

LIFE Circular Economy

The LIFE Programme is the European Union's dedicated funding instrument for environment and climate action (2021–2027), managed by the European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency, with a total budget of around €5.4 billion. It supports projects that advance implementation of EU environmental policy, including the European Green Deal and the EU Circular Economy Action Plan. Within LIFE, the “Circular Economy and Quality of Life” sub-programme funds initiatives that contribute to the transition toward a sustainable, circular, energy-efficient and toxin-free EU economy, protect and improve environmental quality, and integrate systemic circular solutions across value chains (e.g., resource recovery, waste prevention, sustainable materials and product design).

Strategic Focus (Circular Economy)

The Circular Economy and Quality of Life sub-programme prioritises:

- Circular economy and waste management (reducing waste generation, promoting recycling and reuse)
- Resource efficiency and environmental management (air, water, soil, chemicals)
- Circular Systemic Solutions spanning multiple sectors and actors
- Governance mechanisms to enable participatory, systemic transition

Projects should demonstrate policy and practice relevance and contribute to measurable environmental outcomes. Projects are expected to demonstrate, pilot or scale innovative environmental solutions that support the implementation of EU environmental legislation and the European Green Deal.

2026 Call Overview:

The 2026 call is part of the LIFE Work Programme 2025-2027 and is the principal open funding window for environmental, circular economy and quality-of-life projects during this period.

- **Funding instrument:** EU LIFE Mission Grant
- **Co-funding principle:** (EU contribution usually around **60%-75%** of eligible costs in standard projects – exact rate depends on specific topic, project category and legal status of applicants.
- **Programme budget** for 2021–2027: approx. **€5.4 billion** across all LIFE sub-programmes; individual project budget depends on the specific call and related topic.
- **TRL requirements:** For Innovation Actions: TRL 6–7; Research Actions: TRL minimum 5
- **Note:** The programme does not fund basic or early-stage research, such as:
 - TRL 1–3: basic research or conceptual development
 - TRL 4: early laboratory validation
 - *For the exact 2026 LIFE call requirements, refer to the Funding & Tenders portal after 21 April 2026.*

Timeline (Indicative):

- **Call Publication:** 21 April 2026 (expected) on the European Commission Funding & Tenders Portal, covering LIFE's four sub-programmes, including *Circular Economy and Quality of Life*.
- **EU LIFE Info Days:** 28–30 April 2026 (online). The Info-event will outline call details, application procedures and evaluation criteria.
- **Proposal deadline:** September–October 2026 (exact topic-specific dates will be published in April).
- **Deadline Model:** mostly two-stage

Eligibility Criteria:

Eligible applicants typically include:

- Public authorities (national, regional, local)
- Research organisations and universities
- Private entities (companies, SMEs)
- Non-governmental organisations and civil society partners
- Organisations must be legally established in the EU or associated countries and form consortia as appropriate (depending on call type).

Application Strategy:

- Align project concepts with EU circular economy priorities and measurable outcomes (e.g., waste reduction, resource efficiency, systemic solutions).
- Participate in April info days (28–30 April 2026) to understand topic framing and evaluation criteria early. For information and registration see above under “**Timeline**” section.
- Build consortia with complementary partners across sectors and Member States.
- Integrate coproduction with stakeholders (industry, authorities, communities) to demonstrate real-world impact and uptake.
- Engage with the EU-Desk| SFT as well as the [National Contact Point \(NCP\) LIFE | Circular Economy](#) for guidance on topic fit and call-scouting and overall suggestions for proposal preparation.