

3. PROJECT TOPICS IMPLEMENTING THE THEMATIC PRIORITIES SET OUT IN ANNEX III FOR THE SUB-PROGRAMME FOR ENVIRONMENT (ARTICLE 24(2)(b) OF THE LIFE REGULATION)

In line with Recital 36 of the LIFE Regulation, the MAWP contains a non-exhaustive list of project topics implementing the thematic priorities, focussing efforts on concrete environmental policy priorities and areas for action under the sub-programme Environment. Laying down this list for the duration of the MAWP ensures both the necessary flexibility to achieve the LIFE Programme targets and objectives and the necessary stability for potential applicants to plan, prepare and submit proposals. In line with Recital 22 of the LIFE Regulation, when evaluating Union added value of projects under the sub-programme for Environment, the Commission should pay particular attention to their contribution to the thematic priorities implemented through the project topics. Thus the project topics are a tool for giving a bonus to projects addressing strategically important policy areas with a high Union added value, while remaining open to sound proposals in other areas and the incorporation of new ideas to react to new challenges.

The project topics do not apply to project types which are already by their nature and/or due to a detailed description of their specific content in the Regulation and the MAWP limited to specific topics (i.e. capacity building, technical assistance, preparatory, integrated, and other projects defined in detail on an ad hoc basis).

The co-legislators decided that at least 55 % of the resources allocated to projects supported by action grants will be earmarked for projects supporting the conservation of nature and biodiversity with a clear emphasis on Natura 2000, recognising the specific urgency to ensure appropriate financing for the network as well as the legal co-financing obligation as set out in article 8 of the Habitats Directive. This increased earmarking compared to the LIFE+ Regulation limits the budget available for projects in other thematic priorities under the sub-programme Environment and it is thus a further reason to better focus the use of the funds in these areas.

It should be noted that funding of projects on topics not included in this list is not excluded. High quality projects that fulfil the applicable eligibility and selection criteria may still be awarded funding.

3.1. PRIORITY AREA ENVIRONMENT AND RESOURCE EFFICIENCY

Pursuant to Article 10(a) of the LIFE Regulation, the project topics corresponding to this priority area and the related thematic priorities listed in Annex III to the LIFE Regulation, shall pursue the specific objective “**to develop, test and demonstrate policy or management approaches, best practices and solutions**, including development and demonstration of innovative technologies, to environmental challenges, suitable for being replicated, transferred or mainstreamed, including with respect to the link between the environment and health, and in support of resource efficiency-related policy and legislation, including the Roadmap to a Resource Efficient Europe”. All projects under this priority area shall therefore be either pilot or demonstrative projects within the meaning of Article 18 (a) and (b) of the LIFE Regulation, but cannot focus on research. With regard to demonstrative projects under this priority area and covered by one of the project topics listed below, priority shall be given to projects that put into practice, test, evaluate and disseminate actions, methodologies or approaches that are **new or unknown Union wide**.

management and (b) integrated risk assessment and management approaches based on resilience and social vulnerability, and ensuring social acceptance.

3. Projects to allow the achievement of WFD objectives by **addressing hydro morphological pressures** identified in River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs) and originating from land use or in-river use,
4. Projects that address **integrated management of nutrients** and organic pollution of human and agricultural origin in a way that clarifies the measures needed on a river basin or catchment scale to allow for the achievement of the WFD and MSFD requirements, including the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive, Nitrates Directive, Bathing waters Directive and Groundwater Directive requirements.
5. Projects addressing pressures from **chemical pollutants** in the water environment and aimed at reducing emissions of priority substances at source, through the use of appropriate substitutes or alternative technologies.
6. Projects **re-naturalising** river, lake, estuary and coastal **morphology** and/or **re-creating associated habitats** including flood- and marsh plains, to allow the achievement of WFD and FD objectives.
7. Projects that implement **water saving measures** to reduce the quantitative and qualitative pressures on water bodies in water stressed basins **on the basis of hydro-economic models**.

Marine and coastal management - Annex III, section A point (a)(iii)

1. Projects developing tools, technologies and practices to ensure the **sustainability** of economic activities related to the marine environment, including where relevant by **reducing the pressure of economic activities on the marine environment**, and to mainstream marine resource sustainability into maritime economic sectors with a focus on underwater noise, physical disturbance of the sea floor, and the impacts of deep sea mining and aquaculture. Projects are expected to include the development of management plans which reduce the environmental impacts of economic activities.
2. Projects aiming at preventing and reducing **marine litter or microbial contaminants**, addressing the sources of marine litter and microbial contaminants.
3. Projects promoting **synergies between integrated coastal management and maritime spatial planning**, demonstrating the added value of coordinating integrated coastal management and maritime spatial planning in new marine contexts, supporting the concrete implementation of sea basin strategies including implementation of relevant Union law, or connecting integrated coastal management and maritime spatial planning with the procedures for designating and managing Marine Protected Areas or Natura 2000 sites.

