



# **Priority topics**

## **Circular economy and quality of life**

### **Subprogramme**

**FINANZIAMENTI  
PER AMBIENTE, ENERGIA E CLIMA:  
IL PROGRAMMA LIFE**

**28 Luglio 2021**

**MARIO LIONETTI**  
**LIFE Environment (Nature & Circular Economy)**  
**Sector D2.1 – Circular economy and quality of life**



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3. AIR
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6. CHEMICALS
7. NEW EUROPEAN BAUHAUS
8. ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE

# What are SAPs

- Standard Action Projects (SAPs), are the ex 'traditional LIFE projects'
- They can be **Innovative** solutions OR **Best practices**
- By '**innovative**' solutions we mean:  
*new when compared to the state of the art at Member State and sector level and implemented at an operational scale allowing the achievement of ambitious and credible impacts (as per the award criterion 'Impact')*
- By '**Best practice**' solutions we mean:  
*appropriate, cost-effective, state of the art (at Member State and sector level) and implemented at an operational scale allowing the achievement of ambitious and credible impacts (as per the award criterion 'Impact')*
- 'Innovative' is used strategically in the description of priority topics

# The evaluation of Priority topics

- The match is assessed under the Award criterion 'Relevance' (with other elements)

## Relevance (0-20 points)

- Relevance of the contribution to one or several of the specific objectives of the LIFE Programme and the targeted sub-programme
- Extent to which the proposal is in line with the description included in the call for proposals, including, where relevant, its specific priorities
- Concept and methodology: soundness of the overall intervention logic
- Extent to which the proposal offers co-benefits and promotes synergies with other policy areas relevant for achieving environment and climate policy objectives

# 1. CIRCULAR ECONOMY AND WASTE

## Recovery of Resources from Waste

- Implementation of **innovative** solutions to support value-added recycled materials, components or products for the following areas:
  - Separate collection and recycling of **waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE)** in particular but not limited to photovoltaic panels, smartphones, tablets and computers;
  - Separate collection and recycling of **batteries and accumulators**;
  - Dismantling, remanufacturing and recycling of **End of Life Vehicles (ELVs) and End-of-Life Ships**;
  - Selective separation and recycling of **construction works or buildings**;
  - Sorting and recycling of **plastics**;
  - Separate collection and recycling of **bio-waste**;
  - Separate collection and recycling of **textiles**;
  - Recycling of **composite and multilayer materials** in particular but not limited to carbon or glass fibres. Special attention should be given to face-masks used by the general public for COVID protection purposes, in such case also best practice solutions will be considered;
  - Recovering **critical raw materials** from waste
  - Sorting and recycling of **packaging**.
- Implementation of **innovative** solutions for the identification, tracking, separation, prevention and decontamination of **waste containing hazardous substances**, to enable value-added recycling of the treated waste and safe disposal of the hazardous substances or reducing the scale of the problem within the framework of the project. Special attention should be given to those substances considered as the most harmful for the environment and human health, also known as substances of concern.



European  
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# 1. CIRCULAR ECONOMY AND WASTE

## Circular Economy and the Environment

Implementation of business and consumption models or solutions to **support value chains, particularly the key product value chains set out in the new EU Action Plan for the Circular Economy**, aiming at reducing or preventing resource use and waste including one or more of the following:

- Implementation of **design for the environment solutions**, including circular design, to improve durability, reparability, reusability, upgradability, recycling and use of recycled content in new products;  
These solutions shall aim at reducing impacts holistically by considering aspects such as: life cycle approach, wide uptake of labelling, green procurement and tracking of raw materials in components and products;
- **Solutions (post-design)** to support the implementation, transfer and/or uptake **of product durability, reuse and repair, including upgrading and remanufacturing**;
- Support to the implementation, transfer and/or uptake of one or more of the following:
  - a) **Product-as-a-service solutions** and other business models or technologies to optimise asset use,
  - b) **Industrial symbiosis and creation of circular value chains**, better tracking resources and matching surplus or by-product materials or recyclable waste across industrial sectors,
  - c) **Digital product passports**.

