



GOVERNMENT OF MALTA
MINISTRY FOR THE ENVIRONMENT,
CLIMATE CHANGE AND PLANNING

**Guidance Notes for Applications for
LIFE Projects Co-Financing Grant
for Non-Government Organisations and Voluntary Organisations**

June 2021

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Prospective applicants are to note that given the evolving nature of the COVID-19 outbreak, only soft copies submitted via the website www.vofunding.org.mt will be accepted.

Applications in hard copy, whether submitted by mail, by hand or any other means, will not be accepted and in this case, the application will not be deemed admissible and hence not considered during the evaluation process. Likewise, no pen-drives, cd's etc will be accepted. Again, in such case, and in this case, the application will not be deemed admissible and hence not considered during the evaluation process.

Only applications that successfully reach the website www.vofunding.org.mt by the close of deadline will be considered. It remains the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that the application was successfully delivered.

Note that the automated acknowledgement sent from the vofunding mailbox does not in any way confirm or otherwise the (a) successful receipt of part or full application, nor, (b) that the application is deemed admissible.

Prospective applicants are strongly advised to avoid submitting applications on the last days of the call.

The Project Selection Committee also reserves the right to request additional information not included in this Guidance Document.

Further details on the application process may be published in due course on the websites of the Ministry for Environment, Climate Change and planning www.environment.gov.mt. For more information, the Ministry can be contacted by email at life.mecp@gov.mt or Tel. 23316239/43, 22926314.

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Definitions

MECP: Ministry for Environment, Climate Change and Planning

PDPID: Policy Development and Programme Implementation Directorate

VO: Voluntary Organisation

NGO: Non-Governmental Organisation

Evaluation: A periodic collection and analysis of evidence to form conclusions on the effectiveness and efficiency of interventions.

Grant Agreement: An agreement signed between MECP and the selected applicant (beneficiary) containing provisions and conditions related to the particular support.

Grant Award Letter: A letter sent by MECP to selected applicants upon the completion of the selection process as to inform applicants of its outcome.

1.0 Introduction

Through the LIFE Projects Co-Financing Grant for Voluntary Organisations, the Ministry for the Environment, Climate Change and Planning on behalf of the Government, is offering financial support to non-Government, not-for-profit organisations engaged in environmental conservation and its promotion, in recognition and support of the valid and effective effort and contribution they make in the sector, and to incentivise further environmentally-beneficial initiatives.

Applications for co-financing submitted under this call would be considered as possible co-financed projects during the process of the LIFE calls 2021, only if they are found eligible in accordance with the provisions of this call. Those project proposals that are selected during the EU Commission's evaluation process for LIFE funding, would then be considered and assessed further for the co-financing as per terms and conditions within this call.

2.0 Objectives

The LIFE Projects Co-Financing Grant for Voluntary Organisations is aimed to support non-Government, non-profit voluntary organisations, which are capable of managing specific project development issues but not necessarily well equipped to deal with the demand of the required financial element stipulated under the LIFE calls, to undertake tangible environmental conservation projects and initiatives that have the potential to:

- contribute to the shift towards a sustainable low-carbon and climate-resilient economy, as well as to the protection of the environment and of biodiversity.
- improve the development, implementation and enforcement of EU environmental and climate policy and legislation.
- improve environmental and climate governance at all levels, including better involvement of civil society, non – governmental organisations (NGOs) and local actors.

Support under this Grant shall therefore contribute to the achievement of a number of important cross-cutting objectives and priority areas as required by the Ministry for the Environment, Climate Change and Planning.

2.1 Priority areas

Applications for support will be considered on the basis of their contribution to one or more of the following cross cutting objectives, focus areas and needs:

- Measure and management of Natura 2000 sites

- Climate change mitigation and adaptation
- Green infrastructure
- Energy Efficiency
- Waste management and/or Marine litter
- Afforestation

3.0 Scope

This Grant will provide co-financing for actions contributing to the protection and restoration of Malta's nature and biodiversity; the facilitation of a transition towards circular, sustainable and climate-resilient economy; the development of climate change mitigation and adaptation projects; and the facilitation of a transition towards an energy-efficient, renewable energy-based economy.

3.1 Investment Priorities

The Ministry for the Environment, Climate Change and Planning identified various environmentally beneficial actions that would merit support through funding. A list of actions falling within the scope of the current grant is included in **Appendix 1**.

4.0 Management and administration of the Scheme

The LIFE Projects Co-Financing Grant is managed by the Ministry for the Environment, Climate Change and Planning (MECP). It establishes the allocation of funds, sets the objectives, priorities, and criteria for award of the Grant. Furthermore, it administers the general implementation, follow-up, and evaluation of the Grant.

The Project Selection Process is steered by MECP and supported by a Project Selection Committee (PSC). The PSC consists of a chair and four members nominated by the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry responsible for environment and climate change.

The Committee has the full authority to consider and/or select applications for funding during the project appraisal process. The PSC has the right to seek technical advice from experts according to the project that is being discussed. The organisations that may be consulted include amongst others:

Other Line Ministries and public entities
The State Aid Monitoring Board
The Planning Authority
The Environment and Resource Authority
Other ad hoc experts, including relevant stakeholders.

4.1 Functions of the Projects Selection Committee

- (i) managing the grant on an ongoing basis in an effective and efficient manner in accordance with the established objectives and criteria, and in line with good conservation and environmental management practices.
- (ii) establishing requirements, procedures, and ancillary documentation and application forms.
- (iii) ensuring fair, transparent and equitable selection procedures, and ensure compliance with all applicable National, European and International regulations and good practice standards.
- (iv) assessing applications against the objectives, parameters and criteria set out herein and prioritise them accordingly and request any required clarifications from applicants for purposes of assessment.
- (v) informing applicants with the outcome of their application and liaising with successful applicants for signing of the grant agreement.
- (vi) authorising payments in respect of approved grants.
- (vii) ensuring compliance with these guidelines and taking any initiative or action in line with these guidelines.

5.0 Eligibility

5.1 Eligibility pre-requisites – Phase 1¹

- (i) Applicants applying for the LIFE Projects Co-Financing Grant must be the Coordinating beneficiaries in subsequent submitting proposals.

They must be non-Government, non-profit voluntary organizations, with a clear primary focus on environmental conservation on the Maltese territory. Project proposals which include non-Maltese territory could be considered, however, they have to show proof of

¹ Prior submission of application to LIFE call

added value to the local scenario. Having said this, priority will be given to project actions implemented within the Maltese territory.

- (ii) At the date of application, applicants must be duly enrolled with the Commissioner for Voluntary Organizations and must also be compliant with the Voluntary Organizations Act, (Cap 492 of the Laws of Malta) and its subsidiary legislation.
- (iii) The Voluntary Organisation must submit evidence of financial capacity as otherwise would be requested in the LIFE call to indicate financial stability.

Evidence of Financial capacity shall include:

- Declaration by accountant/ lawyer attesting that funds are available to match the private financing.
- Profit and Loss statements of the previous year
- Audited financial statements, or management accounts if the audited accounts are not available, of the previous 2 years
- In case of new NGOs operating in the 1st year of Business they are to submit existing management accounts at application date, cash flow and revenue projections for next year certified by a Certified Public Accountant.

- (iv) The Voluntary Organisation must also submit the soft copy of the draft project proposal which it intends to submit as part of the LIFE application.²

Soft copies of all annexes, documents and supporting documentation, including budget and project management concept

- (v) The co-financing application should also include a declaration from the LIFE NCP that the LIFE Unit Desk was consulted with the proposal and that the provided guidelines were adhered to.

Eligibility of the applications submitted for co-financing within this call will be determined as a first step based on the priority of the project proposal theme and the financial standing of the organization as per terms of conditions in point 5.1 iii. Confirmation of co-financing will be given after review process at phase 2.

5.2 Eligibility post-submission – Phase 2³

Following the project approval from CION, the application will be evaluated further and assessed according to the selection criteria at 8.0. At this stage the Voluntary Organizations will be asked to **submit proof of project acceptance** from the Commission. The application will proceed for further assessment by the PSC against these criteria.

² Submission to be in both word and pdf format – not scanned

³ After approval of project by EU Commission LIFE Programme

Wherever more than one eligible proposal is received from a single applicant organisation, and such proposals are shortlisted for funding support, the Committee shall, in its final ranking decision, have regard to:

- the overall number of applicant organisations participating in a given call for applications;
- the number of eligible proposals per applicant organisation; and
- the availability of funds under the call.

This will ensure a balanced allocation of funding support across beneficiary organisations participating in a given call.

