A LIFE'S GUIDE TO GRANT SUCCESS

Content

'LIFE CLIMATE & ENVIRONMENT 2018 – 2020'

2019 Calls for proposals: € 1.6 Billion public funding available for the best projects

a PNO 2019 e-Paper

The floor is yours – project examples for inspiration

Europe calls upon each of us to participate in actions that help change our climate for the better. To help us with that, since 1992 the European LIFE Program offers significant funding to parties in all member states for this purpose. According to Article 3 of Regulation (EU) No 1293/2013 the LIFE programme "*pursues the following general objectives:*

- *to contribute to the shift towards a resource-efficient, low-carbon and climate- resilient economy, to the protection and improvement of the quality of the environment and to halting and reversing biodiversity loss, including the support of the Natura 2000 network and tackling the degradation of ecosystems,*
- *to improve the development, implementation and enforcement of Union environmental and climate policy and legislation, and to act as a catalyst for, and promote, the integration and mainstreaming of environmental and climate objectives into other Union policies and public and private sector practice, including by increasing the public and private sector's capacity,*
- *to support better environmental and climate governance at all levels, including better involvement of civil society, NGOs and local actors, and*
- *to support the implementation of the 7th Environment Action Programme.*"

In simple terms, LIFE asks us to build something new with lower carbon emissions, invent a way to be able to endlessly reuse resources and help prevent the loss of biodiversity. Fortunately, there are lots of parties that are actively working on these themes and are really making a change. In numbers, since its inception, LIFE has co-financed more than 4,600 projects, and for the 2014-2020 funding period, LIFE will contribute approximately 3.4 billion euro to the protection of the environment and climate. To give you a sense of the types of projects that were successful – also thanks to the LIFE funding they got – here are some examples of projects that we think speak for themselves.

AGANFOILS The Netherlands – Making plastics circular

"By introducing a new plastic recycling technology that enables plastic waste to be used as a resource instead of being sent to landfill or incinerated, the AGANFOILS project aims to contribute to resolving the plastic waste problem.

In 2012, just 25.2 million tonnes of post-consumer waste plastic in Europe ended up in the waste stream. Despite improved plastic waste prevention, preparation for re-use, recycling and separate plastic waste collection, as well as improving plastic design and plastic product design, only around a quarter of all waste plastic was recycled. In the context of a Resource Efficient Europe, increasing the re-use and recycling of materials is considered a high priority for realising the vision of a circular economy within the EU. The LIFE AGANFOILS project addresses exactly this environmental problem and contributes to a more resource efficient Europe by introducing a new plastic recycling technology that enables plastic waste to be used as a resource instead of being sent to landfill or incinerated. The project will focus on post-consumer LDPE (low-density polyethylene) plastic foils recovered from municipal solid waste, which are considered difficult to recycle.

(continuing AGANFOILS The Netherlands – Making plastics circular)

One of the goals of the project is to demonstrate a recycling installation (Polymer Recycling Plant (PRP)) at which post-consumer LDPE foils from dirty Materials Recycling Facilities (MRF) are upcycled to 'as-good-as-new plastic'. The innovative process will result in a higher quality odourless re-granulate. For the first time an integrated, full-industrial scale, waste-to-resource recycling facility will be demonstrated on one location for plastic waste foil. By eliminating transportation needs, the facility will enable low-cost upcycling at a significantly lower environmental impact. Furthermore, by introducing an innovative hot washing stage to the plastic foil recycling process a higher quality end-product and higher yield can be achieved compared to current plastic foil recycling facilities.

Recently this PRP facility was opened in Wijster, The Netherland by the First Vice-President of the European Commission Frans Timmermans and Attero CEO Paul Ganzeboom."

Source: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/project/Projects/index.cfm?fuseaction=search.dspPage&n_proj_id=5781

Holcim Belgium – From quarry to habitat

"Operating a quarry can create habitats that have become rare for our fauna. To support biodiversity, Holcim, a Belgian producer of cement, decided to collaborate on the Life in Quarries project.

In 2016, a team of researchers with various specialisations drew up an inventory in the quarry of Milieu and Van Trooz. Based on these results and the opportunities on the sites, an action plan was drawn up in consultation with Holcim, the scientific coordinators and the operators. The first actions on the ground will started last summer. For example, deforestation creates open spaces around certain ponds and gives lime grassland and grassland on acid soil more light. Furthermore, new ponds and permanent water surfaces will be formed, and the habitat of the wild bees will be restored by giving the walls a freshening up and planting flowers on the grassland around it.

The quarry of Leffe has now joined the project. This year the project is working on mapping the biodiversity of the site, and more actions are being drawn up. More than 40 bird species and many species of dragonflies and damselflies, including some striking specimens, were observed during the inventory in the quarry of Environment and that of Trooz.

This project was made possible thanks to the financial support of the European Union, the Walloon sector, the quarry sector and partners."

Source: www.holcim.be

Chimera Italy – reinventing the chicken manure disposal process

"Chicken manure is an organic waste, rarely perceived as a polluting agent; however, it is rich of toxic elements such as nitrogen oxide (N2O), ammonia (NH3) and methane (CH4) which contaminate air, soil and groundwater.

Nowadays, chicken manure disposal is twofold: the waste is either bestowed to waste-to-energy plants or directly broadcasted on the ground. Costs related to storage, transport, disposal and/or broadcasting are high for the farmer. Chimera solves all those issues related to waste management. A 'ready and easy to use' solution, which works in small farms or farm districts for meat (broiler) and/or eggs production laying hen. The dimension of the plant is limited and can be installed within any sized farm.

Chimera's ambition consists of transforming waste into a fertilizer, while producing energy. This project becomes true thanks to the EU financing of the LIFE programme, GA n. LIFE15 ENV/IT/000631, and the collaboration between Tre P Engineering Srl, Italian engineering company and project coordinator, and Renders&Renders V.O.F., Dutch farmer."

Source: www.life-chimera.eu/

Glueless Italy – change of diapers production process leads to environmental impact reduction

"The Fameccanica project LIFE GLUELESS™ Petrol based Glue and Energy consumption reduction in diapers production processes" demonstrates to industry and policy makers that significant environmental impact reduction in Absorbent Hygiene Products (AHP), such as diapers, can be realised, with appropriate solutions. Gluing can be replaced by innovating combinations of thermo welding and ultrasonic bonding, which allow reduction in the use of petrochemical-based glue with significant energy and costs savings.

This project received contribution of the Life+ financial instrument of the European Commission. The PARTNER 'Sustainable Industrial Systems group' at UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER, carried out Life Cycle Assessment and Life Cycle Costing to estimate environmental and economic savings."

Source: glueless.fameccanica.com/

Waste2NeoAlginate The Netherlands: how granular sludge, produced during wastewater, can become a substitution for worldwide production-limited high-quality alginate.

"Recently, it was discovered that granular sludge produced during wastewater treatment contains a relatively high percentage of valuable components such as alginate-like exopolysaccharides. These are comparable to the alginates traditionally derived from seaweeds. Alginates could replace many fossil fuel-based chemicals used to manufacture paper, textiles and concrete, as well as in agriculture. However, at present worldwide production of high-quality alginate is limited to some 33,000 tonnes/year. Greater availability of alginate made from granular sludge is necessary for widespread substitution for chemicals derived from fossil fuels.

Waste2Neo-Alginate aims to demonstrate an innovative and highly-replicable technology for turning wastewater solids (granular sludge) into a valuable material that will be commercialised under the registered trade mark, Neo-Alginate. To do this it will use a double mechanical-chemical process of extraction, followed by refining. The technology will be implemented in a semi-industrial plant producing around 1,000 tonnes/year of NeoAlginate from granular sludge. The general aim is to develop a production process for bio-based products from wastewater. This will generate new market opportunities and reduce the environmental impacts of wastewater treatment in terms of sludge production, transportation and energy consumption.

By turning a waste product into a secondary raw material, the project will directly contribute to the EU Circular Economy Action Plan. The proposed technology also fosters the implementation of the Water Framework Directive, as it will improve the quality of EU water bodies. The project objectives are also in line with the Sewage Sludge Directive and the Urban Waste Water Directive, which encourage the use of sludge as long as it is not a threat to the environment or human health."

Source: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/project/Projects/

Now it's time for LIFE

Now that you are inspired, it's time to learn more about LIFE.

Structure of LIFE
The LIFE programme consists of two sub-programmes: LIFE Environment and LIFE Climate Action.

With a total funding budget of over € 1.243 billion the environment part is by far the biggest section. It includes the following thematic so-called priority areas:

- Environment and Resource Efficiency
- Nature and Biodiversity
- Environmental Governance and Information

To give you an idea of what the EU was thinking while drafting these programmes: here's what they expect to see when receiving applications for the Environment and Resource Efficiency priority:

'to develop, test and demonstrate policy or management approaches, best practices and solutions, including development and demonstration of innovative technologies, to environmental challenges, suitable for being replicated, transferred or mainstreamed, including with respect to the link between the environment and health, and in support of resource efficiency-related policy and legislation, including the Roadmap to a Resource Efficient Europe'.

The secret to success is, as always, in the details. Naturally, a submitted project must meet the primary goals of the specific priority, being in this example the (contribution to) realising the solution of environmental challenges and resource efficiency. But look at the part that says: 'suitable for being replicated' and 'with respect to the link between the environment and health': these sub-sentences show what the EU also prioritises. The EU puts it as follows:

'The present, second LIFE multiannual work programme takes into account the experience gained in the period 2014 to 2017 and, in particular, the recommendations made in the mid-term evaluation, which are mainly related to
1. *the simplification of the application and reporting processes;*
2. *the replication of project results;*
3. *the improvement of the communication strategy.*

The need for continuation, replication and/or transfer of project results is given more emphasis in the Award phase and will receive more support through procurement. The simplification of reporting will be targeted through project management procedures and by giving beneficiaries

access to an on line data base facilitating the collection of the data related to the key project indicators. The improvement of the communication strategy is achieved through procurement.'

So, in order to increase your chances of success, it is important to meet not only the primary goals of the programme, but the secondary ones as well.

We mentioned LIFE Climate action before. With a total budget of € 413 million, this sub-programme is much more modest. It consists of the following priorities:

- Climate Change Mitigation
- Climate Change Adaptation
- Climate Governance and Information

Because of the size of LIFE Environment and some spectacular changes made in the application process, this paper will only go into this sub-programme.

Most important change: from one- to two-stage application

A programme change that really catches the eye is the two-stage application. That means that applications for the LIFE's Environment sub-programme must be submitted in two stages. The first stage is a concept note, and applicants that make it through to the second stage will then have to submit their full proposal based on feedback from the LIFE programme evaluators. Here's what a concept note must include:

- basic information about the coordinating beneficiary
- the environmental problem that is targeted and/or the description of species, habitats or biodiversity issues targeted by the project
- project objectives
- information about the project partners (the coordinating and associated beneficiaries as well as the co-financers of the project)
- actions and means
- expected results and impact of the project
- the sustainability of project results
- project risks and constraints
- added value of the project for the EU
- pilot or demonstration character of the project (and/or best practice for nature and biodiversity strand)
- a budget indication for the project

And this must all be written convincingly in approximately 10 pages!

All concept notes will be evaluated against two criteria: overall quality of the proposal and overall EU added value. They will then be ranked by merit. Applicants with the best ranked concept notes will be invited to stage 2: submission of their full proposal. While there will be

small adjustments to the full proposal forms, the information requested will not differ substantially from what has been requested in past calls for LIFE funding.

Now this all will probably sound okay: you get feedback, improve your proposal, easy peasy! But another big alteration is that the fixed LIFE budgets for countries have been dropped. Formerly, each EU member state had its own fixed part of the immense LIFE-budget, but now there's only one thing that counts: the quality of your project. That means that theoretically, each applicant has the same chance of success. We write 'theoretically', because as a consequence of this change it can be expected that the number of applications will increase significantly and precisely because of this, the EU can sit back and relax. They only need to pick out the best of the best: and we do mean EXCELLENT proposals. Capitalised!

Conclusion: the first shot is your best shot.

Suggestions from our LIFE experts

Are you still with us? If so, then it's time to tell you how you can improve your application! In the past decades, our Energy, Climate and Environment experts have been applying for LIFE and its predecessors all over Europe, with an above average success rate. Their knowledge and experience go much further than having read the official LIFE regulations (which, by the way, they have!). Through the numerous projects they have helped to build, the proposals they have written and the discussions with EU-experts they have conducted, they have gained a profound insight in how 'it works'. How do EU-experts reason? What do they really want? Why do they prefer one project over another?

With that knowledge in mind, we would like to give you a set of suggestions, which can really help you prepare a solid and complete project proposal. The first step to an excellent proposal, so to speak.

1 The perfect concept note

What the EU wants:

We mentioned before what components a concept note must contain:

- basic information about the coordinating beneficiary
- the environmental problem that is targeted and/or the description of species, habitats or biodiversity issues targeted by the project
- project objectives
- information on the project partners (the coordinating and associated beneficiaries as well as the co-financers of the project)
- actions and means
- expected results and impacts of the project

- the sustainability of project results
- project risks and constraints
- added value of the project for the EU
- pilot or demonstration character of the project (and/or best practice for nature and biodiversity strand)
- an indicative budget for the project

Our suggestion:

Due to expected high competition, we suggest developing a concept note with as much as possible details about requested information (which is – assuming a maximum of 10 pages – not an easy task). Crucial information is:

- Environmental benefits: *"further enhancement of the results-orientation by introducing the requirement to produce measurable effects on the environment or climate change under all priority areas"*
- Put more emphasis on the project's sustainability and replicability after the project has been completed. From LIFE MAWP: "*Support actions that help to develop investment-ready economically and environmentally viable projects that mobilize additional private and public financial resources for scale-up and replication of results"*
- If you are building a consortium, the keywords are: complementary, multisectoral (not only research), preferably multi-EU countries
- There is a slight preference for activities aimed at enhancing the circular economy. Emphasise aspects related to how your project would contribute towards the application of the new circular economy paradigm.

2 How many and which other companies and sectors can participate in your project?

What the EU wants:

The good news is that, when applying for LIFE, having a consortium is not mandatory. Projects proposed by single applicants are eligible.

Our suggestion:

Although it is not written anywhere, our experience over the last 10 year (based on over 20 proposals per year) shows an increasing attention of LIFE evaluators for transnational LIFE projects. These are projects with at least two or more EU countries involved. As cited in the LIFE website: *"In 2017, 88% of the proposals were submitted by a consortium of partners. More than half of the proposed projects involve partners from different countries – a strong increase compared to last year's call for proposals (when only 36% of project proposals included a transnational element."*

3 How innovative is your idea?

What the EU wants:
A technology/methodology/model that has reached proof of concept and is ready to be demonstrated and eventually upscaled.

Our suggestion:

- The starting point, through results of previous activities (e.g. preliminary tests) should be at least TRL5 (that's the EC way of saying a technology is or can be validated in relevant environment).
- During the project it is mandatory to bring the innovation to pre-industrial level (TRL 6-7) with activities specifically devoted to demonstration/piloting (see definition below in 'Facts').
- The focus must be on eco-innovation. This is an innovation with clear and substantial positive impacts for the environment.
- Close-to-market innovations will be favoured, i.e. ability to go to market quite soon.

4 How do you measure and forecast?

What the EU wants:
'The mid-term evaluation of the LIFE programme, and the European Parliament confirmed the need and importance of measurable effects of projects on the ground. The LIFE programme contains performance indicators and the multiannual work programmes contain quantitative and qualitative outcome indicators in line with these. To be able to report on these indicators on programme level, beneficiaries need to forecast and measure the environmental, climate, and governance and information, i.e. societal, effects at project level in relation to specific output and outcome indicators. To ensure that these effects are lasting, i.e. sustainable in time, they also need to establish robust mechanisms to ensure that projects have effects beyond the original project area by extension and replication. The clear and coherent explanation of how the continuation, replication and/or transfer of projects' activities and effects will be ensured, therefore becomes an even more decisive award criterion in the evaluation of project proposals. By their nature, successfully demonstrated close-to market solutions to environmental and climate change challenges have a particularly high chance to be continued, replicated and/or transferred. Proposals credibly and coherently presenting a strategy to reach marketability by the end of the project, will therefore score high under this criterion.'

Our suggestion:

- To help you with this a table of indicators-template is provided by LIFE. This table will be updated during the project and serves to monitor the progress.
- It is important to set a credible baseline for environmental impacts.

- Business and socio-economic impacts can be forecasted based on a coherent logic. (i.e. answer questions like: what is the 'as is' situation? What is the 'to be' with your proposed technology/methodology implemented? How many years are necessary for your solution to be on the market? Which markets segments first? Which type of clients? In which countries? What are the benefits for EU society? And globally? What are the benefits for the EU economy in growth, jobs? and so on).

Facts of LIFE

For whom?
LIFE is open to the participation of entities registered in the Member States of the European Union being (1) public bodies, (2) private commercial organisations and (3) private non-commercial organisations (including NGOs). Also eligible are third countries and LIFE provides for activities outside the EU. It also provides a framework for cooperation with international organizations. The LIFE Programme may fund public and private bodies out of the following countries: EFTA, Candidate Countries, countries to which the European Neighbourhood Policy applies and countries which have become members of the European Environmental Agency, and some Overseas Countries and Territories (OCT).

Collaboration with one or multiple parties is not obligatory. However, in our experience, the participation of one or more international partners significantly increases your application's chance of success. Transnational projects will receive extra points in their evaluation.

Which projects?
LIFE can offer co-financing for so-called 'traditional' projects. Among these it's worth mentioning:

- Demonstration projects: 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.
- Pilot projects: 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.

In addition, LIFE finances Best Practices, Information/Awareness/ Dissemination, Integrated Projects, Technical Assistance and Preparatory projects.

Which costs?
Usually, the maximum rate of co-financing is 55% of the eligible project costs. The eligible costs are:

- direct personnel costs;
- travel and subsistence costs;
- external assistance costs;
- durable goods (Infrastructure costs, Equipment costs, Prototype costs);
- costs for consumables;
- other costs.

Overheads (also referred to as "indirect costs") are eligible at a flat rate, which will be fixed in the grant agreement as a percentage (maximum 7%) of the total eligible direct costs of the entire project.

Important to mention that equipment costs can be declared on a depreciation basis!

LIFE assistance

Although the LIFE regulations give all the clues you need for preparing an excellent proposal, reality is more stubborn. The fact that you have to start with a 10-pager does not change that. On the contrary, proposers will now have to summarise a full project in only 10 pages – which formerly could take up to 80 pages! This is a very complex task indeed, that you do not want to underestimate. Therefore, it is important to know that you can rely on PNO's experienced experts, who not only know what the EC wants, but also how to address these topics. Some facts and figures about PNO:

- specialists with technical backgrounds and PhDs in environments and resource efficiency related disciplines
- high-end knowledge of the LIFE programme; our average success rate is 40 to 50% which is twice as much as the European average (18 – 23%)
- an extensive EU-network
- access to extensive network of potential partners
- offices in six countries and in Brussels – the heart of the EU administration
- partner in multiple projects.

With an experience of 200+ LIFE applications over the last decade, PNO experts can help you develop all the requested information to the required level of detail and, at the same time, summarise this in a 10-pager without loss of appeal and effectiveness. A seemingly simple start that hopefully will evolve in thunderous success for our climate and environment!

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