The models and/or solutions proposed should ideally consider the environmental performance of the whole value chain, but can equally focus on any specific stage of the value chain. Projects may include, as an element, the development of data to support value chain thinking. Particular attention should be given to the involvement and active participation of SMEs.

Priority will be given to projects that minimise or eliminate environmental impact, without simply shifting negative impacts elsewhere or to other stages of the product lifecycle.

Those projects dealing in particular with waste prevention, should, as part of their actions and where relevant, involve citizens, through information and awareness on:

- a) the environmental performance associated with proposed solution throughout its life cycle (to encourage more informed purchases),
- b) the return, collection and recovery systems available and with respect to the meaning of the labels related to ecological performance and recycling affixed on the products.



## 2. SOIL

Contribute to the soil-related commitments set in the EU Biodiversity Strategy towards 2030 and to the implementation of the new Soil Thematic Strategy, when adopted

- Implementation of actions to protect the quality of EU's soil, including innovative actions:
  - encourage transition to sustainable **practices of soil and land management**, promote and scale up innovative soil and land management techniques and **scale-up the implementation of the sustainable soil management** with a view to eliminate and prevent adverse effects (erosion, pollution, loss of soil organic carbon, etc.) and negative impacts on provided soil ecosystem services and/or,
  - **prepare for extreme weather events and combat desertification**, in order to increase resilience of agricultural and tourism sectors to climate threats (e.g. floods, soil erosion and droughts) **by scaling up the implementation of effective nature based solutions**.
- Restoration, protection and improvement of soil health and prevention of soil degradation including soil loss also through innovative actions:
  - sustain soil fertility and soil biodiversity, restore them after pollution and enhance their capacity to improve water quality,
  - apply cost-effective investigation, assessment and remediation solutions for point-source and diffuse soil contamination,
  - support to sustainable soil and land management practices, including those specifically intended to remove CO<sub>2</sub>,
  - address soil degradation including soil loss to preserve land resources ('land degradation neutrality') and/or,
  - apply cost-effective solutions to unseal already sealed areas.

### 3. AIR

#### Air Quality Legislation and NEC Directive

Where not explicitly stated otherwise, air quality projects should generally focus on urban areas, or on approaches for rural areas with a large replicability potential in the EU, in order to cover as many people as possible.

Air quality improvement and emission reduction **of particulate matter (PM)** in areas:

- o with high use of solid fuel like biomass, coal, and peat for domestic heating, or
- o with high **emissions of PM from (re)construction, quarrying, mining, mineral handling, or other dust generating activities**, if not covered by the IED

Such projects shall implement one or more of the following: technical , management, innovative regulatory and/or innovative incentive based solutions.

**Sustainable road transport mobility** aiming at emissions of air pollutants, the reduction of which is essential for helping meet air quality standards, focusing on one or more of the following:

- Reduction of emissions of air pollutants during **real world driving conditions** (e.g. technical measures for vehicles, eco-driving, measurement and surveillance technology)
- zero-emission two- or three wheelers and/or analysis for and implementation on a test scale of related infrastructure needs;
- zero- emission vehicles and related infrastructure needs;
- the innovative use of alternative fuels;
- innovative retrofit programmes for vehicles ;
- alternative drivetrain technology ;
- innovative technologies to reduce **emissions from wear and tear** (e.g. brakes, tyres, road surface);
- high-impact traffic access systems (such as Low and Zero Emission Zones and road pricing schemes) through advanced access criteria and/or labels e.g. promoting zero-emission vehicles. Priority will be given to projects in urban areas in order to improve the situation for a maximum number of persons;
- the use of innovative logistic or passenger



## 3. AIR

### Air Quality Legislation and NEC Directive (2)

**Sustainable mobility, other than road transport**, including maritime transport, ports, aviation and Non Road Mobile Machinery (NRMM) mobility, including their supporting infrastructure and logistics. If aiming at reducing emissions from NRMM, projects can address existing NRMM not covered (yet) by Regulation (EU) 2016/1628 , and/or address improvements to reduce emissions from NRMM already covered by the NRMM Regulation beyond the legal requirements mentioned in it.