Water Industry (Annex III, section A point (a)(iv))

1. Projects aiming at developing **technologies for drinking water and urban waste water treatment systems**, through the use of resource efficient processes for the provision of water services (e.g. aiming to reduce energy consumption for the treatment and management of water, and water losses) and onsite procedures and control processes to diminish or eliminate discharges of emerging pollutants and pathogens as part of wastewater treatment effluents.

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- (a) **Thematic priorities for Water, including the marine environment:** activities for the implementation of the specific objectives for water set out in the Roadmap for a Resource-Efficient Europe and the 7th Environment Action Programme, in particular:
- (i) *integrated approaches for the implementation of Directive 2000/60/EC;*
 - (ii) *activities for the implementation of the Directive 2007/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council⁴ ;*
 - (iii) *activities for the implementation of the programme of measures of the Directive 2008/56/EC with a view to achieving good environmental status of marine waters;*
 - (iv) *activities to ensure safe and efficient use of water resources, improving quantitative water management, preserving a high level of water quality and avoiding misuse and deterioration of water resources*

Addressing water quality, floods and drought management in a cost efficient way is a serious challenge within the EU. Responding to the challenges and opportunities in the water sector requires a holistic approach across a number of actors. In line with the implementation of the Water Framework Directive (WFD), the Flood Directive and the priorities of the European Innovation Partnership on Water, projects should focus on developing and particularly implementing actions which can help Member States move to genuinely integrated water resource management, promoting ecosystem-based approaches where relevant. In the context of actions targeted at the implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD), particular emphasis should be placed on emerging pressures and impacts, as well as fostering better integrated coastal management and maritime spatial planning. With respect to the water industry, the technologies and processes used to ensure the provision of water services (production of drinking water or waste water treatment) are reaching maturity. In line with the priority areas of the European Innovation Partnership on Water, the current challenge is twofold: (i) ensuring proper implementation in a way which yields cost-effective, resource efficient and legally compliant results, and (ii) ensuring an ability to deal with emerging issues in this field.

Priority will be therefore given to the following projects:

Water, floods and drought - Annex III, section A points (a)(i)-(ii)

1. Planning and establishment in urban and rural areas of **natural water retention** measures that increase infiltration, storage of water and remove pollutants through natural, or "natural-like" processes and thereby contribute to the achievement of the WFD and the Floods Directive (FD) objectives and to drought management in water scarce regions.
2. Projects promoting **flood and drought risk management** through (a) extreme event prevention and protection tools for support of policy, land use planning and emergency

⁴ Directive 2007/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2007 on the assessment and management of flood risks (OJ L 288, 6.11.2007, p. 27).

2. Projects implementing tools (e.g. planning, decentralised systems, risk-based approaches) to ensure the efficient **provision of water services** that are compliant with the Drinking Water Directive and the Urban Waste Water Directive **in areas of low population density**.
3. Projects aiming at more efficient and effective, innovative solutions and/or treatment options regarding **recycled/reclaimed water**, developing and demonstrating:
 - Innovative concepts for (alternative) water supply, wastewater treatment, reuse and recovery of resources;
 - Source control methods and cost-effective on-site technologies for discharges of emerging pollutants and pathogens into the wastewater treatment system;
 - Water treatment innovation hubs, in regions that currently lack of appropriate sewer systems and treatment and sanitation facilities, applying smart technologies and decentralized systems with a focus on alternative water sources.
 - Systematic approaches to avoid loss of water, energy and resources in industrial production and water and wastewater infrastructure.

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(b) Thematic priorities for Waste: activities for the implementation of the specific objectives for waste set out in the Roadmap for a Resource-Efficient Europe and the 7th Environment Action Programme, in particular:

- (i) integrated approaches for the implementation of waste plans and programmes;*
- (ii) activities for the implementation and development of Union waste legislation, with particular emphasis on the first steps of the Union waste hierarchy (prevention, re-use and recycling);*
- (iii) activities for resource efficiency and lifecycle impact of products, consumption patterns and dematerialisation of the economy.*

With respect to waste, the Roadmap for a Resource-Efficient Europe and the 7th EAP aim at reaching the following overall goals by 2020:

- to reduce waste generated;
- to maximise recycling and re-use;
- to limit incineration to non-recyclable materials; and
- to limit landfilling to non-recyclable and non-recoverable waste.

Priority will be therefore given to the following projects:

Implementation of waste legislation - Annex III, section A points (b)(i)-(ii)

1. Projects using innovative methods, technologies, and actions primarily at the waste source for waste prevention, reuse, and separate collection of **municipal waste**.
2. Projects using innovative methods, technologies, and actions primarily at the waste source for the prevention, preparation for reuse /reuse, recycling and separate collection of the following waste streams: