

## *“Environment, Climate Change and Low Carbon Economy” Programme*

**PROGRAMME OPERATOR:** Secretary General of the Environment

**PROGRAMME PARTNER:** Innovation Norway

### **OPEN CALL**

#### **Call#5 – Projects for climate change-related extreme weather preparedness and risk management**

The ‘Environment, Climate Change and Low Carbon Economy Programme’ shall finance innovative and structuring projects for the Country in the areas of Environment, Climate Change and Low Carbon Economy (“Environment Programme”), with the aim of promoting the good environmental state of the ecosystems and reducing the adverse effects of pollution and other human activities, being climate change one of the main concerns expressed in the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), signed in Lisbon on 22 May 2017.

The ‘Environment Programme’ selects as one of its priority areas climate change adaptation measures in line with Blue Book Programme Area 13- Climate change mitigation and adaptation - and the National Action Program to Combat Desertification (NAPCD)<sup>1</sup> on this matter focused on adaptation to the following climate vulnerabilities:

- Increase in the frequency and intensity of drought and water shortage periods;
- Increase in susceptibility to desertification;
- Increase in maximum temperature.

The UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework points out land-based solutions as the most impactful for the response to crises, such as the current COVID-19 pandemic, placing the land at the centre of concerns.

Desertification and drought cut across other environmental issues, due to the strong interrelationships with both the causes and consequences of climate change in the different areas of natural resources, such as soil, air, water and biodiversity. Drought is a vector for land degradation, posing a great pressure under ecosystems, accelerating biodiversity loss. Drylands may force land

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<sup>1</sup> Resolution of the Council of Ministers no. 78/2014, of 24 December

abandonment, crop destruction, and jeopardize food security, putting in evidence soil loss and a decrease on land productivity. Additionally, land degradation negatively impacts a great spectrum of land resources, which are currently under strong pressure.

IPBES report (2021) identified land use and the land cover changes as the main causes for biodiversity loss. Agenda 2030 for sustainable development, whose goals aim to respond to changes in soil biodiversity and the loss of vegetation cover, classifies drought as a natural phenomenon but exacerbated by climate change. The effects on soil erosion and land degradation, as well as the consequences for land productivity are associated to anthropogenic origin.

Desertification is increasingly affecting Europe. Half of EU Member States declared being affected by desertification under the UNCCD, and IPCC prediction on climate change shown that desertification is expected to occur in other European countries by 2050. The risk of desertification is most severe in southern Portugal, parts of Spain, southern Italy, south-eastern Greece, Malta, Cyprus and the Black Sea areas of Bulgaria and Romania. Studies indicate that these areas are frequently affected by soil erosion, salinization, loss of soil organic carbon, biodiversity loss and landslides. The long period of high temperatures and low rainfall that characterized the summer of 2018 in Europe reminded us of the urgency of this issue.

Half of Portugal's mainland is already susceptible to desertification, a clear sign of awareness to tackle desertification, mitigate drought effects and to achieve land degradation neutrality. The Government, municipalities, universities, environmental non-governmental organizations and landowners are increasingly concerned about the desertification process evidences, especially in southern Portugal. Civic and environmental movements are increasingly demanding that the government invest more and more in initiatives that contribute to tackle desertification.

These instances show that desertification is a very relevant issue and the EEA Grants will have an added importance and will increase interest in achieving the objectives that are being outlined.

Within the scope of the EEA Grants 2014-2021, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, in the capacity of Donors, finance initiatives and projects in 15 European Union Member States with the aim of reducing social and economic disparities and strengthening bilateral relations with beneficiary states.

The Secretary General of the Environment (SGE) was appointed Operator of the Environment, Climate Change and Low Carbon Economy Programme in accordance with the MoU, with a total allocation of €29,411,765 (€ 25,000,000 EEA Grants + €4,411,765 from co-financing).

The projects selected shall contribute to the implementation of Outcome 3 of the Programme: "Increased climate change resilience and responsiveness in targeted areas" and of Output 3.1 of the Programme, "Strengthened climate change adaptation at local level", in accordance with Annex I of the Programme Agreement signed on 27 May 2019.

The projects should also contribute to strengthening relations with the Donor States, and partnership projects with entities from Norway, Iceland or Liechtenstein are encouraged with additional points in selection. The Programme Operator and Donor Programme Partner will help facilitate bilateral partnerships.

The table below sets out the indicators to which the financed projects will contribute.

Programme Area / Objective	Expected result	Indicator	Unit of measurement	Source of Verification	Frequency of reporting	Baseline value	Baseline year	Target value
PA13/ Outcome 3	Increased climate change resilience and responsiveness in targeted areas	Number of acres with reduced susceptibility to desertification	Acres	Project promoters' records	Annually (APR)	0	2022	250
Output 3.5	Pilot projects to combat desertification completed	Number of projects combating desertification piloted	Number	Project promoters' records	Semi-annually (APR and September IFR)	0	N/A	3

The present Open Call establishes the specifications that are applicable to the submission of applications. The electronic application platform can be found at the website <https://www.eeagrants.gov.pt/en/calls/>.

**PROGRAMME OPERATOR:** Secretary General of the Environment (SGE).

**DONOR PROGRAMME PARTNER:** Innovation Norway (IN).

## 1. PRIORITY AREAS

Applicant projects must demonstrate their contribution to the [National Action Program to Combat Desertification](#) (NAPCD), namely its Objectives 2.4; 3.1 and 3.4, focusing on promoting the sustainable ecosystem management of susceptible areas and the recovery of affected areas, soil protection and conservation. Additionally, projects should demonstrate their benefits to biodiversity and climate change mitigation and adaptation in susceptible areas to desertification.

The selected projects must promote participation mechanisms in the fields of science, politics and society and bear in mind the uncertainties associated with the threats and opportunities deriving from climate change.

The projects have to address and contribute to combat desertification in key hotspots of land degradation, have as baseline an ecosystem services approach and have an innovative or experimental nature (pilot projects). The innovative character of the projects may result from new approaches or methodologies, as well as integrated cooperative approaches with secondary benefits to circular economy and bioeconomy. As experimental projects they must be designed to be scaled up or replicated in similar conditions.

Each project must demonstrate its sustainability for at least 18 months after the implementation of the project in terms of the continuity of implemented management actions.

Applications should use the data available at the geographical database of the Institute of Nature Conservation and Forests (<https://geocatalogo.icnf.pt>).

To ensure that the specific territorial characteristics are fully contemplated, this present Call is organized in 3 priority areas:

- **Priority Area A - Resilience of forest and burnt areas**

This priority area aims to enhance the resilience of forest areas and its susceptibility to fires and desertification. The goal is to intervene on areas affected by rural fires, soil erosion, other degraded land, through restoration and requalification. In this priority area, ecosystems' restoration must foresee activities that contribute to increase greenhouse gases storage by enhancing the forestry management and new forest areas, and by the development of technologies, practices and processes.

In terms of the geographical application, priority area A must be applied to one or more of the following administrative units at NUTSIII level: Terras de Trás-os-Montes; Douro; Beiras e Serra da Estrela.

- **Priority Area B - Resilience of the productive systems at oak trees agro-forests and grazing areas**

This priority area aims to promote and enhance sustainable production methods and management in agroforest systems and extensive grazing, focusing on soil protection. Ecosystems' restoration must foresee activities that contribute to increase greenhouse gases storage by enhancing and developing agronomic practices, technologies, and processes.

The priority area B aims to improve soil's physical and chemical quality, comprising good practices regarding soil use and conservation, such as minimum mobilizations, direct seeding, greening between lines and crops rotation, among others. Also, it should ensure biodiverse pastures.

In terms of the geographical application, priority area B must be applied to one or more of the following administrative units at NUTSIII level: Algarve; Baixo Alentejo; Alentejo Central.

- **Priority Area C - Resilience of productive systems**

Priority area C aims to reduce the susceptibility to desertification in semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas, by smart management and the use of technologies, aiming the sustainable use of local products and land.

This Priority area aims to focus on interventions towards ecosystems restoration, foreseeing activities that contribute to CO<sub>2</sub> sequestration, improve soil functions and improve the response to fires, since these areas are vulnerable to rural fires and to land degradation through soil erosion.

In terms of the geographical application, priority area C must be applied to one or more of the following administrative units at NUTSIII level: Beira Baixa; Alto Alentejo.

In the present Open Call, each application only pertains to one Priority Area and must guarantee a minimum area of application of 85 hectares. **The applicant entity (Promoter) must not submit more than one application. This limitation does not apply to the project partners.**

## 2. PERIOD FOR SUBMITTING APPLICATIONS

(in accordance with Article 7.3, no. 2.b. of the “Regulation on the implementation of the European Economic Area (EEA) Financial Mechanism 2014-2021” – EEA FM 2014-2021 Regulation).

Applications must be submitted using the electronic application platform available on the EEA Grants website <https://www.eeagrants.gov.pt/en/programmes/environment/calls/> between 04.10.2021 until 12:00:00 (GMT) of 18.01.2022.

## 3. TOTAL AVAILABLE ALLOCATION

The allocation available for this Call is € 1,229,858.

Minimum grant amount of financing for each project: €200,000.

Maximum grant amount of financing for each project: €400,000.

## 4. DURATION OF THE PROJECTS

18 months. The deadline for expenditure eligibility is 30 April 2024.

## 5. TERRITORIAL SCOPE

The Environment Programme shall finance projects in specific depressed, interior and forest territories in Portugal, severely vulnerable to climate change. According to the NAPCD, item 5.1, the areas susceptible to desertification are geographically limited by the Drought Severity Index (SDI), which expresses the reason between annual precipitation and the potential annual evapotranspiration. Areas classified as arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid are susceptible to desertification. Considering the variability of the climatic patterns in the Mediterranean region, the quantity, seasonality and distribution of precipitation changes across mainland Portugal, 51% of municipalities were susceptible to desertification in 2010. For this tendency, several regional

changes occurred in the last fifty years, namely the progression of aridity in traditionally rainy areas of the northwest mainland Portugal, increase of aridity in coastal and mountain areas of the centre of Portugal, and regression of aridity in specific areas of the borderland with the retreat of Douro and Guadiana rivers secondary basins. Associated with these changes, two processes are being developed in parallel: i) the physical and chemical degradation of soil with impacts in soil biodiversity, vegetation cover and in land productivity; ii) the loss of social and economic value of the land, leading to abandonment and depopulation (land degradation).

Borderland areas have a percentage of territory covered by the aridity index classes are evenly distributed, as well as there is a dominance of a land cover of the following classes: forests, agriculture and pastures. These areas are also characterized by a low population density.

In this context, the territorial scope of this call is framed by the semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas, within the priority areas A, B and C, and divided into pilot projects to combat desertification, to be applied in the following NUTS III:

→ Terras de Trás-os-Montes; Douro; Beiras e Serra da Estrela; Beira Baixa; Alto Alentejo; Alentejo Central; Baixo Alentejo and Algarve.

Each of these geographic areas correspond to administrative units at NUTS III level, having in mind the harmonization with other information calculated for desertification monitoring.

Urban areas, defined by COS (2018) as artificial territories, in semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas are not eligible to this call.

As such, the activities should be implemented in areas: by the semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas, within the priority areas A, B and C, and divided into pilot projects to combat desertification, to be applied in the following NUTS III: Terras de Trás-os-Montes; Douro; Beiras e Serra da Estrela; Beira Baixa; Alto Alentejo; Alentejo Central; Baixo Alentejo and Algarve.

## 6. FINANCING RATE

The eligible costs of the selected project shall be financed up to 85%, except when the entities that promote the project are non-governmental organizations, hereafter referred as NGOs, or social partners in accordance with article 1.6 (n and y) of the “Regulation on the implementation of the European Economic Area (EEA) Financial Mechanism 2014-2021”, in which case eligible costs shall be financed up until a maximum rate of 90%.

