EFI

EUROPEAN FOREST INSTITUTE

Grant submission guidelines

G-03-2026
EFI Network Fund call 2026

Forest biodiversity: Building capacity and shared knowledge for resilient forests and society

1. ACTIVITY TO BE SUPPORTED BY THE GRANT

1.1. Introduction

The loss of biodiversity is a defining environmental challenge and a major driver of change identified in EFI Strategy 2040. Biodiversity is fundamental to resilient forest ecosystems and societies, underpinning ecosystem functioning, adaptation and the continued provision of environmental, social and economic benefits.

Across Europe, approaches to forest biodiversity monitoring, incentive mechanisms and the integration of biodiversity into forest ecosystem service provision vary widely. At the same time, substantial knowledge and practical experience already exist within EFI member organisations. Bringing this expertise together provides an important opportunity for members to learn from one another, strengthen their capacities and develop a shared understanding of emerging challenges and effective approaches.

The EFI Network Fund supports this peer-driven knowledge exchange and cooperation, with particular attention to strengthening the capacities of early-career professionals. By collecting, comparing and sharing existing knowledge and experience, supported activities should provide practical value to participating organisations, strengthen connections across the EFI network and create a basis for future collaboration. The call thereby contributes to EFI Strategy 2040 and the EFI Action Plan 2026–2030.

1.2. Objectives

The objective of this call is to strengthen the capacity of EFI member organisations to address forest biodiversity challenges through peer-driven knowledge exchange and collaborative learning. It will support members in collecting, comparing and synthesising existing knowledge, practical experience and good practices from across Europe.

Supported projects should:

- improve shared understanding of common challenges, approaches and knowledge gaps;
- enable better identification and visibility of the expertise available across the EFI member network, including where specific knowledge, experience and capacities are located;
- strengthen cooperation and professional networks among EFI member organisations; and
- identify opportunities for future collaboration and joint action.

Through these results, the call will help EFI members make better use of the expertise available across the network and translate shared knowledge into practical and policy-relevant outputs. It contributes to EFI Strategy 2040 and the EFI Action Plan 2026–2030 by supporting knowledge exchange, evidence-informed decision-making and collaboration across the EFI network.

1.3. Scope of call: supported projects and activities

<u>Lot 1: Forest biodiversity monitoring, assessment and indicators</u>
Projects under this lot should strengthen the knowledge base and promote the exchange of experiences on biodiversity monitoring, assessment, criteria and indicators in European forests.

Proposals are expected to identify and analyse existing approaches and practices across countries and regions, examine key drivers of and threats to forest biodiversity, and identify innovative methods, technologies and data sources that could improve the effectiveness, efficiency and comparability of biodiversity monitoring.

Projects should facilitate the sharing of experiences among EFI member organisations and relevant stakeholders and contribute to a better understanding of available expertise, good practices, emerging approaches, challenges and common needs. They should generate knowledge, recommendations or other practical outputs that support mutual learning, future cooperation and the further development of biodiversity monitoring and assessment approaches across Europe.

Lot 2: Biodiversity and ecosystem service delivery

Projects under this lot should improve understanding of the relationships between biodiversity and ecosystem service delivery in forest landscapes. Proposals are expected to bring together and synthesise knowledge and practical experience from different contexts, and to examine how biodiversity contributes to ecosystem services such as climate regulation, carbon sequestration, water regulation and adaptation.

Projects should also explore how maintaining and enhancing biodiversity can help mitigate risks to the resilience, stability and continued provision of ecosystem services under climate change and other environmental pressures. They should identify relevant approaches and good practices for recognising, assessing and addressing biodiversity-related risks in forest policy, management and planning.

Projects should promote the exchange of experience among EFI member organisations and other relevant actors and identify lessons learned, knowledge gaps and future opportunities for policy, management, research and cooperation.

Lot 3: Innovative approaches to biodiversity conservation and enhancement

Projects under this lot should advance knowledge and shared understanding of innovative approaches that support biodiversity conservation, restoration and enhancement. These may include biodiversity credits, nature-based solutions, policy and market-based incentive mechanisms, and forest business models built on biodiversity-enhancing practices, such as mixed-species stands.

Proposals should examine existing and emerging approaches, explore their opportunities, risks and enabling conditions, and facilitate the exchange of experience among organisations active in this field. Projects should contribute to a stronger evidence base and generate practical insights and recommendations that support future cooperation and the development of credible and effective approaches to biodiversity conservation and enhancement.

1.4. Methodology

Projects should focus on knowledge exchange, capacity building and the synthesis of existing knowledge and practical experience, not on generating new research. Activities should bring together, compare and consolidate knowledge, methods and lessons from across EFI member organisations and other relevant stakeholders.

Activities may include comparative analyses, knowledge syntheses, peer learning, workshops and professional exchanges, mapping of expertise and practices across the EFI network,

documentation of lessons learned and emerging approaches, and the development of recommendations, roadmaps or other practical outputs.

Projects should use collaborative and participatory approaches that strengthen capacities, professional networks and mutual learning. Limited analytical work may be included where necessary to synthesise or interpret existing information, but the collection of new primary research data should not be a main focus of the supported activities.

1.5. Expected results

Projects should strengthen the capacity of EFI member organisations and the wider forest-related community through knowledge exchange, peer learning and the synthesis of existing knowledge and practical experience. They should highlight good practices and expertise available across the EFI network, strengthen cooperation among members, and produce practical outputs such as syntheses, recommendations or roadmaps. Where relevant, projects may also identify areas requiring further attention. Results should be based on existing knowledge, not new research.

1.6. Available funding

Proposals can request funding under one of the lots, in the amount of max. EUR 200,000.

Up to three projects will be funded under the call.

Projects are expected to start in May 2027 and run for a maximum of 24 months.

1.7. Follow-up

Following completion of the supported projects, EFI will organise a joint event bringing together all projects funded under this call to present and discuss their findings, exchange lessons learned and identify opportunities for cooperation. The event will include a foresight component to explore emerging questions, future challenges and knowledge needs related to biodiversity and resilient forest landscapes. This follow up is voluntary and not funded under the call.

2. QUESTIONS

Questions regarding the grant process must only be sent to the following address:

network.fund@efi.int

Questions can be sent until:

29 November 2026

Questions and answers for this grant process will be published at https://grants-tenders.efi.int/portfolio-item/g-03-2026/

The following schedule will be followed for the publication of the Questions and answers:

- Answers for questions received during the period call launch – 25 October 2026 will be published on 30 October 2026
- Answers for questions received during the period 26 October 2026 – 29 November 2026 will be published on 4 December 2026

Individual questions will not be replied to separately.

Potential applicants are advised to visit https://grants-tenders.efi.int/portfolio-item/g-03-2026/ regularly before the deadline for the submission of applications for any Q&A, and updates or modifications regarding this grant process.

3. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Applications must, by the deadline for submission of the Application, meet the following criteria to be eligible for the grant:

<table>
<tr><th>Criteria</th><th>Description of criteria</th><th>Clarification</th></tr>
<tr><td>E1</td><td>The Applicant (comprising the participating organisations) must include at least five EFI Associate or Affiliate Member organisations from at least four of the Forest Europe regions, including at least one member organisation from Central-East Europe and at least one member organisation from South-East Europe:
<table>
<tr><th>Forest Europe Regions</th><th>Countries</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="8">North Europe</td><td>Denmark</td></tr>
<tr><td>Estonia</td></tr>
<tr><td>Finland</td></tr>
<tr><td>Iceland</td></tr>
<tr><td>Latvia</td></tr>
<tr><td>Lithuania</td></tr>
<tr><td>Norway</td></tr>
<tr><td>Sweden</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="10">Central-West Europe</td><td>Austria</td></tr>
<tr><td>Belgium</td></tr>
<tr><td>France</td></tr>
<tr><td>Germany</td></tr>
<tr><td>Ireland</td></tr>
<tr><td>Liechtenstein</td></tr>
<tr><td>Luxembourg</td></tr>
<tr><td>Netherlands</td></tr>
<tr><td>Switzerland</td></tr>
<tr><td>United Kingdom</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="10">Central-East Europe</td><td>Belarus</td></tr>
<tr><td>Czech Republic</td></tr>
<tr><td>Georgia</td></tr>
<tr><td>Hungary</td></tr>
<tr><td>Poland</td></tr>
<tr><td>Republic of Moldova</td></tr>
<tr><td>Romania</td></tr>
<tr><td>Slovakia</td></tr>
<tr><td>Ukraine</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="8">South-West Europe</td><td>Andorra</td></tr>
<tr><td>Holy See</td></tr>
<tr><td>Italy</td></tr>
<tr><td>Malta</td></tr>
<tr><td>Monaco</td></tr>
<tr><td>Portugal</td></tr>
<tr><td>San Marino</td></tr>
<tr><td>Spain</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="6">South-East Europe</td><td>Albania</td></tr>
<tr><td>Bosnia and Herzegovina</td></tr>
<tr><td>Bulgaria</td></tr>
<tr><td>Croatia</td></tr>
<tr><td>Cyprus</td></tr>
<tr><td>Greece</td></tr>
</table>
</td><td>Legal entities that are not EFI member organisations may also be included in the proposal, but are not eligible for funding by EFI. They must be indicated as Cooperating participants (organisations) in Application form – Part A.

The call is not open to natural persons.</td></tr>
</table>

		Montenegro North Macedonia Serbia Slovenia Turkey	
E2	The **Coordinator** must be **an EFI Associate or Affiliate Member**		

Applications not fulfilling the above stated eligibility criteria will be rejected.

4. ADMISSIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

All applications shall apply the following structure:

I. Administrative information

i) Application Form - Part A, using template provided in annex 1

II. Technical description

i) Application Form - Part B, following template provided in annex 2

ii) The length of the technical description must not exceed 10 pages and shall be submitted in one single PDF document (this does not include the instructions and guidance provided in annex 2).

iii) Technical description must be written in English

All the documentation must be submitted in PDF format (Two separate pdfs for I. Administrative information and II. Technical Description).

What procedures to follow for applying:

Grant application shall only to be submitted by the applicant (coordinator as applicable) to:

grants@efi.int

Please note that it is not allowed to send the email to another recipient at EFI

(i.e. not in the To: field, the cc: field, or the bcc: field)

The email with the application shall contain the following heading in the subject line:

EFI Network Fund call 2026

The grant application must have been received by EFI by the following deadline at the latest:

31 December 2026 at 21:00 UTC +2

5. AWARD CRITERIA

Criteria that will be applied for awarding of the grants:

A1	**Excellence**	▪ Clarity and relevance of the objectives in relation to the call topic, objectives and selected lot; ▪ Quality and relevance of the proposed approach to synthesising and sharing existing knowledge, practical experience and good practices; ▪ Quality of the planned knowledge exchange, peer-learning and capacity-building activities; ▪ Potential to identify innovative approaches and relevant expertise available across the EFI member network.
A2	**Implementation**	▪ Quality, coherence and effectiveness of the work plan, including the extent to which the proposed activities, resources and budget are aligned with the project objectives; ▪ Feasibility and realism of the proposed approach, including the timetable, division of responsibilities, planned outputs and allocation of resources; ▪ Complementarity of the participants and the extent to which the consortium brings together the necessary expertise, knowledge and experience; ▪ Meaningful engagement and development of early-career scientists, young experts and emerging policy professionals; ▪ Appropriateness of risk management and mitigation measures.
A3	**Impact**	▪ Potential to strengthen the capacities of EFI member organisations and promote knowledge exchange, peer learning and cooperation across the Forest Europe regions: North Europe, Central-West Europe, Central-East Europe, South-West Europe, South East Europe; ▪ Potential to improve the visibility and use of expertise, experience and capacities available within the EFI member network; ▪ Expected contribution to the collection, synthesis and dissemination of knowledge and experiences relevant to the call topic, including policy-relevant insights and the identification of knowledge gaps; ▪ Sustainability and long-term value of the outcomes, including how activities, networks, knowledge products or collaborations may continue beyond the project and benefit EFI member organisations and the wider forest-related community.

Applications will receive a score of 0-5 for each criterion.

Applications must receive a score of at least 3.5 points in each of the categories A1-A3 to be considered for a grant award and a total score of at least 13.5 points overall.

Subject to applications meeting or exceeding the thresholds, one grant will be awarded per lot: the application receiving the highest total score A1 + A2 + A3.

In case of equal scores the following will apply: applications will be prioritised according to score under criteria A1, then A2, and last A3. In case of equal scores under A1, A2, and A3 priority will be given to the application that demonstrates the strongest contribution to the development and meaningful engagement of early-career scientists, young experts, and emerging policy professionals in fields relevant to the call.

Should, if no application within a lot meets or exceeds the minimum threshold, overall call budget be available, the highest ranked application not selected for award of a grant will be selected (regardless of lot), and so forth, until overall call budget is no longer available.

6. GRANT DISBURSEMENT

EFI will disburse the grant in lump sum instalments (fixed sums):

- 35% entry into force of the grant agreement
- 25% upon approval of the interim technical report
- 40% upon approval of the final technical report

7. GRANT AGREEMENT

Template grant agreement is provided as annex 3.
Please note that the Grant Agreement is only signed by EFI and the successful Applicant(s) (all Participating organisations) following decision by EFI on award of the Grant(s). The Grant Agreement will not be signed by any Cooperating participant.

8. NEGOTIATION PHASE

In respect of applications selected for funding, further documentation to validate the legal and financial capacity of the Applicant, provided by and signed by the Applicant, may be required before EFI can sign the grant agreement – as further instructed by EFI. If the requested documentation is not submitted within deadline set by EFI, EFI may in a new decision reject the application.

9. TERMS AND CONDITIONS FOR SUBMISSION OF AN APPLICATION

9.1 In addition to what has been stated in the Call for grant and these Grant submission guidelines, EFI applies the EFI Grant rules which have been made available at https://grants-tenders.efi.int/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/EFI-Grant-Rules.pdf

9.2 By submitting an application for a grant, the applicant accepts all the terms and conditions set out in the Call for grant and these Grant submission guidelines (including its annexes) and waives all other terms.

9.3 EFI may reject an application that is not in compliance with the instructions in the Call for grant or the Grant submission guidelines.

9.4 No information communicated in this grant process, including the Call for grant and these Grant submission guidelines (including its annexes), bind EFI in any way to an award or a grant agreement. EFI shall only be bound by written grant agreements.

9.5 An applicant must be able to prove to the satisfaction of EFI, any information given as part of its application. Failure to do so, within a time limit set by EFI, may result in rejection of the application.

9.6 EFI may ask the applicant for clarifications regarding any information submitted as part of the application. EFI may reject any applicant from the grant process that fails to submit the requested clarification.

9.7 Only applications sent to *grants@efi.int* will be considered.
9.8 Applications submitted after the deadline for submission will not be considered.
9.9 An Applicant may only submit one application. In case of multiple applications from the same economic operator EFI will only consider the last one received.
9.10 Withdrawal of an application shall be done in writing.
9.11 Information provided by the applicants cannot be considered confidential, unless so designated by EFI.
9.12 All applications shall be quoted in Euros.
9.13 Expenses incurred in the preparation and dispatch of an application will not be reimbursed by EFI.
9.14 Applications must be legible. EFI may reject applications that are not legible.
9.15 EFI will disregard any information given by an Applicant outside the format for submission as stated in the Call for Grant or Grant submission guidelines.
9.16 The application shall be complete when submitted. EFI will disregard additional documentation or information submitted separately from the application, where not requested by EFI.
9.17 EFI may at its own discretion disclose the contents of any application, as well as information on the Beneficiary awarded the grant as well as any other information of the grant awarded.
9.18 Unless otherwise stated in the Call for grant and these Grant submission guidelines, the Application and all correspondence related to it shall be in English. EFI retains the right to correspond in English with the Applicant even if the application may be submitted in a language other than English.
9.19 Applicants are not entitled to contact EFI staff members, or any other person referred to in the EFI grant rules after the closing date of the receipt of applications to ask for information on the evaluation. EFI may eliminate from the evaluation any Applicant contravening this provision.

ANNEXES

- Annex 1: Application Form Part A
- Annex 2: Application Form Part B
- Annex 3: Grant Agreement Template