (or possibly covered by complementary measures).

Also, if those actions are related to the project, i.e. for example would improve the project or without them the project would be less effective, then it is all right to have those actions proposed. However, a clear justification would need to be provided, so we can understand what is the added value to have those actions included and how they support project objectives.

13. Can the Concept Note exceed 10 page limit?

We encourage the Concept Notes to be concise. The most important is to consider whether you have included information that will allow us to evaluate the concept note against the criteria included in the evaluation guide and to demonstrate that your application meets the requirements for integrated project

14. How should I submit my Concept Note?

See section 1.8 of the guidelines for applicants to LIFE Integrated Projects 2020, available in <https://ec.europa.eu/easme/en/section/life/2020-call-proposals-integrated-projects> .

15. Should I send you paper version of my Concept Note? Is there a template for the cover letter?

Concept Note submission is fully electronic, see section 1.8 of the guidelines for applicants to LIFE Integrated Projects 2020, available in <https://ec.europa.eu/easme/en/section/life/2020-call-proposals-integrated-projects> .

16. Will a part of the EU contribution be transferred to in the beginning of the project? If so, will it be transferred to the coordinating beneficiary or directly to each associated beneficiary?

All the payments are made to the coordinating beneficiary who is then responsible for distributing the financial resources among the associated beneficiaries as required.

First pre-financing payment to the coordinating beneficiary will be made within 30 calendar days from the entry into force of the Grant Agreement (or from the moment when we receive the financial guarantee if that is applicable).

17. Could the cascading grants be included in the Integrated Project? Can you please clarify the following sentence from the guidelines: "The maximum amount allocated to any third party involved may not exceed EUR 60,000 and the total amount of such costs overall may not exceed EUR 200,000 during the lifetime of the IP ".

The cascading grants are possible eligible costs under LIFE in the following format: 60,000 EUR per third party up to the ceiling of 200,000 EUR for all the grants. This means that 6 such grants for 30,000 EUR could be considered as eligible costs or possibly 10 grants for 20,000 EUR or any other configuration that will allow you to respect the limit of 60,000 EUR per grant without exceeding the total cost of 200,000 EUR for all of them.

If the cascading grants that are envisaged do not meet the above mentioned criteria, they cannot be considered as eligible project costs. In such case the applicant could perhaps consider if they could be covered under IP complementary measures.

For further details see section 1.10.8 of the guidelines for applicants to LIFE Integrated Projects 2020, available in <https://ec.europa.eu/easme/en/section/life/2020-call-proposals-integrated-projects>.

18. We have started with preparation for IP NAT application. In the guidelines, page 38, it is written: "The PAFs are expected to describe the measures that are necessary to achieve the objectives of Natura 2000, and as such contribute to meeting the goals of the Biodiversity Strategy. They should also indicate the financing sources intended to be used for their implementation. The timeframe for the PAFs corresponds to the deadlines set in the Biodiversity Strategy and in the Multiannual Financial Framework, i.e. it covers the period 2014-2020." Our PAF, currently waiting for EC official opinion, will cover next MFF period. Could you please clarify – is our country still eligible to receive LIFE IP project in the Nature area – since we do not have PAF which covers 2014-2020 period, but will soon have one that covers next programming period?

Your country is eligible. The proposal will meet the requirements also because the IP, in case it is financed, will start in 2021 and would therefore not cover the period before.

19. KPI reporting: do we need to include complementary measures in IPs?

During project lifetime the IP beneficiaries will need to report 3 times (shortly after the start, at mid-term and at final report stage). Beneficiaries will need to report on impacts coming not only from LIFE funding but also from complementary funding, distinguishing between them

whenever possible. See instructions for KPI reporting for IPs in <https://ec.europa.eu/easme/en/section/life/life-reporting#inline-nav-6>.

20. Are the costs of application for funding for complementary measures eligible?

If foreseen in the grant agreement and in line with the objectives of the project, the cost for accessing other courses of funding needed to cover complementary measures could be accepted. If you are planning this type of expenditure, it is best to specify it in the proposal (total cost, number of prepared applications, what complementary activities it concerns and, most importantly, the expected effect of the action, etc.).

21. In the guidelines (p. 62) you ask for information “whether this would be a contribution to the Direct co-financing of the LIFE project itself (yes) or complementary (no)”, but there is no column for that in the CNf template. Is this information needed and if so, where we should indicate it?

Please indicate any contributions to the Direct co-financing of the LIFE project itself in the line “Contribution by cofinancers” of the CNf template. If you have several, please indicate one after the other, all within that line of the template.

In this way it will be clear that the funds indicated in the remaining boxes of that template (“EU Funds” and “Other Funds”) do not serve to co-finance your project.