In all cases, the project rate shall be set at a level that complies with state Aid rules in force and considers any and all other forms of public support granted to projects. Any remaining costs of the project shall be provided or obtained by the project consortium.

Accordingly with Article 6.4, Grant rates and minimum size of project grants “Regulation on the

implementation of the European Economic Area (EEA) Financial Mechanism 2014-2021”, Co-financing shall be in the form of cash, including electronic transfers. In accordance with Article 6.4.5 in case of projects where the project promoter is an NGO or a social partner, in-kind in the form of voluntary work may constitute up to 50% of the co-financing.

## **7. ELIGIBLE PROMOTER ENTITIES**

In this Call the eligible promotor entities are any public or private entity, commercial or non-commercial, along with non-governmental organizations that have been established as a legal person in Portugal.

## **8. PARTNER ENTITIES**

The rules on eligibility of project promoters and project partners are set in Article 7.2 of the Regulation. In According to Article 7.2.2 of the “Regulation on the implementation of the European Economic Area (EEA) Financial Mechanism 2014-2021”, a project partner shall be any public or private entity, commercial or non-commercial, along with NGOs that have been legally established as a legal person in the donor states, or any international organization that is actively involved in implementing the proposed project.

In line with the bilateral objective of the programme, project partnerships with an entity from the Donor States is awarded an addition five points in selection.

## **9. ELIGIBILITY OF EXPENDITURE**

(According to Articles 8.2 and 8.3 of the of the “Regulation on the implementation of the European Economic Area (EEA) Financial Mechanism 2014-2021”)

### **9.1. Eligible project costs**

**9.1.1.** The inclusion of an expenditure item in a project budget template approved by the Programme Operator, cannot be considered as confirmation of eligibility of that expenditure item.

### **9.1.2. Eligible project costs must meet the following criteria:**

- (a) they are incurred between the first and final dates of eligibility of a project as specified in the project contract;
- (b) they are connected with the subject of the project contract, and they are indicated in the detailed budget of the project;
- (c) they are proportionate and necessary for the implementation of the project;

- (d) they must be used for the sole purpose of achieving the objective(s) of the project and its expected outcome(s), in a manner consistent with the principles of economy, efficiency and effectiveness;
- (e) they are identifiable and verifiable, through being recorded in the accounting records of the Project Promoter and/or project partner and determined according to the applicable accounting standards of the country where the Project Promoter and/or project partner is established and according to generally accepted accounting principles; and
- (f) they comply with the requirements of applicable tax and social legislation.

**9.1.2.** Expenditures are considered to have been incurred when the cost has been invoiced, paid and the subject matter delivered (in case of goods) or performed (in case of services and works). Exceptionally, costs in respect of which an invoice has been issued in the final month of eligibility are also deemed to be incurred within the dates of eligibility if the costs are paid within 30 days of the final date for eligibility. Overheads and depreciation of equipment are considered to have been incurred when they are recorded on the accounts of the Project Promoter and/or project partner.

**9.1.3.** Where new or second-hand equipment is purchased, only the portion of the depreciation corresponding to the duration of the project and the rate of actual use for the purposes of the project may be considered eligible expenditure.

**9.1.4.** The Project Promoter's internal accounting and auditing procedures must permit direct reconciliation of the expenditures and revenue declared in respect of the project with the corresponding accounting statements and supporting documents.

## **9.2. Eligible direct expenditure in a project:**

**9.2.1.** The eligible direct expenditures for a project are those expenditures, which are identified by the Project Promoter, and/or the project partner, in accordance with their accounting principles and usual internal rules, as specific expenditures directly linked to the implementation of the project and which can therefore be booked to it directly. The following direct expenditures are eligible provided that they satisfy the criteria set out in 9.1.1:

- (a) the cost of staff assigned to the project, comprising actual salaries plus social security charges and other statutory costs included in the remuneration, provided this corresponds to the Project Promoter's and project partner's usual policy on remuneration. The corresponding salary costs of national administrations staff are eligible to the extent that they relate to the cost of activities which the relevant public authority would not carry out if the project concerned was not undertaken;

- (b) travel and subsistence allowances for staff taking part in the project. Regarding the principle of proportionality, travel costs, including subsistence allowance, may be calculated as a lump sum, on the basis of defined rules approved by the Programme Operator;
- (c) cost of new or second-hand equipment. In case the Programme Operator determines that the equipment is an integral and necessary component for achieving the outcomes of the project, the entire purchase price of that equipment may, by way of exception from the rule contained in 9.1.3., be eligible;
- (d) costs of consumables and supplies, provided that they are identifiable and assigned to the project;
- (e) costs entailed by other contracts awarded by a Project Promoter for the purposes of carrying out the project, provided that the awarding complies with the applicable rules on public procurement and “Regulation on the implementation of the European Economic Area (EEA) Financial Mechanism 2014-2021”;
- (f) costs arising directly from requirements imposed by the project contract for each project.

**9.2.2.** Where the entire purchase price of equipment is eligible in accordance with point (c) of paragraph 9.2.1., the Programme Operator shall ensure that the Project Promoter:

- (a) keeps the equipment in its ownership for a period of at least five years following the completion of the project and continues to use that equipment for the benefit of the overall objectives of the project for the same period;
- (b) keeps the equipment properly insured against losses such as fire, theft, or other normally insurable incidents both during project implementation and for at least five years following the completion of the project; and
- (c) sets aside appropriate resources for the maintenance of the equipment for at least five years following the completion of the project.

**9.3. Indirect eligible costs in projects (overheads):** indirect costs shall be eligible in accordance with Article 8.5 of the “Regulation on the implementation of the European Economic Area (EEA) Financial Mechanism 2014-2021”.

**9.4. Non-eligible costs:** the costs mentioned in Article 8.7 of the “Regulation on the implementation of the European Economic Area (EEA) Financial Mechanism 2014-2021” are not eligible.

## 10. SUBMISSION OF THE APPLICATION

**10.1.** Applications should be submitted using the electronic application platform available for this call on the EEA Grants website <https://www.eegrants.gov.pt/en/programmes/environment/calls/>, between 04.10.2021 until 12:00:00 (GMT) of 18.01.2022.