The Committee shall also have the prerogative to request further information, amendments or clarifications as it deems appropriate at any stage, and/or to leave, as reserved matters, any details that may be premature vis-a-vis the in-principle decision on the project but which would need to be addressed at a later stage before implementation. Qualifying proposals shall be awarded funding support, subject to availability of funds.

5.3 Eligible expenditure

Expenditure is considered to be eligible expenditure and therefore eligible for reimbursement only if it has been incurred after the application has been submitted to MECF and approval by CION of the project has been issued.

The following type of expenditure is considered eligible for the purpose of support under the LIFE Projects Co-Financing Grant:

- they must be actually incurred by the beneficiary.
- they have been approved by Commission and indicated in the estimated budget submitted with the application.
- they are directly linked to the operation of the project and are unavoidable.
- they are determined according to accounting and management principles/rules and used only to achieve the objectives of the project.
- they must comply with the applicable national law on taxes, labour and social security, and
- they must be reasonable, justified and they are adequately recorded

The selection of projects may be limited by the available budget, in which case the highest-ranking projects will be offered a grant. The maximum amount that can be granted will not exceed € 150,000 per proposal according to limit of budget unless otherwise deemed advisable by the PSC and approved by the Permanent Secretary. The acceptance of a proposal does not necessarily constitute an undertaking to award funding equal to the amount requested by the Voluntary Organisation. This maximum amount is only for indicative purposes and the final amount actually granted is to be determined by the selection board.

An applicant who receives this grant may not be in receipt of any other Government or European Union funding for the same project proposal writing.

To avoid the risk of double-funding, the applicant must indicate in the relevant section of the application form, the sources and the amounts of any other funding received or even applied for the same project.

6.0 General provisions

Potential eligibility for co-financing under this scheme shall not per se constitute sufficient justification for the granting of any permit which would otherwise not be issued; circumventing or influencing any assessment; or non-application or relaxation of any appropriate conditions or quality standards.

Non-disclosure of any required information (including any details required for processing of the application or for subsequent administration, verification or monitoring), or submission of misleading information, shall invalidate the application and may also constitute grounds for judicial or other proceedings against the applicant.

7.0 Applications

Where to apply?	✓ E-applications can be found on the MCVS home page www.vofunding.org.mt and must be submitted on line to the Malta Council of the Voluntary Sector
When to apply?	- The e-application may be submitted as of: 1st June 2021 - The deadline to submit e-applications is: 8th October 2021
How to apply?	<u>Step One: Access the website:</u> For the online application, access the webpage link: www.vofunding.org.mt or, access the webpage link: www.environment.gov.mt <u>Step Two: Access the LIFE Co-financing Scheme:</u> ✓ Search for the LIFE Co-financing Scheme call

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Click on it ✓ Download the LIFE Co-financing guidelines <p><u>Step Three: if the VO is not registered to the MCVS website</u> Register to the MCVS portal by following the instructions</p> <p><u>Step Four: Access the online application:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Click on LOGIN TO APPLY ✓ Fill in the Login online box ✓ Click on Login <p><u>Step Five: Fill in the online application</u> Comply with the Co-financing guidelines</p> <p><u>Step Six: Submit the online application</u> Upload the supporting documentation requested:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Draft of the LIFE Project proposal 2. Annual Activity Report of the previous year 3. Audited financial statements, or Management accounts if the audited accounts are not available, of the years 2019, 2020 and up to application date 4. The existing Management accounts at application date, cash flow and revenue projections for next year certified by CPA, in case of VO's 1st year of business 5. Profit and Loss statements of the previous years 6. Declaration by accountant/ lawyer attesting that funds are available to match the private financing 7. Previous LIFE evaluation synthesis report (If applicable) 8. LIFE NCP declaration of consultation with the LIFE Unit Desk
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A Call for Applications will be issued and advertised in the media. The respective application form will be available only online in electronic format, either from the webpage www.vofunding.org.mt or from the webpage link www.environment.gov.mt. To apply, applicants must first be registered with the VO Funding Portal. Any related enquiries can also be communicated via the e-mail address life.mecp@gov.mt or by calling telephone number 23316239/43, 22926314.

Once approval by CION is received, applicants are to deliver the final version of the LIFE project proposal submitted to CION as well as the letter of approval and evaluation synthesis of the proposal received by CION, in order to proceed to the second phase of the co-financing evaluation.

In any case, applications along with the letter of approval and evaluation synthesis are to be sent within one week after the CION's evaluation process via the email address life.mecp@gov.mt.

