


Proposal Evaluation Form

	EUROPEAN COMMISSION Programme for Environment and Climate Action (LIFE)	Evaluation Summary Report - LIFE
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Call: LIFE-2022-SAP-NAT

Type of action: LIFE-PJG

Proposal number: 101114539

Proposal acronym: LIFE22-NAT-RO-Fish for LIFE fwd

Duration (months): 60

Proposal title: Migration corridors for fish species Dear Environmental Protection Agency Gorj PUBLIC INSTITUTION, You have successfully created a draft proposal Fish for LIFE fwd for the call LIFE-2022-SAP-N

Activity: LIFE-2022-SAP-NAT-NATURE

N.	Proposer name	Country	Total eligible costs	%	Grant Requested	%
1	Agentia pentru Protectia Mediului Gorj (Environmental Protection Agency Gorj)	RO	4,220,586.26	84.88%	2,532,351.76	84.88%
2	ALMA GROUP RESEARCH SRL	RO	369,603.83	7.43%	221,762.3	7.43%
3	UNIVERSITATEA DIN PETROSANI	RO	382,392.7	7.69%	229,435.62	7.69%
Total:			4,972,582.79		2,983,549.68	

Abstract:

The project addresses the Nature 2000 sites Gilort River ROSCI CODE 0362 and Motru River ROSCI0366, which suffer a consistent impact due to anthropogenic activities that affect in the first fish migration and refuge, feeding and breeding habitats.

Project fall under the intervention area “Safeguarding our species”, by its general objective: improving the condition of the fish species Eudontomyzon mariae actually unfavorable, entirely inadequate, Rhodeus amarus, Romanogobio albipinnatus, Romanogobio kessleri, Sabanejewia balcanica – actually unfavorable, inadequate, and Barbus petenyi.

These species are included in Annex II of the Habitats Directive, representing a contribution to LIFE Programme, which aims to conserve and enhance the EU's natural capital.

Fish for LIFE fwd focuses on activities to reduce the decline of rheophilic fish species, by:

- Habitat creation and restoration interventions to create and maintain habitats of refuge, rest, feeding, and reproduction
- Restoring longitudinal connectivity by building passages
- Restoring lateral connectivity through obstacle clearance works
- Restoration of riparian vegetation by planting trees and shrubs
- increasing the awareness of the stakeholders so that they know, understand and, finally, change their attitude.

The proposed actions contribute to improving the knowledge base for the implementation, evaluation and monitoring of factors and pressures on water bodies (art. 10 LIFE Regulation) and contribute to the specific objective of Nature and Biodiversity sub-programme by developing, demonstrating and promoting best practice and technical solutions for a good ecological status for water bodies, especially by increasing the present hydro-morphological status for 8 water bodies on rivers Gilort and Motru.

Evaluation Summary Report

Evaluation Result

Total score: 58.00 (Threshold: 55)

Criterion 1 - Relevance

Score: **14.00** (Threshold: 10/20.00 , Weight: -)

The following aspects have been taken into account:

- 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.

The proposal is relevant to the general objectives of the LIFE programme and the specific objectives of the sub-programme for Nature and Biodiversity, because it contributes to reaching the objectives of the EU Habitats Directive (HD).

*The project clearly complies with the selected call topic Nature and Biodiversity. It will apply best practice to improve the conservation of the Annex II fish species 5261 *Barbus meridionalis*, 2484 *Eudontomyzon mariae*, 5339 *Rhodeus sericeus amarus*, 5329 *Gobio albipinnatus*, 6143 *Gobio kessleri*, and 5197 *Sabanejewia aurata* within 2 N2000 sites.*

The project falls under the intervention area "Space for Nature", because it is focused on the implementation of site-based activities for habitat restoration. The project has outcome-based biodiversity-related objectives.

*The urgency of the proposed conservation activities is medium, as the status and trend of the target species at the EU/national biogeographical level (Continental) is: *B. meridionalis* FV=/FV=; *E. mariae* FV=/U2-; *R. sericeus amarus* FV+/FVx; *G. albipinnatus* UI+/UI+; *G. kessleri* UI-/UI-; *S. aurata* UI=/UI=. All these species have a status of Least Concern in the IUCN European Red List.*

The project also provides a reasonable contribution to the policy priorities of the EU Habitats Directive, as it will implement activities outlined in the national PAF and in line with the conservation objectives of the target N2000 sites.

The preoperational context is well described and sufficient information is provided to assess the problems and threats targeted: fragmentation; disruption of lateral connectivity; riverbed deterioration; and anthropogenic pressure. The baseline has been explained, but it is not quantified with detailed figures. In particular, population data is missing. Considering that there is an ongoing LIFE project in the same area and with similar objectives (LIFE 16/NAT/RO/000778), data should be available, in particular for the Natura 2000 Gilort river site. Nevertheless, the proposed interventions are justified. The proposal seems to include new objectives and additional activities with respect to the ongoing project, e.g. new species targeted, new activities targeting diversification of habitats and restoration of lateral connectivity. However, the proposal does not clarify the results achieved by the previous project and how this new proposal will complement or improve those results.

The overall intervention logic is overall sound because the identified problem of poor habitat conditions negatively affecting fish populations is convincingly addressed by the proposed approach and activities (construction of fish passages, reconnection of river arms, improvement of fish habitat and riparian forest), and the stated objectives and results are likely to be achieved. However, the proposal does not foresee any activity (regulations, management guidelines, etc.) addressed to counteract the anthropogenic activities (e.g. sand/gravel mining) that negatively affect the habitats and fish populations.

The proposal identifies co-benefits with other EU policy areas, in particular with tourism and employment. These co-benefits seem to be a natural result of the project implementation and the proposal does not include a sufficiently elaborated strategy or specific activities to accomplish them. The level of contribution is assessed as low.

Criterion 2 - Impact

Score: **13.00** (Threshold: 10/20.00 , Weight: 150.00%)

The following aspects have been taken into account:

- Ambition and credibility of impacts expected during and after the project due to the activities, including ensuring that no substantial harm is done to the other specific objectives of the LIFE Programme.
- Sustainability of the project results after the end of the project.
- Quality of the measures for the exploitation of project results.
- Potential for the project results to be replicated in the same or other sectors or places, or to be up-scaled by public or private actors or through mobilising larger investments or financial resources (catalytic potential).

The expected results and impacts of the project are well described - even though not fully quantified - in the text of the proposal. These include improvement of the conservation status of the target fish species, reconnection of six river arms, improvement of fish habitat in eight areas and restoration of riparian forest in five hectares. However, the specific KPIs reported in part C are insufficient, and the expected results in term of marl riverbed restoration and foreseen improvement of the fish populations are not stated. In addition, the nomenclature used to define the improvement of the conservation status does not correspond with the one used for Art. 17 assessment, therefore impeding a full understanding of these conservation benefits. Nevertheless, the identified impacts, in particular improvement of the status of habitats and the future prospects, are consistent with the activities planned and seem concrete, realistic and achievable.

The proposed best practice solutions will allow the improvement of the river connectivity and the restoration of the feeding and resting areas, resulting in an increased survival of the six target rheophilic fish species. Although this improvement cannot be appropriately assessed, in the absence of baseline data (which should however be available for the Gilort river), it seems significant. The project is therefore expected to achieve a substantial conservation benefit at a regional level.

In general, the proposal demonstrates convincingly that the proposed solutions and related expected results of the project will be continued in the medium and long term after the project. The flow structures will be maintained by the Jiu Hydrographic Basin Management Company and will be regularly checked by the Water Administration. The fish passages will be maintained by the legal owners of the infrastructures with their own resources and on the basis of long-term agreements (minimum 20 years), even though the duration should be adjusted to 30 years. However, long-term continuity of results is threatened by ongoing exploitation of natural resources (mining, grazing, illegal cutting, etc.) and there is not a clear strategy to counteract these pressures. The mandatory work package "Sustainability, replication and exploitation of project results", and the mandatory deliverable "After-LIFE Conservation Plan", are included in the proposal.

The proposal does not include a convincing plan to ensure that the project outputs will be utilised in other contexts or for other purposes.

The proposal presents a sufficient strategy to ensure successful replication of the project's solutions. In particular, the project will assess the suitability for replication of other river sections (including socioeconomic potential and opportunities) through specific studies. The presented strategy is clear, but only slightly goes beyond transfer of knowledge and networking.

Criterion 3 - Quality

Score: **13.00** (Threshold: 10/20.00 , Weight: -)

The following aspects have been taken into account:

- **Clarity, relevance and feasibility of the work plan.**
- **Identification and mobilisation of the relevant stakeholders.**
- **Appropriate geographic focus of the activities.**
- **Quality of the plan to monitor and report impacts.**
- **Appropriateness and quality of the measures to communicate and disseminate the project and its results to different target groups.**

 Associated with document Ref. Ares(2023)1637302 - 07/03/2023

The work plan, work packages, and their expected outputs, are adequately conceived and very clearly described. In particular, tasks foreseen in WP4 (river restoration activities) are considered good examples of river restoration. How and by whom the main activities will be implemented is sufficiently clear, and the outputs are described and quantified.

However, the ownership of the land for restoration of riparian vegetation is unclear, the mentioned activities for updating the river basin management plan and the N2000 site management plans are not properly included in the workplan (e.g. no specific deliverables), and the purpose and means of the volunteer work is insufficiently described and not fully relevant (e.g. participation at Fish Festival). No mention is provided on potential overlapping of project activities, including preparatory studies, with those implemented with the ongoing project.

The overall project planning is realistic and adequate safety margins and time buffers have been included in the proposal. For example, the length of the planning and authorisation procedures are well integrated into the workplan, and the duration of the construction works seems appropriate. Implementation risks (e.g. delays in permission or contracting), and necessary contingent measures, have been adequately addressed.

Deliverables and milestones are correctly defined and are comprehensive, realistic and coherent with the expected results (with the exception of those for WP4).

Some relevant stakeholders have been identified and consulted, and have expressed their support (competent Ministry and its agencies, administrative bodies at the appropriate level, the key water management company of the region). However, local stakeholders responsible for river deterioration (excessive grazing, logging, sand and gravel mining etc.), and landowners potentially to be involved in restoration tasks (e.g. T4.3), have not been engaged.

*The chosen location of the planned activities is relevant. The project addresses two N2000 sites which are suffering from anthropogenic activities negatively affecting the conservation status of the selected fish species. This is especially relevant for *Eudontomyzon mariae*, a species for which very few areas have been designated for conservation. All the species are adequately listed in the SDFs. The measures would allow the restoration of full longitudinal connectivity. Some infrastructure will be constructed outside Natura 2000 (bypass), but can be considered strategic to the project objectives.*

The geographic scope of the projects is ambitious enough to ensure that the problem is addressed on an adequate scale – regional level.

The attached maps clearly show the project area and the foreseen interventions.

Monitoring of the project impacts is well developed. Specific tasks for impact monitoring and reporting are included in the work plan. These address the hydro-morphologic features, fish and invertebrate populations, and socio-economic aspects.

However, monitoring of restored riparian corridors and the pilot action for the rehabilitation of the alluvial marl bed, has not been planned.

The mandatory work package “Monitoring and Evaluation” is included and is appropriately designed to monitor, evaluate and report impacts of the project.

The proposal includes a well-conceived communication strategy. The dissemination activities are appropriate and well-designed for the purpose of communicating the project results and the lessons learnt to a wide and appropriate target audience (authorities, NGOs, private companies, landowners and the general public). A separate package is dedicated to environmental education. All obligatory communication requirements are appropriately covered in the work plan.

Criterion 4 - Resources

Score: **11.50** (Threshold: 10/20.00 , Weight: -)

The following aspects have been taken into account:

- Composition of the consortium in terms of expertise, skills and responsibilities and appropriateness of the management structure.
- Appropriateness of the budget and resources and their consistency with the work plan.
- Transparency of the budget, i.e. the cost items should be sufficiently described.
- Extent to which the project environmental impact is considered and mitigated, including through the use of green procurement. The use of recognised methods for the calculation of the project environmental footprint (e.g. PEF or OEF methods or similar ones, such as [PEFCRs/OEFSRs](#)) or environmental management systems (e.g. EMAS) would be an asset.
- Value for money of the proposal.

The partnership is clearly described and is assessed as fully appropriate because it includes the relevant local authority, a private company experienced in environmental assessment, and the Environmental Engineering and Geology Department of the Petrosani University. The consortium properly covers the technical areas necessary for achieving the objectives of the project.

The project's operational and management structure is well planned, fully controlled by the coordinating beneficiary, and is assessed to be effective. Project management is carried out by the staff of the coordinating beneficiary. Establishment of three horizontal working groups (infrastructure, restoration, communication) will ensure harmonised cooperation between the partners. However, it is not fully clear how the proposal would avoid any overlapping with the management of the ongoing project.

The budget is overall coherent with the work plan. The funds allocated for the work packages are balanced and the costs are adequate to carry out the activities by the means proposed. The budget is balanced. However, the project allocates almost 16 FTE, while the budget includes many subcontracted elements, which does not seem appropriately justified (especially for WP1).

The costs in the budget table are not sufficiently detailed because the costs are presented mostly in lump sums (e.g. €2.3M for fish passages, log jams, planting). Nevertheless, the costs can be considered realistic. Most costs in the detailed budget table are correctly allocated and are compliant with the rules and principles of the LIFE Programme.

The proposal includes high costs for infrastructure (approximately €2.5M), but this is considered justified because the project aims to create water management structures (fish ladders, by-passes) and re-connect river branches, which are necessary to achieve the project objectives.

The purpose and means of the volunteer work are not described and the cost calculation is not presented. The requested co-financing rate (60%) is appropriate.

The project consortium commits to adequately apply green project management principles. In particular, all beneficiaries commit to follow the provisions of the Romanian Law on GPP and the proposal presents a clear strategy for lowering energy consumption.

The proposal is assessed to be cost-efficient. Although the budget is not fully detailed and justified, it is generally assessed as reasonable and represents fair value for money in relation to the scale and dimension of the expected environmental benefits and results to be achieved: two rivers targeted; c.a. 60 km reconnected; 11 obstacles addressed.

Criterion 5 - Bonus points

Score: **0.00** (Threshold: 0/10.00 , Weight: -)

The following aspects have been taken into account:

BONUS 1: The proposal offers exceptional synergies and promotes significant co-benefits between LIFE sub-programmes. (2 points)

BONUS 2: The proposal is primarily implemented in the Outermost Regions. Where specific regional features are relevant to the needs addressed in the call for proposals, e.g. islands for waste, coal-intensive regions for clean energy, etc., the bonus could be extended to other geographical areas with specific needs and vulnerabilities. (2 points)

BONUS 3: The proposal substantially builds on or up-scales the results of other EU funded projects. (2 points)

BONUS 4: The proposal offers an exceptional catalytic potential. (2 points)

BONUS 5: The proposal envisages a transnational cooperation among Member States essential to guarantee the achievement of the project objectives. (2 points)

The proposal does not appear to promote exceptional synergies and/or significant co-benefits between LIFE sub-programmes for Environment and Climate Action.

The proposal is not being implemented in the Outermost Regions of the EU.

The proposal does not seem to substantially build on the results of other EU funded projects. The project is a continuation of the previous LIFE 16/NAT/RO/000778 "Fish for LIFE" and it will address the 11 obstacles identified by the ongoing "Fish for LIFE" and the dissemination actions and the cooperation established with the Institute of Hydropower Studies and Design will be used to facilitate the activities of this project. However, it is not well explained how the use of concrete results is embedded in the activities and if specific outputs of the previous project will be used in the proposal. The proposal seems to focus more on the transfer of best practices and experiences.

The proposal does not offer an exceptional catalytic potential for replication or upscaling of project results in the same or other sectors/places.

The project involves partners from only one Member State and activities are only implemented in Romania. The proposal does not envisage essential transnational cooperation to guarantee the achievement of the project objectives.

Threshold Status - The score '-0.01' below exclusively indicates that the proposal only fails because it does not reach the minimum threshold of 55 points (sum of criteria 1-4). A '0.00' value has no meaning.

Score: **0.00** (Threshold: 0/0.00 , Weight: -)

HIGHER FUNDING RATE (PRIORITY EU SPECIES OR HABITAT TYPES 75% OR 67%)

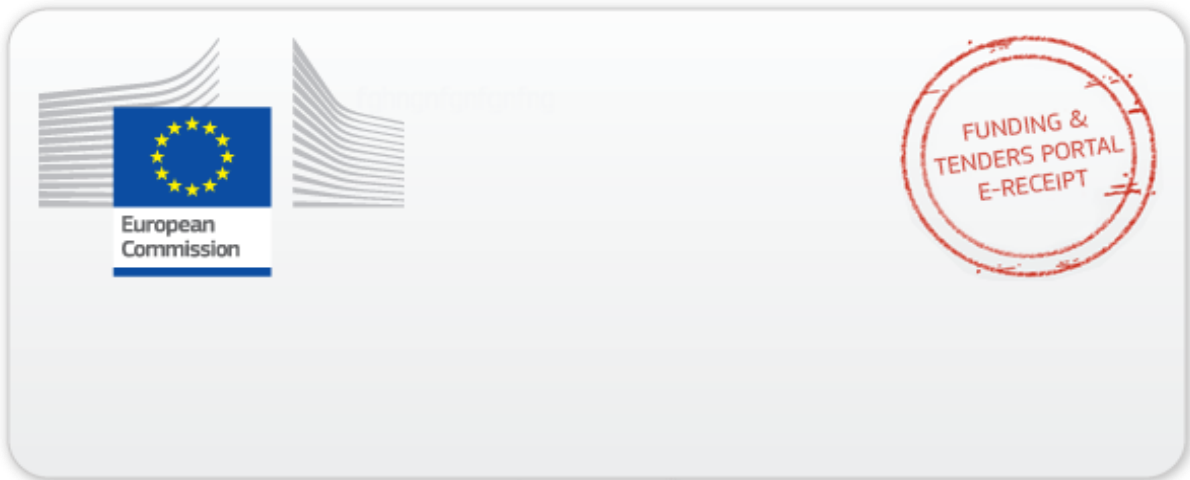
Status: **No**

IF YES, DOES THE PROPOSED ACTION TARGET THE CONSERVATION OF PRIORITY HABITATS AND/OR SPECIES

Not provided

Give reasons:

Not provided



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