**10.2.** It shall be noted that in what the Term of Responsibility is concerned, in case the applicant entity is not capable of using digital signature shall instead send the original copy of the Term of Responsibility duly signed and initialled by the person who has powers to legally bind the company with one copy of the electronic application form (in Portuguese or in English), to the Programme Operator via registered mail with acknowledgement of receipt stamped no later than the date of 04.10.2021.

**Address:** Secretary General of the Environment– EEA Grants 2014- 2021, Rua de "O Século" n.º 63, Piso 3, 1200-433 Lisbon, PORTUGAL.

**Email:** [ambiente.eegrants@sgambiente.gov.pt](mailto:ambiente.eegrants@sgambiente.gov.pt)

**10.3.** Only fully completed applications including the Term of Responsibility shall be considered for assessment and selection purposes.

**10.4.** The applicant entities are responsible for the veracity and authenticity of all the submitted documents and are expressly informed that they may be obliged to submit the original documents to the Programme Operator during any phase of the application process.

## 11. PROJECT SELECTION

The project selection procedures follow Chapter 7 of the *'Regulation on the implementation of the European Economic Area Financial Mechanism 2014-2021'* (EEA FM 2014-2021 Regulation).

**11.1.** Administrative and eligibility criteria - the application must be submitted with the following documents (for project promoters and partners):

- (a) Statement containing the name of the entity, tax number, taxation address, name of the legal representatives and copy of the articles of association;
- (b) Statement attesting to the fact that there are no debts to the Taxation Authority and Social Security Authority;
- (c) VAT situation;
- (d) Copy of the latest Annual Report.

**11.2.** The application shall contain the following information:

- (a) Project title;
- (b) Activities, including project execution indicators (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, relevant and time limited) and proposed targets to be attained;
- (c) Geographic coverage and partnerships, particularly between local authorities (individually or in the form of public associations) leveraging the geographic expression of the applicant projects;
- (d) Expected results and forecast of the impact on the organization, territory and/or target group, as applicable, including a forecast of the contribution to the output and outcome level indicators of the 'Environment Programme';
- (e) Plan assuring financial sustainability of the project, if applicable;
- (f) Communication Plan;
- (g) Project and activities timeline;
- (h) Budget (included in Part D of the electronic form);
- (i) Summary (Part B of the electronic form);
- (j) Indication of any external consultants involved in the preparation of the initiative application. (If yes, who, included in part A).
- (k) Annexes, which containing supplementary information for the application:
  - Part A – Administrative Information (including CV of the team members allocated to the project, namely if there were any external consultants involved in the preparation of the application);
  - Part B – Description and Summary of the project drafted in Portuguese and in English, with a maximum of 500 words (including a brief description of the entity's experience and the team of the project in the priority areas of this call, along with the identified needs);
  - Part C – Detailed Technical Description;
  - Part D – Financial Information (including the detailed version of the Budget broken down by year and a statement attesting the amounts are those normally practiced by the entity, *e.g.*, salaries that correspond to the average remuneration of the Promoters; statement referring the partnership commitment between the applicant entity and the respective partner entities, and Term of Responsibility).

- Part E – Geographical information (vectorial format, *i.e.* shapefile) and map with the location of the areas covered by the pilot project.

**11.3.** The following table shows the minimum requests for compliance with the administrative and eligibility criteria.

<b>Administrative and eligibility criteria</b>	
Declaration of the entity's name, tax identification number, tax address, name of legal representatives	Promotor
	Partners (...)
Copy of statutes	Promotor
	Partners (...)
Declaration of no debts to Finance	Promotor
	Partners (...)
Declaration of no debts to Social Security	Promotor
	Partners (...)
VAT situation	Promotor
	Partners (...)
Copy of the latest Annual Report	Promotor
	Partners (...)
<b>Application annexes</b>	
CV of project team members	Promotor
	Partners (...)
Term of Responsibility	Promotor
	Partners (...)
Partnership Agreement (template available)	
Indicators (template available)	
Schedule (template available)	
Budget (template available)	
Communication plan	
Communication Plan (template available)	
Plan to ensure the financial sustainability of the project	
Secured financing	
Own capitals	
Financial indicators (revenue and expense map)	
Geographical information (vectorial format, <i>i.e.</i> shapefile) and map with the location of the areas covered by the pilot project	

**11.4.** The Programme Operator will review the applications in order to verify compliance with the administrative and eligibility criteria. If an application does not comply with these criteria the Programme Operator will request for additional information by electronic mail in the following ten weekly days. After review of the application and verification of additional information to fulfil the administrative and eligibility criteria, the Programme Operator notifies the Promotor of the application eligibility within 10 working days. Applicant entities whose applications are rejected

during this phase may file a complaint in accordance with article 121 and 122 of the Code of Administrative Procedure.

## 12. SELECTION CRITERIA

Applications are evaluated in accordance with the **following criteria**, to which a score of 0 points (minimum) to 100 points (maximum) is awarded:

- A – Technical Capacity of the Promoter and the Project Team;
- B – Technical Quality of the Project Proposal;
- C – Project Structure and General Objectives;
- D – Partnerships with entities from the Donor States;
- E – Specific criteria.

The total score of each application is obtained from the following formula:

$$\text{Total Score (PG)} = [(A \times 0.10) + (B \times 0.25) + (C \times 0.20) + (D \times 0.05) + (E \times 0.40)] = 100$$

Only applications whose value of A, B, C and E obtains at least 50 points for each criteria and in which the Total Score (PG) value is equal to or greater than 50 points are eligible for the awarding of financing.

For pilot project application approvals, it will be considered:

- a minimum of 1 eligible pilot per priority area (A, B and C)
- and a maximum of 3 pilots per priority area.

In any case a project will need 50 points to be selected even if it is the only application in one area. In case there are not any eligible applications for one priority area all funds will be spent on the other priority areas.