8.0 Selection of proposed projects

For a project to be considered for funding, it has to obtain at least 50% of the marks available in total (both general and measure-specific criteria). Projects will be ranked according to marks and funds allocated to those projects which obtain the highest marks. In cases of over-demand for funding, other projects which obtain the pass mark, but which are not

funded/selected will be placed on a reserve list according to marks obtained and funding offered if and when funds become available.

The voting members shall decide how the project proposal addresses each of the criteria and assign points according to the following guide:

Excellent	81 to 100% of points
Very good	76 to 80% of points
Satisfactory	50 to 75% of points
Very poor	26 to 49% of points
Unacceptable	01 to 25% of points

For the purpose of project selection, the total maximum scoring is 200 marks. The general selection criteria carry a maximum of 50 marks, while the measure specific criteria carry a maximum of 150 marks.

8.1 General Selection Criteria (50 marks)

- ***Relevance of the proposed project to the priorities of the Grant (as per 2.1) – (30):***
 - extent to which the project meets the objectives, parameters, requirements and criteria, and addresses at least one of the priority areas, as set out in these guidelines and in the call for applications.
 - demonstrate need, appropriate feasibility, effectiveness, reliability and sustainability of the proposal in meeting and addressing environmental needs and providing tangible environmental benefits.
- ***Quality of the proposal – (10):***
 - clarity of focus on achieving the declared outcomes in the most effective way.
 - soundness of budget and value for money, securing net long-term benefit.
 - compatibility of any site-specific interventions with their environmental context.
 - comprehensive and logical project management concepts as outlined in the documentation provided
- ***Capacity of applicant organisation to carry out the proposed project - (10):***
 - sufficiency of resources of the organisation to carry out the proposed project.

- demonstrated ability, competence and experience and capacity of the organisation to successfully and lawfully implement the project in a timely and effective manner.
- the organisation’s track record to meet appropriate environmental standards.
- Preference will be given to project proposals which offer a minimum of 10% for the co-financing by NGO and are targeting the priorities listed in this call.

8.2 Measure-specific Selection Criteria (as per Appendix 1) (150 marks)

- *“Nature and Biodiversity” and related areas of intervention (30)*
- *“Circular Economy and Quality of Life” and related areas of intervention (20)*
- *“Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation” and related areas of intervention (45)*
- *“Clean Energy Transition” and related areas of intervention (55)*

8.3 Unsuccessful Applicants

In cases where projects have been unsuccessful, the PSC shall inform the applicant accordingly, and provide the reason for the outcome. Applicants who feel aggrieved by the outcome of the procedure have the right of appeal within five (5) working days from the date of the letter of rejection by the PSC.

A Projects Selection Appeals Board (PSAB) is set up. Its role is to receive, review and evaluate appeals lodged by aggrieved proponents in case of rejected proposals. The decision of the PSAB is final. It has the authority to consider, approve or reject appeals for review of rejected application forms.

8.4 Grant Award Letter

The PSC will proceed to write to the successful applicants informing them of the decision of acceptance of their project. Scanned copies of the acceptance letter shall also be submitted through email. Letters of acceptance may include conditions which have been raised by the PSC.

9.0 Contractual Obligations

Upon signing the Grant Agreement, the Beneficiary becomes legally bound by certain provisions. The following sections provide information on some aspects of the contractual obligations of the Beneficiary.

9.1 Grant Agreement

Successful applicants shall enter into a funding agreement with the Ministry for the Environment, Climate Change and Planning. The funding agreement shall be subject to the conditions set out in these guidelines as well as those contained in the call for applications, and shall also include any specific conditions and arrangements as necessary to ensure proper governance and enforcement of the grant conditions as well as effective implementation, achievement and durability of environmental benefits.

In accepting a grant, a beneficiary is expected to:

- Ensure that the project commences promptly and progresses steadily.
- Submit performance reports to the satisfaction of the Project Selection Committee.
- Provide due acknowledgement to MECP, as co-financier, in all publications and reports, all informative signage, and all public communications relating to the approved project; and
- Ensure that all funds are used in line with the grant conditions.

9.2 Documentation

Beneficiaries are obliged to retain all supporting documentation for a two (2)-year period following the submission of the accounts in which the final expenditure of the completed project is included.

9.3 Public Procurement

Beneficiaries of Grant Support are to be aware that they are bound by the principles of good governance, sound financial management and relevant EU or National Legislation.

Checks in relation to public procurement will verify that Union public procurement rules and related national rules are complied with and that the basic principles of transparency, objectivity, non-discrimination and appropriate disclosure have been respected throughout the entire process.

The documents to be submitted with each payment claim by beneficiaries shall be comprehensive enough to enable verification of the legality and regularity of the expenditure in compliance with national and Union rules. Administrative checks shall thereby comprise, as far as possible, a complete review of the supporting documents to each payment claim.

When submitting a request for payment of suppliers and/or contractors, it is crucial that all necessary documentation is presented and that the payment claims/invoices submitted are clear and valid as per the twelfth schedule of the Value-Added Tax Act (Chapter 406 of the Laws of Malta), which stipulates what a tax invoice should include.

MECP retains the right to reject a payment claim if this is not of sufficient quality or does not contain all the relevant details.

In general, a tax invoice should contain the following particulars:

1. The date of issue;
2. A sequential number which uniquely identifies the invoice;
3. The name, address and VAT number of the supplier;
4. The name, address and VAT number of the customer;
5. A description sufficient to identify the quantity and nature of the goods or the extent and nature of the goods or the extent and nature of the services applied;
6. The date on which the supply was made or complete or the date on which a payment on account of a supplier was made;
7. The taxable value per rate or exemption, the unit price exclusive of tax and any discounts or rebates if they are not included in the unit price;
8. The amount of tax chargeable, if any, at each rate so chargeable
9. The total amount of tax chargeable, if any.

9.4 Provision of Payments

Where applicable, the beneficiary may opt to request an interim payment. These payments will be carried out in lots. In total, these lots cannot exceed 50% of the total eligible grant amount and shall be paid upon presentation of relative invoices and eligible proof of payment.

The applicant may only claim back expenditure that is incurred from the date of submission of the application. The final amount, the remaining 50% of the eligible grant amount, shall be issued by PSC only after the project is completed. The beneficiary may submit a request for reimbursement once all project components have been completed, payments settled in full upon certified completion of the project.

In cases where a project consists of structural works, the beneficiary has to present an actual bill of quantities, as well as a declaration of completed works endorsed by a warranted architect related to the cost components contracted. Moreover, the beneficiary also has to

submit drawings highlighted by the architect to reveal which sections of the holding are being affected by the grant reimbursement.

The beneficiary shall, within one month following project completion, submit to PSC a final progress report and a completion certificate, also including documentary evidence and photographs to confirm that all project components have been successfully implemented to the required standards.

If the beneficiary does not meet all requirements set out in the grant agreement, or is found to have defaulted on the conditions of the grant, the Committee may decide to recover the entire co-financing, or any proportionate amount, at its sole discretion. The beneficiary shall repay any such amount within 30 days from being intimated by the Committee. Monies due shall be deemed to constitute public debt and the applicable measures may be taken or enforced to recover such debt.

The Committee reserves the right to rescind any funding agreement at any time if any of the conditions set out therein are not properly observed. Furthermore, if at any point it results that an application, or any terms of agreement (or the inclusion or omission of any such terms), were vitiated or influenced by incorrect, misleading or fraudulent information or assurance, or by a breach of rules or regulations, the Committee shall have the right to revoke the agreement or parts thereof, or to amend its terms, as it deems appropriate, as well as to recover any funds or seek any other appropriate redress. The Committee shall not be liable for any ensuing damage or inconvenience suffered by the beneficiary. The Committee shall also have the right to take further action in the event of fraud or other malicious circumstance.

10.0 Data Policy

By submitting the application, the applicant is giving his/her consent to have personal and project details published in line with the obligations in the relevant EU Regulations and other requests by MECP.

10.1 Data Protection

Whilst abiding to the provisions set in the Data Protection Act regarding the handling of personal data, the Committee will retain the right to disclose, exchange or request information about any applicant, application and agreement to or with other organisations or consultants which the Committee consider appropriate for administration, statistical, monitoring, evaluation and dissemination purposes.

10.2 Transparency

Because projects implemented under this Co-Financing Grant involve expenditure of public money, there is public interest in how the money is spent. In this respect the Committee will ensure that the principle of transparency is fully respected in the implementation of the project.

11.0 Auditing, monitoring and enforcement

From time to time, the Committee may conduct monitoring measures whereby beneficiaries are asked to present the necessary documentation for auditing purposes. In applying for support under this Grant the beneficiary is deemed automatically as agreeing to cooperate with or take part in such audits, which are important for reviewing the effectiveness of the measure as well as evidencing implementation of projects.

12.0 Contact Details

For more information regarding the LIFE Co-Financing Grant, kindly contact the LIFE Unit within MECP on life.mecp@gov.mt

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APPENDIX 1 – List of potentially fundable items

LIFE Programme Structure

According to Article 4 of the LIFE Regulation, the LIFE programme is structured into two fields – Environment and Climate Action – and four sub-programmes:

1. Under the Environment field:

1.1 The sub-programme « Nature and Biodiversity ».

1.2 The sub-programme «Circular Economy and Quality of Life».

2. Under the Climate Action field:

2.1 The sub-programme «Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation».

2.2 The sub-programme «Clean Energy Transition».

1.1. The sub-programme “Nature and Biodiversity” and related areas of intervention

In line with the specific objectives of the sub-programme as set out in Article 3(2) of the LIFE Regulation, the sub-programme “Nature and Biodiversity” will aim:

- to develop, demonstrate, promote and stimulate scale up of innovative techniques, methods and approaches (including nature-based solutions and ecosystem approaches) for reaching the objectives of Union legislation and policy on nature and biodiversity, and to contribute to the knowledge base and to the application of best practices, including through the support of the Natura 2000 network;
- to support the development, implementation, monitoring and enforcement of relevant Union legislation and policy on nature and biodiversity, including by improving governance at all levels, in particular through enhancing the capacities of public and private actors and the involvement of civil society, also taking into due consideration the possible contributions provided by citizen science;
- to catalyse the large-scale deployment of successful solutions/approaches for implementing relevant Union legislation and policy on nature and biodiversity, by replicating results, integrating related objectives into other policies and into public and private sector practices, mobilising investment and improving access to finance.

1.2 The sub-programme “Circular Economy and Quality of Life” and related areas of intervention

The specific objectives of the sub-programme “Circular Economy and Quality of Life” are:

- to develop, demonstrate and promote innovative techniques, methods and approaches for reaching the objectives of Union legislation and policy on environment, and to contribute to the knowledge base and, where relevant, to the application of best practices;

- to support the development, implementation, monitoring and enforcement of relevant Union legislation and policy on environment, including by improving governance at all levels, in particular through enhancing capacities of public and private actors and the involvement of civil society;
- to catalyse the large-scale deployment of successful technical and policy-related solutions for implementing relevant Union legislation and policy on environment, by replicating results, integrating related objectives into other policies and into public and private sector practices, mobilising investment and improving access to finance.

This sub-programme aims at facilitating the transition toward a sustainable, circular, , energy-efficient and climate-resilient economy, toxic-free environment and at protecting, restoring and improving the quality of the environment.

It will contribute to the relevant European Union priorities by

- reducing resource consumption and facilitating the transition toward a sustainable, circular, toxic-free, energy-efficient and climate-resilient economy;
- developing circular systems, in line with the new Circular Economy Action Plan and reflecting its focus on sustainable products, material and energy intensive sectors and circular business models for value retention. Specific consideration will be given to projects from EU outermost regions and islands these regions.;
- bringing down waste generation in line with the Waste Framework Directive and the reduction of hazardous waste in view of the EU's commitment under the Basel Convention;
- improving waste management with respect to collection and storage of waste, recovery options and end-of-life disposal, including in islands and outermost regions where waste management has to face specific challenges;
- reducing emissions of pollutants to air and ensuring clean air for EU citizens in line with the EU acquis and the objectives of the zero pollution action plan;
- achieving and maintaining a good status of the Union's water bodies;
- ensuring clean surface water and ground-water, in sufficient quantities for human and other species, including by increasing efficiency of water use;
- reducing production, use and emissions of hazardous chemicals as well as reducing the exposure of humans and the environment to those chemicals;
- promoting the development, commercialisation and uptake of safe and sustainable-by-design substances, materials and products;
- diminishing exposure to harmful noise levels;
- protecting the quality of EU soil, preventing soil degradation and increasing resilience of soils to climate threats and combat desertification through sustainable practices of soil and land management, remediating from soil pollution and enhancing the capacity to improve water quality through reduced nitrate leakage and to reduce emissions through carbon storage and preventing and mitigating soil sealing.