**Reduction of ammonia, methane and PM emissions from agriculture** in support of the implementation of the upgraded UNECE Code of Good Practice for reducing emissions from agriculture .

### Industrial Emissions Directive - IED

Application of pollution prevention and abatement techniques referred to in the Industrial Emissions Directive as emerging techniques or development and application of pollution prevention and abatement techniques, which could qualify as candidate emerging techniques under the Industrial Emissions Directive's BREFs review process. Projects will focus on the reduction of air pollutants and should notably address PM2.5, NO<sub>x</sub>, SO<sub>2</sub>, NH<sub>3</sub> and/or NMVOCs generated by industrial installations regulated by the Industrial Emissions Directive (IED).

## 4. NOISE

Under this heading, priority will be given to projects in urban areas in order to improve the situation for a maximum number of persons.

Substantial reduction of noise inside densely populated urban areas through solutions with high environmental and economic sustainability; for instance, by using low noise surfaces and/or tyres having life cycle costs comparable to those of standard surfaces and/or tyres, low height barriers with low landscape impact and eco-friendly materials, or lowering noise from railway traffic or airports.

## 5. WATER – a. Water quality & quantity

- Improvement of **water quality** via one or both of the following:
  - Integrated **management of nutrients and organic pollution** of human (urban) and/or agricultural origin by directly removing pollution. The solutions foreseen should be innovative and should be identified as a result of a comprehensive gap analysis defining the measures needed on a river basin scale or catchment scale to allow for the achievement of the WFD and MSFD requirements, taking into account what has been delivered via the UWWTD, the Nitrates Directive, the Bathing Water Directive and the Groundwater Directive requirements.
  - Innovative solutions for the **reduction of pressures from chemical pollutants** in the water environment by reducing emissions of priority substances and other chemicals identified as river basin specific pollutants at source, through the use of appropriate substitutes or alternative technologies. This should include, where relevant, other pollutants such as pharmaceuticals and (micro) plastics.
- Implementation of **flood and/or drought risk management actions** by applying at least one of the following:
  - **Nature-based solutions** consisting in natural water retention measures that increase infiltration and storage of water and remove pollutants through natural or "natural-like" processes including re-naturalisation of river, lake, estuary and coastal morphology and/or re-creation of associated habitats including flood- and marsh plains;
  - **Innovative prevention and protection tools and techniques** for support of policy, land use planning, risk reduction, post-event resilience and emergency management and/or
  - **Innovative integrated risk assessment and management approaches** taking into account social vulnerability and aiming at improved resilience while ensuring social acceptance.
- Innovative projects addressing **hydro morphological pressures** identified in RBMPs and originating from land or water uses in order to achieve good water status or potential as required by the WFD objectives and attain the objectives of the EU Biodiversity Strategy. This could include projects working on development of sediment transport management techniques and solutions, ensuring ecological flow, removal of obstacles, etc.
- Implementation of innovative **water saving measures** in order to reduce the quantitative and qualitative pressures on water bodies/resources. This includes measures for reduction of over-abstraction of water taking into account circular economy measures.

## **5. WATER – b. Marine and coastal water management**

Application of innovative solutions (tools, technologies or practices) to ensure the protection and conservation of the seas, oceans and their coasts, by fostering sustainable human activities within the marine environment. This would include initiatives aimed at reducing the pressure of human activities on the marine environment, and addressing at least one of the following topics of high concern:

- underwater noise,
- marine litter and/or contaminants (addressed at source or in the sea giving priority to prevention rather than clean-up),
- disturbance of and damage to the sea floor,
- examination & reduction of impacts of deep sea exploitation & exploration,
- over-fishing and/or incidental by-catch,
- nutrient and organic matter inputs from agriculture or aquaculture and/or
- navigation (e.g. dredging navigation channels, shipping highways).

## 5. WATER – c. Water services

- Application of **innovative technologies and tools for drinking water and UWWT systems**, through at least one of the following:

- the use of **resource efficient processes** for the provision of water services ,
- the use of processes to diminish the presence of **pollutants of emerging concern**,
- the **treatment of drinking water and/or waste water for reuse** that can ensure highest safety levels, e.g. treatment efficacy for pathogen (viruses, bacteria) removal.

- Application of innovative tools ensuring the **resource efficient provision of water services** compliant with the revised Drinking Water Directive and the UWWTD to population living in **rural areas**.

- Improvement of the **efficiency and effectiveness** of innovative solutions and/or innovative treatment options regarding **recycled/reclaimed water**, implementing one or more of the following:

- **Concepts for (alternative) water supply, wastewater treatment, reuse** (where applicable, in accordance to Regulation (EU) 2020/741 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 May 2020 on minimum requirements for water reuse PE/12/2020/INIT )  
**recovery and recycling of resources** ;
- **Source control methods and on-site technologies for decreased discharges of pollutants of emerging concern** (e.g. pharmaceuticals, nanoparticles, textile fibres) and/or pathogens with wastewater effluent;
- Systematic approaches to **avoid loss of water, energy and resources** in industrial

## 6. CHEMICALS

-Prevention and Reduction of the impact on the environment or human health, of hazardous substances, in particular at least one of the following:

- Substances identified as being of concern (including endocrine disruptors and persistent substances) ;
- combination effects of substances;
- nanomaterials;
- biocidal products and/or pesticides;
- PFAS (Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances).

This shall be reached through innovation for safe and sustainable by design approaches for chemicals, materials and products and promotion of the phasing out of substances of concern.

- Prevention and Reduction of the impact on the environment or human health of chemical production and use across the value chain to promote:

- a. the development of green and digital/smart technologies
- b. advanced materials
- c. low-carbon and low environmental impact industrial production and use of chemicals

## 6. CHEMICALS

- Digital innovations for advanced tools, methods and models, and data analysis capacities to also move away from animal testing.
- Implementation of safe- and sustainable-by-design solutions, including through the development, commercialisation, deployment and uptake of safe- and sustainable-by-design substances, material and product. The overall sustainability should be ensured by minimising the whole environmental footprint in particular on climate change, resource use, ecosystems and biodiversity from a life cycle perspective.
- Facilitation of the implementation of the Seveso III Directive (Directive 2012/18/EU) on the control of major-accident hazards involving dangerous substances through deployment of particularly cost-effective methodological tools for carrying out human health and environmental risk mapping, and for addressing domino effects. Projects shall foresee the demonstrative application of these tools by different duty holders and implement risk preventing or reducing measures on their basis.

## 7. A NEW EUROPEAN BAUHAUS

On January 2021, the Commission launched the New European Bauhaus (NEB) initiative, an environmental, economic and cultural project to combine design, sustainability, accessibility and affordability in order to help deliver the European Green Deal. There is a potential for supporting this initiative under LIFE Circular economy and quality of life and LIFE Nature and Biodiversity.

In particular, the following project proposals that contribute to the implementation of the New European Bauhaus initiative will be given priority for LIFE support:

- Proposals focussed on a holistic reduction of environmental impacts of new buildings;
- Proposals on circular districts involving creation of circular value chains to boost urban economies whilst producing urban and territorial regeneration.
- Proposals for maintaining or restoring biodiversity that contribute to the implementation of the New European Bauhaus initiative. This may include, for example, demonstrating biodiversity friendly practise for the energetic isolation of buildings, innovative architectural approaches for wildlife-friendly buildings, etc.



## 8. Environmental Governance

### 1. Activities in support of public administrations' decision-making and voluntary approaches

- **Improving the capacity of public administration to implement a holistic vision of the environment, including managing, monitoring, assessing environmental plans, programmes and initiatives**, by involving responsible authorities, also through institutional collaboration at different territorial level and/or where appropriate in partnership with private entities, with a view to develop synergies, to reduce administrative burden and/or to optimise environmental outcomes (...) Plans/Programmes targeted:
  - National air pollution control programmes
  - Air Quality Plans
  - River Basin Management Plans
  - Flood risk management plans;
  - Nitrate action plans
  - Waste management plans
  - National or Regional **Circular Economy Action Plans, Strategies, Roadmaps or similar**
  - National **Radon** Action Plans
  - Actions, Measures and Plans to implement the **Green City Accord**

and/or decisions related to:

- industrial emissions
- waste management
- water pollution and water abstraction

## 8. Environmental Governance

- **Development, promotion, implementation and/or harmonisation** of one or more of the following **voluntary instruments and approaches** and their use by entities aiming at **reducing the environmental impact of their activities, products and services**:
  - Third-party verification of the performance of innovative technologies (...) such as **Environmental Technology Verification (ETV)**
  - Product environmental footprint category rules (**PEFCR**) and/or organisation environmental footprint sectoral rules (OEFSR)
  - **EU Ecolabel**
  - Actions, services, networks and innovative business models for fostering the use of reused, repaired, refurbished, remanufactured also linked to product durability and planned obsolescence
  - **Green and Circular Public Procurement**
  - **EMAS**
  - **Sustainability performance of buildings**

# 8. Environmental Governance

## 2. Environmental compliance assurance and access to justice

- Supporting **environmental compliance assurance** by
  - establishing new or, where in place, enhancing existing cross-border, **national or regional networks of environmental compliance assurance practitioners or experts**; and/or establishing or, where in place, **improving professional qualifications and training to improve compliance with binding EU environmental instruments** (*other than on nature and biodiversity*), through promoting, checking and enforcing compliance, and applying the polluter pays principle, using a mix of administrative law, criminal law and environmental liability; and/or
  - by developing and implementing **strategies and policies** and/or developing and using **innovative tools** and actions to promote, monitor and enforce compliance with binding EU environmental instruments (*other than on nature and biodiversity*), and **ensure application of the polluter pays principles** through environmental liability; and/or
  - **engaging with citizens** and others to promote and monitor compliance, and ensure application of environmental liability
- Promoting effective public participation and **access to justice** in environmental matters amongst the public, NGOs, lawyers, the judiciary, public administrations or other stakeholders with a view to improving knowledge, understanding and application of effective means of public participation and/or access to justice, with a particular focus on protecting people's health and well-being and protecting the quality of the environment via the requirements of **EU air, water and waste and environmental liability instruments**. Projects should draw on existing modules and know-how in the area of environmental law training developed by the Commission and the Commission Notice on access to justice in environmental matters and related materials

# 8. Environmental Governance

## 3. Behavioral change and awareness-raising initiatives

**Raising awareness on environmental problems, EU environmental policies, tools and/or legislation among the relevant target audiences**, aiming to change their perceptions and **fostering the adoption of environmentally friendly behaviours and practices** and/or direct **citizen's engagement**. Applicants need to provide substantial evidence that a change of awareness levels in the field(s) addressed by the project is a crucial factor supporting correct implementation and/or future development of EU environmental policies tools and/or legislation. The awareness-raising activities should have the widest coverage relevant for the specific issue targeted. These activities will contribute, where applicable, to the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development Goals. The environmental problems, EU environmental policies, tools and/or legislation targeted should be directly linked to one or more of the **priorities** included in:

- The **European Green Deal** to raise awareness on the environmental impacts to underpin the transformative changes towards **more sustainable food, energy, mobility and building systems** and to mainstream environmental considerations across policies and activities in line with the EGD oath to do no harm;
- The **Circular Economy Action Plan** to ensure waste prevention and reduction, sustainable production, sustainable products, services and business models, sustainable consumption and transformation of consumption patterns in particular in the sectors that use most resources and pose higher sustainability challenges, namely **textiles, chemicals** (including **plastics**), **construction and buildings, electronics** and **ICT, batteries** and **vehicles**;
- The **Zero Pollution Action Plan** addressing the protection of citizens from environmental pressures and risks to health as a result of Europe's zero-pollution ambition and measures for a toxic-free environment including, in particular, sustainability in the use and management of chemicals and promoting clean air.