**12.1.** The **selection criteria** and respective **weighting** shall be as follows:

Selection criteria	Weighting (%)	Score
A. <u>Technical Capacity of the Promoter and the Project Team</u> Technical knowledge and capacity of the project team: applicant entity and partner entities involved (including partner entities from Donor States).	10	0 - 100
B. <u>Technical Quality of the Project Proposal</u> General quality of the application submitted: activities, budget, schedule, Communication Plan, Sustainability Plan, gender equality.	25	0 - 100

<u>C. Project Structure and General Objectives</u> The consistency between Objectives, activities and results is evaluated, including the alignment between the 'Environment Programme' objective, the outcome and the outputs to which the project will contribute.	20	0 - 100
<u>D. Partnerships with entities from the Donor States</u> Inclusion of partner entities of the Donor States (Norway, Iceland and/or Liechtenstein).	5	0 - 100
<u>E. Specific criteria</u> Specific aspects are evaluated arising from the type of projects aimed at by the Call.	40	0 - 100
<b>TOTAL</b>	100	

The **specific criteria** and respective sub-criteria shall be the following:

<b>Priority Area A. Resilience of forest and burnt areas</b>
The applicant project proves its contributions to the NAPCD Specific Objective 2.4, 3.1 and 3.4 through at least one of the following interventions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- restore areas affected by rural fires, soil erosion or other degraded land;</li> <li>- recovery of river heads, high sloped hillside or intermittent streams;</li> <li>- increase greenhouse gases storage by enhancing forestry management and forestation, or by the development of technologies, practices, and processes.</li> </ul>
The applicant project proves its relevance for the recovery of at least one of the following habitats: 5210, 6310, 9560*, 92a0, 92d0.
The applicant project is in a Protected Area (RNAP and RN2000).
The applicant project demonstrates and properly justifies its responsiveness to drought and fire risks.
The applicant project includes the engagement and the active participation of local actors/stakeholders.
The applicant project has an innovative approach on nature-based solutions on forestry, with methodologies and technologies adaptation deployed to achieve the best results and has a potential for restoration measures to be implemented.
<b>Priority Area B. Resilience of Productive systems at oak trees agroforest and grazing areas</b>
The applicant project demonstrates its contributions to NAPCD Specific Objective 2.4, 3.1 and 3.4 through at least one of the following actions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- restore areas affected by over exploitation, caused by inadequate or uncontrolled</li> </ul>

<b>Priority Area B. Resilience of Productive systems at oak trees agroforest and grazing areas</b>
<p>livestock density, soil erosion, or other degraded land;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- recovery of river heads, high sloped hillside or intermittent streams;</li> <li>- enhance sustainable production methods on extensive grazing areas, improving or maintaining the organic matter of the soil, by adequate crop rotation, minimum mobilizations, direct seeding, greening between lines, biodiverse pastures or adapted species and crops;</li> <li>- increase greenhouse gases storage by enhancing the development of technologies, practices and processes.</li> </ul>
The applicant project demonstrates its orientation to different habitats restoration in at least one of the following habitats: 4030, 6220*, 92a0, 92d0.
The applicant project is in a Protected Area (RNAP and RN2000).
The applicant project demonstrates and properly justifies its responsiveness to drought.
The applicant project includes the engagement and the active participation of local actors/stakeholders.
The applicant project has an innovative approach on nature-based solutions at oak trees, agroforest and grazing areas, with methodologies and technologies adaptation deployed to achieve the best results and has a replicability potential of the restoration measures to be implemented.

<b>Priority Area C. Resilience of Productive systems</b>
<p>The applicant project proves its contributions to the NAPCD Specific Objective 2.4, 3.1 and 3.4 through at least one of the following interventions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• restore areas affected by over exploitation, caused by inadequate or uncontrolled livestock density, soil erosion, or other degraded land;</li> <li>• restore areas affected by rural fires, soil erosion or other degraded land;</li> <li>• increase greenhouse gases storage by enhancing forestry management and forestation, or by the development of technologies, practices and processes.</li> </ul>
The applicant project proves its relevance for the recovery of at least one of the following habitats: 5210, 6310, 9560*, 4030, 6220*, 92a0, 92d0.
The applicant project is in a Protected Area (RNAP and RN2000).
The applicant project demonstrates and properly justifies its responsiveness to drought and fire risks.
The applicant project includes the engagement and the active participation of local actors/stakeholders.
The applicant project has an innovative approach on nature-based solutions, with methodologies and technologies adaptation deployed to achieve the best results and has a potential for restoration measures to be implemented.

**12.2.** Each applicant project must demonstrate a minimum area range of 85 ha.

**12.3.** In the case of tie, applications with equal total scores will be ranked according to the following criteria, in descending order of priority:

- greater number of habitats covered by the project;
- larger range area covered by the project;
- presence of entities from donor countries as project partners.

**12.4.** The detailed description of the application selection and evaluation model can be found in Annex I.

### **13. SELECTION PROCEDURES**

**13.1.** The Programme Operator shall be responsible for evaluating the project and granting funding.

**13.2.** The Programme Operator shall establish a Selection Committee that shall recommend the projects to be funded within the programme. The Selection Committee shall consist of at least three environment experts, two from Programme Operator and one from DPP. The FMC and the National Focal Point shall be invited to participate in the meetings of the Selection Committee as observers.

The Programme Operator shall review the applications for compliance with administrative and eligibility criteria. Applicants whose applications are rejected at this stage shall be informed and given a reasonable time to appeal that decision.

Each application that meets the administrative and eligibility criteria shall be reviewed by two experts appointed by the Programme Operator, who shall be impartial and independent of the Programme Operator and the Selection Committee.

The experts shall separately score the project according to the selection criteria published with the call. For the purposes of ranking the projects, the average of the scores awarded by the experts shall be used.

If the difference between the scores given by the two experts is more than 30% of the higher score, a third expert shall be commissioned by the Programme Operator to score the project independently. In such cases the average score shall be used for the ranking of the projects.

The Programme Operator shall provide the Selection Committee with a list of the ranked projects. The Selection Committee shall review the ranked list of projects. It may modify the ranking of projects in justified cases. The justification for the modifications shall be detailed in the minutes of the meeting of the Selection Committee. If such a modification results in a project's rejection, the affected applicant shall be informed in writing about the justification for the modification. The Selection Committee shall submit the list of recommended projects to the Programme Operator.

The Programme Operator shall verify that the selection process has been conducted in accordance with the "Regulation on the implementation of the European Economic Area (EEA) Financial

Mechanism 2014-2021” and that the recommendations from the Selection Committee comply with the rules and objectives of the programme, following such verification, the Programme Operator shall, based on the decision of the selection Committee, decide on which projects shall be supported. If the Programme Operator modifies the decision of the Selection Committee, it shall inform the applicants affected and provide them with a justification.

The Programme Operator shall notify the applicants about the results of the selection process within a reasonable time and publicize the results.

**13.3.** In accordance with Article 21 of the ‘Applicants Guide for Financing of Projects Supported by Environment, Climate Change and Low Carbon Economy Programme’, notification shall be provided concerning the reasons, duly justified and substantiated, for rejection of applications based on the verification of the formal admissibility and eligibility requirements. The decision may be appealed within 10 working days.

**13.4.** In accordance with Article 23 of the ‘Applicants Guide for Financing of Projects Supported by Environment, Climate Change and Low Carbon Economy Programme’, after the technical assessment of the accepted applications, the Programme Operator will provide the Selection Committee with a list of projects classified for review. In duly justified cases, the Selection Committee may decide to change the ranking of projects and the ordering of applications. The justification for the changes will be detailed in the Selection Committee meeting minutes. If the change results in the rejection of a project, the applicant will be informed in writing. The Selection Committee will submit the list of projects recommended for funding to the Programme Operator.

## **14. COMMUNICATION OF RESULTS**

**14.1.** After closing the call, the results of the selection process will be communicated within 90 days, individually to each applicant by the Programme Operator and the final list of selected projects will be disclosed.

**14.2.** If the project is approved, a draft contract shall be sent to the promoter, specifying all the terms and conditions of the approved funding.

**14.3.** The draft contract must be returned to the Programme Operator, duly signed and initialled by the applicant's legal representatives, within a maximum period of 20 working days, counted from the date of its receipt, under penalty of revocation of the approval decision.

**14.4.** All rejected applications will be notified to respond within a maximum of 10 days in accordance with the Portuguese Administrative Code of Procedure.

**14.5.** Projects must start no later than 30 working days after the date of signature of the project contract.

**14.6.** Upon receipt of all signed contracts, the Programme Operator will prepare the final list of selected projects and promoters and publish it on the EEA Grants website (<https://www.eeagrants.gov.pt/en/programmes/environment>).

## **15. PAYMENT METHODS**

**15.1.** The Programme Operator shall be responsible for processing payments to projects in a timely manner. Interim and final payments will be made after the approval of the respective project reports.

**15.2.** Payments to the promoter shall take the form of advance payments, interim payments and final payment. The level of advance payment shall be set out in the project contract. The maximum level of payment shall be as follows:

- first advance payment, up to 25%, interim payments, 65% and
- final payment 10%.

The first advance instalment shall be paid following the signature of the project contract. Subsequent payments shall be paid after the approval of the interim reports. The final payment, if applicable, will be paid after the approval of the final report.

An advance payment of a percentage of the total grant amount shall be paid within 20 working days from the submission of a request after signature of the project contract. The interim payments shall be paid within 1 month after the approval of project interim reports.

Upon approval of the final project report a balance payment, if applicable, shall be made within 1 month.

The approval of project interim and final reports take place 2 months from the submission of the required information.

### **15.3. Structure of the Final Report**

The Final Project Report must contain:

- i. Detailed description, namely: summary of the activities carried out; information regarding the involvement of partners, in particular with regard to partners from Donor Countries; information regarding the participants in the Project;
- ii. Results achieved, namely: evaluation of the Project's results (at each reporting date);
- iii. Description of costs and financial impact assessment;
- iv. Description of the Project's contribution to achieving the overall objectives of EEA Grants and the 'Environment Programme'.

**15.4.** The frequency and deadline of all reports (interim and final) to be submitted will be half- yearly, and both must be sent within 30 (calendar) days after the respective reference period.

## **16. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**

Prior to submitting applications, applicants are encouraged to consult the EEA Grants website (<https://www.eeagrants.gov.pt/en/programmes/environment>) for information on the Environment, Climate Change and Low Carbon Economy Programme, particularly the following documents:

- Electronic Application Form, Annexes and Promoter's Manual;
- 'Memorandum of Understanding on the Implementation of the EEA Financial Mechanism 2014-2021';
- 'Regulation on the implementation of the European Economic Area (EEA) Financial Mechanism 2014-2021';
- 'Applicants Guide for Financing of Projects Supported by Environment, Climate Change and Low Carbon Economy Programme'.
- Information contacts:

e-mail address: [ambiente.eeagrants@sgambiente.gov.pt](mailto:ambiente.eeagrants@sgambiente.gov.pt)

Telephone: (+351) 213 231 644 (José Manuel Pinto) – Available from Monday to Friday, from 10:00 to 12:00 and 14:30 to 16:30.

- Any changes made to the contents of this call shall be announced on the website of the Programme Operator (<https://www.eeagrants.gov.pt/en/programmes/environment/calls/>)
- A section of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) will be published on the Website of the Program Operator (<https://www.eeagrants.gov.pt/en/programmes/environment/calls/>) and frequently updated based on the queries from the potential applicants and partners.
- Any information regarding this call will be published in the EEA Grants Website within its specific area (<https://www.eeagrants.gov.pt/en/programmes/environment/calls/>)
- All questions shall be answered by email in a timeframe of 3 working days.

## **17. DATA PROTECTION**

All personal data will be processed in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) of 25 May 2018 and the Personal Data Protection Act (PLPD) – Law 67/98 of 26 October 1998 in its current wording.