2.1 The sub-programme “Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation” and related areas of intervention

The specific objectives of the sub-programme “Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation” are:

- to develop, demonstrate and promote innovative techniques, methods and approaches for reaching the objectives of Union legislation and policy on climate action and to contribute to the knowledge base and to the application of best practices;
- to support the development, implementation, monitoring and enforcement of relevant Union legislation and policy on climate action, including by improving governance at all levels, in particular through enhancing capacities of public and private actors and the involvement of civil society;
- to catalyse the large-scale deployment of successful technical and policy-related solutions for implementing relevant Union legislation and policy on climate action by replicating results, integrating related objectives into other policies and into public and private sector practices, mobilising investment and improving access to finance.

Its areas of intervention will be the following:

- **Climate Change Mitigation**
 - Reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, including fluorinated greenhouse gases and ozone depleting substances, in line with the EU’s climate neutrality target and the improvement of energy efficiency, including addressing the policy and market framework for the development and deployment of low-carbon or energy efficient products and services, as well as by promoting the transition of the transport sector.
 - Enhancing the functioning of the Emissions Trading System.
 - Support to sustainable land, forest, soil, sea and ocean management practices, which reduce emissions or remove CO₂ from the atmosphere, notably in the outermost regions.
 - Develop and promote solutions to remove CO₂ from the atmosphere. Carbon capture and carbon removals can be nature-based or rely on storage in specific long-term media or products.
- **Climate Change Adaptation**
 - Support adaptation related policy development, and improve adaptation strategies and plans at all levels and in all sectors, in line with the new EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change ;
 - Improve, promote, and scale up the use of state-of-the art tools and solutions for adaptation modelling, risk assessment, management and decision support; adaptation monitoring, reporting and evaluation; and ex-ante project assessment tools to better identify co-benefits and positive impacts on the economy of adaptation and prevention projects.
 - Support the rollout of viable nature-based solutions in the management of land, coastal and marine areas including through assessments, guidance, capacity building, and suitable financial approaches and products.

- Approaches and solutions for adapting cities and regions to climate change, notably in support of the EU and Global Covenant of Mayors and of the European Climate Pact.
- Approaches and solutions to ensure a stable and secure supply of high quality freshwater, prevent droughts, reduce water use, protect and restore wetlands, and prevent floods.
- Solutions to climate-proof and enhance the resilience of infrastructure and buildings, including by using blue-green infrastructure infrastructure and through cooperation with standardisation organisations.
- Support preparedness for extreme weather events, notably at a local level and in the outermost regions.
- Promote financial instruments and innovative solutions to deal with climate-induced risks, and public-private collaboration to reduce the share of uninsured climate-related economic losses, including by improving collection and access to climate-related economic loss data.
- Climate Change Governance and Information, which will include actions contributing to climate change mitigation or adaptation.
- Incentivise changes in behaviour and practices, as well as improving citizens' knowledge and awareness, notably through the support of the implementation of the European Climate Pact , mainstreaming emission reduction and resource efficiency actions in relevant sectors.
- Development and implementation of climate and energy strategies or mid-century strategies at local, regional and national level.
- Improve greenhouse gas monitoring, accounting and reporting and contribute to policy monitoring, assessment and ex-post evaluation.
- Information on best practices and awareness raising on climate change mitigation and adaptation, including on climate-proofing of infrastructure investment and policies.
- Development of climate services and promotion of climate science.
- Development and promotion of sustainable finance instruments and support for climate diplomacy.

The sub-programme Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation may cover activities related to energy efficiency and renewable energy as far they are not covered by the Clean Energy Transition sub-programme calls.

2.2 The sub-programme “Clean Energy Transition” and related areas of intervention

The specific objectives of the sub-programme "Clean Energy Transition" are the following:

- to develop, demonstrate and promote innovative techniques, methods and approaches for reaching the objectives of Union legislation and policy on the transition to sustainable

renewable energy and increased energy efficiency, and to contribute to the knowledge base and to the application of best practice;

- to support the development, implementation, monitoring and enforcement of relevant Union legislation and policy on the transition to sustainable renewable energy or increased energy efficiency, including by improving governance at all levels, in particular through enhancing capacities of public and private actors and the involvement of civil society;
- to catalyse the large-scale deployment of successful technical and policy-related solutions for implementing relevant Union legislation on the transition to renewable energy or increased energy efficiency by replicating results, integrating related objectives into other policies and into public and private sector practices, mobilising investment and improving access to finance.