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## ANNEX I. Application's Selection Framework

Applications are evaluated in accordance with the following criteria to which a score from 0 points (min.) to 100 points (max.) is awarded:

- A – Technical Capacity of the Promoter and the Project Team;
- B – Technical Quality of the Project Proposal;
- C – Project Structure and General Objectives;
- D – Partnerships with entities from the Donor States;
- E – Specific criteria.

The weighting of the criteria is as follows:

- A. Technical Capacity of the Promoter and the Project Team – 10%
- B. Technical Quality of the Project Proposal- 25%
- C. Project Structure and General Objectives - 20%
- D. Partnerships with entities from the Donor States – 5%
- E. Specific criteria - 40%.

Selection criteria	Weighting (%)	Score
A. <u>Technical Capacity of the Promoter and the Project Team</u> Technical knowledge and capacity of the project team: applicant entity and partner entities involved (including partner entities from Donor States).	10	0 - 100
B. <u>Technical Quality of the Project Proposal</u> General quality of the application submitted: activities, budget, schedule, Communication Plan, Post-financing project Sustainability Plan, gender equality.	25	0 - 100
C. <u>Project Structure and General Objectives</u> The consistency between the objectives, activities and results of the project is evaluated, including the alignment between the 'Environment Programme' objective, the outcome and the outputs to which the project will contribute.	20	0 - 100
D. <u>Partnerships with entities from the Donor States</u> Inclusion of partner entities of the Donor States (Norway, Iceland and/or Liechtenstein).	5	0 - 100

Selection criteria	Weighting (%)	Score
E. <u>Specific criteria</u> Specific aspects are evaluated arising from the type of projects aimed at by the Call.	40	0 - 100

The total score of each application is obtained from the following formula:

$$\text{Total Score (PG)} = (A \times 0.10) + (B \times 0.25) + (C \times 0.20) + (D \times 0.05) + (E \times 0.40) = 100$$

Or considering the sub-criteria:

$$\text{Total Score (PG)} = (A \times 0.10) + [(B1+B2+B3+B4+B5) / 5] \times 0.25] + (C \times 0.20) + (D \times 0.05) + (E \times 0.40)$$

Only applications whose value of A, B, C and E obtains at least 50 points for each criteria and in which the Total Score (PG) value is equal to or greater than 50 points are eligible for the awarding of financing.

The score of each criterion and sub-criterion shall be awarded in accordance with the tables below:

#### A – Technical Capacity of the Promoter and the Project Team

Description	Score
There are not sufficient elements to evaluate this criterion as a whole.	0
The knowledge and experience of the applicant entity, of the partner entities and of the project team are not relevant for the assets required for the smooth implementation of the project, namely, in the areas of climate change, desertification, biodiversity and project management.	20
The knowledge and experience of the applicant entity, of the partner entities and of the project team are adequate for the assets required for the smooth implementation of the project, namely, in the areas of climate change, desertification, biodiversity and project management.	50
The knowledge and experience of the applicant entity, of the partner entities and of the project team are relevant for the assets required for the smooth implementation of the project, namely, in the areas of climate change, desertification, biodiversity and project management.	80

Description	Score
The knowledge and experience of the applicant entity, of the partner entities and of the project team are highly relevant for the assets required for the smooth implementation of the project, namely, in the areas of climate change, desertification, biodiversity and project management.	100

### B – Technical Quality of the Project Proposal

The score of this criterion consists of the arithmetic mean of the score awarded to each sub-criterion.

#### B1. Adequacy to the pursuit of the project objectives and goals

Description	Score
There are not sufficient elements to evaluate this sub-criterion.	0
The project is appropriate but there are inadequacies in terms of the activities to be carried out, respective indicators and targets, budget, scheduling and the participative process to be adopted.	20
The project is appropriate but there are inadequacies in terms of scheduling and the participative process to be adopted.	50
The project is appropriate but there are inadequacies in terms of the participative process to be adopted.	80
The project is appropriate for the pursuit of the objectives and goals defined and it is well detailed, duly well founded and structured in terms of the activities to be carried out, respective indicators and targets, budget, schedule and participative process to be adopted.	100

#### B2. Capacity to provide the co-financing of the project

Description	Score
It fails to demonstrate the co-financing capacity of the non-financed component (it cannot be evaluated owing to incomplete information or non-verifiable information).	0
It has no co-financing guaranteed at the time of application but demonstrates efforts in that direction.	50
Co-financing already guaranteed (demonstration).	80

Description	Score
Co-financing based on own capital (demonstration).	100

### B3. Adequacy of the project Communication Plan

Description	Score
There are not sufficient elements to evaluate this sub-criterion.	0
The Communication Plan fails to meet the requirements defined in the Promoter's Manual and the graphic standards, namely, the use of logos.	10
The Communication Plan meets the requirements, but it does not meet the communication Objectives of the Environment Programme defined in the Promoter's Manual nor does it properly identify the target public and the means of communication and dissemination.	30
The Communication Plan meets the requirements and meets the communication Objectives of the Environment Programme defined in the Promoter's Manual but it does not properly identify the target public and groups and the means of communication and dissemination.	50
The Communication Plan meets the requirements and meets the communication Objectives of the Environment Programme defined in the Promoter's Manual and it properly identifies the target public and groups of the project but it fails to provide appropriate means of communication and dissemination.	80
The Communication Plan meets the requirements defined and meets the communication Objectives of the Environment Programme defined in the Promoter's Manual and the graphic standards, as well as properly identifying the target public and groups of the project and providing appropriate means of communication and dissemination.	100

### B4. Adequacy of the Post-financing project Sustainability Plan

Description	Score
There are not sufficient elements to evaluate this sub-criterion.	0
The Sustainability Plan ensures the sustainability of the project in terms of the prioritisation of measures and investments, cutting long-term environmental, social and economic costs.	20

Description	Score
The Sustainability Plan ensures the sustainability of the project in terms of the prioritisation of measures and investments, cutting long-term environmental, social and economic costs and boosting opportunities deriving from climate change.	50
The Sustainability Plan ensures the sustainability of the project in terms of the decision-making capacity regarding local policies, in terms of the prioritisation of measures and investments, cutting long-term environmental, social and economic costs and boosting opportunities deriving from climate change.	80
The Sustainability Plan ensures the sustainability of the project in terms of the decision-making capacity regarding local policies in view of future climate changes, including the prioritisation of measures and investments, cutting long-term environmental, social and economic costs and boosting opportunities deriving from climate change.	100

#### B5. Gender equality

Description		Score
The candidate project highlights the balanced representation of women and men in the project team in a 2 to 3 proportion.	No	0
	Yes	100

#### C – Project Structure and General Objectives

Description	Score
There are not sufficient elements to evaluate this sub-criterion.	0
The applicant project has an organised structure in terms of Objectives, clearly defined and aligned with the outcome and the outputs of the Environment Programme.	20
The applicant project has an organised structure in terms of Objectives, activities and results that are clearly defined, consistent and measurable.	50
The applicant project has an organised structure in terms of Objectives, activities and results that are clearly defined, consistent, measurable and viable.	80
The applicant project has an organised structure in terms of Objectives, activities and results that are clearly defined, consistent, measurable, viable and feasible.	100

#### D. Partnerships with entities from Donor States

Description	Score	
The applicant project includes at least one partner entity from MFEEE Donor States (Norway, Iceland and/or Liechtenstein).	No	0
	Yes	100

#### E – Specific criteria

The score for this criterion consists of the sum of the score awarded to each sub-criterion by Priority Area covered by the project.

Priority Area A. Resilience of Forest and Burnt areas	Score	
The applicant project proves its contributions to the NAPCD Specific Objective 2.4, 3.1 and 3.4 through at least one of the following interventions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- restore areas affected by rural fires, soil erosion or other degraded land;</li> <li>- recovery of river heads, high sloped hillside or intermittent streams;</li> <li>- increase greenhouse gases storage by enhancing forestry management and forestation, or by the development of technologies, practices and processes.</li> </ul>	No	0
	Yes	30
The applicant project proves its relevance for the recovery of at least one of the following habitats: 5210, 6310, 9560*, 92a0, 92d0.	No	0
	Yes	5
The applicant project is in a Protected Area (RNAP and RN2000).	0%	0
	]0%;5%]	5
	]5%;10%]	10
	>10%	15
The applicant project demonstrates and properly justifies its responsiveness to drought and fire risks.	No	0
	Yes	20
The applicant project includes the engagement and the active participation of local actors/stakeholders.	No	0
	Yes	15
	No	0

Priority Area A. Resilience of Forest and Burnt areas		Score
<p>The applicant project proves its contributions to the NAPCD Specific Objective 2.4, 3.1 and 3.4 through at least one of the following interventions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- restore areas affected by rural fires, soil erosion or other degraded land;</li> <li>- recovery of river heads, high sloped hillside or intermittent streams;</li> <li>- increase greenhouse gases storage by enhancing forestry management and forestation, or by the development of technologies, practices and processes.</li> </ul> <p>The applicant project has an innovative approach on nature-based solutions on forestry, with methodologies and technologies adaptation deployed to achieve the best results and has a potential for restoration measures to be implemented.</p>	No	0
	Yes	30
	Yes	15

Priority Area B. Resilience of Productive systems at oak trees agroforest and grazing areas		Score
<p>The applicant project demonstrates its contributions to NAPCD Specific Objective 2.4, 3.1 and 3.4 through at least one of the following actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- restore areas affected by over exploitation, caused by inadequate or uncontrolled livestock density, soil erosion, or other degraded land;</li> <li>- recovery of river heads, high sloped hillside or intermittent streams;</li> <li>- enhance sustainable production methods on extensive grazing areas, improving or maintaining the organic matter of the soil, by adequate crop rotation, minimum mobilizations, direct seeding, greening between lines, biodiverse pastures or adapted species and crops;</li> <li>- increase greenhouse gases storage by enhancing the development of technologies, practices and processes.</li> </ul>	No	0
	Yes	30
<p>The applicant project demonstrates its orientation to different habitats restoration in at least one of the following habitats: 4030, 6220*, 92a0, 92d0.</p>	No	0
	Yes	5
<p>The applicant project is in a Protected Area (RNAP and RN2000).</p>	0%	0
	]0%;5%]	5
	]5%;10%]	10
	>10%	15

<b>Priority Area B. Resilience of Productive systems at oak trees agroforest and grazing areas</b>		<b>Score</b>
The applicant project demonstrates and properly justifies its responsiveness to drought.	No	0
	Yes	20
The applicant project includes the engagement and the active participation of local actors/stakeholders.	No	0
	Yes	15
The applicant project has an innovative approach on nature-based solutions at oak trees, agroforest and grazing areas, with methodologies and technologies adaptation deployed to achieve the best results and has a replicability potential of the restoration measures to be implemented.	No	0
	Yes	15

<b>Priority Area C. Resilience of productive systems</b>		<b>Score</b>
The applicant project proves its contributions to the NAPCD Specific Objective 2.4, 3.1 and 3.4 through at least one of the following interventions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- restore areas affected by over exploitation, caused by inadequate or uncontrolled livestock density, soil erosion, or other degraded land;</li> <li>- restore areas affected by rural fires, soil erosion or other degraded land;</li> <li>- increase greenhouse gases storage by enhancing forestry management and forestation, or by the development of technologies, practices and processes.</li> </ul>	No	0
	Yes	30
The applicant project demonstrates its orientation to different habitats restoration in at least one of the following habitats: 5210, 6310, 9560*, 4030, 6220*, 92a0, 92d0.	No	0
	Yes	5
The applicant project is in a Protected Area (RNAP and RN2000).	0%	0
	]0%;5%]	5
	]5%;10%]	10
	>10%	15
The applicant project demonstrates and properly justifies its responsiveness to drought and fire risks.	No	0
	Yes	20
The applicant project includes the engagement and the active participation of local actors/stakeholders.	No	0
	Yes	15
The applicant project has an innovative approach on nature-based solutions, with methodologies and technologies adaptation deployed to achieve the best results and has a potential for restoration measures to be implemented.	No	0
	Yes	15

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