

**FOREST - European Partnership for FOrests, forestry, and
the forest-based sector: REsearch and innovation for a
Sustainable Transition**

15.09.2026

CALL ANNOUNCEMENT

**JOINT CALL FOR PROPOSALS IN
2026**

FOREST|Pathways

**Building Knowledge and Solutions for Resilient
Forests and Sustainable Forest-Based Futures**

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(1) KEY INFORMATION

The European Partnership for FOrests, forestry, and the forest-based sector: REsearch and innovation for a Sustainable Transition (FOREST), is launching its first transnational Joint Call for proposals for research, development and innovation in forest science and the forest-based sector. This document will display all relevant information for applicants interested to submit a proposal to the open call.

I. Definitions

“Call Office”: The administration and management activities of the Joint Call are led by the Call Office (Agency for Renewable Resources (FNR, DE), Ministry of Agriculture (AM, HU) and Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM, IE) on behalf of all funding agencies participating in the call. General enquiries about the Joint Call should be addressed to the Call Office: calloffice-jc2026@forest-partnership.eu

“Research Funding Organisation (RFO)”: a national or regional organisation responsible for providing (a share of) the national/regional funding for the Transnational Projects.

“International Expert Panel” (IEP): the board of independent experts evaluating proposals of the Joint Call. The IEP is appointed through transparent procedures and subject to strict conflict of interest rules.

“Call Steering Committee” (CSC): the ultimate decision-making body of the consortium when it comes to any Joint Call related decisions from call planning to the recommendations for national funding decisions based on the evaluation of the proposals. The CSC shall consist of one representative of each RFO participating in the Joint Call. (Hereinafter CSC Member).

“Joint Call”: Joint Call means the co-funded call for collaborative proposals in the framework of the EU Partnership FOREST, which is implemented jointly by the RFOs in 2026/2027, co-financed by the EC. Also referred to as “the call”.

“Funded Project / Transnational Project”: “Funded Project / Transnational Project” is a project selected for funding in the Joint Call.

II. Timeline

Tue, 15.09.2026	Call Announcement
Thu, 17.09.2026	Call Information Webinar
Wed, 30.09.2026	IN PERSON Partnering workshop at EUFORE final conference
Tue, 06.10.2026	Online networking webinar / partnering workshop
Tue, 17.11.2026	Applicants are strongly encouraged to contact their respective RFOs no later than 17.11.2026, to ensure that funders have sufficient time to respond to eligibility confirmation requests.
Tue, 02.12.2026	Deadline for submission of pre-proposals
12/2026 – 03/2027	Eligibility check and evaluation of pre-proposals
Tue, 23.03.2027	Coordinators receive pre-proposal evaluation results incl. possible invitation to compose and submit full proposals; Electronic submission and evaluation system opening again (Start of Redress period for not selected projects)
Tue, 06.04.2027	End of Redress period for not selected projects
Wed, 02.06.2027	Deadline for submission of full proposals
Jun – Sep 2027	Eligibility check and evaluation of full proposals
Tue, 21.09.2027	Coordinators receive full proposal evaluation results; Start of national/regional contract negotiations
12/2027-04/2028	Projects start



III. Online Information

- **OFFICIAL WEBSITE of the FOREST JOINT Call 2026:** <https://forest-partnership.eu/jointcall2026>. Please check this source regularly for additional and updated information.
- **INFORMATION WEBINAR:** A webinar will be hosted on 17.09.2026 (10:00 CET) for interested applicants. The webinar will provide an overview of relevant aspects of the Call and a short introduction to the submission and evaluation system.
- **NETWORKING WEBINAR:** On 06.10.2026 (10:00 CET) the FOREST partnership will organise a networking webinar providing stakeholders a chance to connect and network with each other enabling consortia establishments.
- **PARTNERING OPPORTUNITIES:** A partnering tool will support interested parties to submit and search profiles in order to find cooperation partners.

More information on the events above can be found on the FOREST JOINT Call 2026

Website: <https://forest-partnership.eu/jointcall2026>



(2) INTRODUCTION

The European Partnership “Forests, forestry, and the forest-based sector: REsearch and innovation for a Sustainable Transition (FOREST)” aims to mobilise research and innovation to accelerate the transition to a sustainable forest bioeconomy. Serving as the primary instrument for collaboration among stakeholders in EU Member States and Associated Countries, the partnership will facilitate coordinated research and innovation (R&I) actions in order to reduce fragmentation and foster innovation and competitiveness in the forest-based sector, supporting climate-smart and sustainable forest management and its transformation from a resource-intensive to a knowledge-intensive, productive, resource-efficient, and resilient sector.

The partnership is strategically aligned with key European policy frameworks, including the European Green Deal, the EU Forest Strategy for 2030, the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, and the EU Bioeconomy Strategy. Positioned research to advance EU policy developments in climate resilience, biodiversity, forest monitoring, and the circular economy. Building on the overarching aim, the partnership's ambition is to launch and coordinate seven co-funded Joint Calls over a ten-year period (2026–2036) funding transnational projects that align closely with key EU strategic priorities to support a sustainable transition of forests, forestry and the forest-based sector. Guided by a Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA¹) developed through broad stakeholder engagement, this initiative will ensure that R&I interventions are centrally coordinated and strategically impactful. The Joint Calls will lead to the funding of research projects while facilitating transnational collaboration between a variety of stakeholders.

The first Joint Call of the European partnership FOREST brings together **36 Research Funding Organisations (RFOs) from 27 countries**.

The participating RFOs have provisionally reserved approximately €33 million for this call. Together with the EU co-contribution, this provides for a total **indicative Joint Call budget of up to €40 million**.

The scope and topics of the Joint Call derive from the official Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda of the partnership and were selected by the Research Funding Organisations (RFOs) participating in the Joint Call.

This first Joint Call is intentionally broad. This allows the flexibility to accommodate different research and innovation needs while fostering synergies between these areas and aligning with SRIA goals. The following topics are included and described in detail in Chapter (4) Topics.

- TOPIC 1 – Climate-Resilient Forest Systems
- TOPIC 2 – Adaptive and Multifunctional Forest Management Systems
- TOPIC 3 – Timber and Innovative Wood-Based Products
- TOPIC 4 – Forest Value Chains, Markets and Governance

FOREST will take all lawful steps to ensure confidentiality of information and documents obtained during the evaluation and selection procedures of the Joint Calls. Personal data collected within the Joint Calls are properly managed to comply with EU regulations.

¹ Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda, prepared in the frame of the <https://eufore.eu/> project, accessible under <https://doi.org/10.36333/rs12>)

(3) PARTICIPATING COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS

The following 36 funding organisations and programme owners are participating in the Joint Call and together form the **Call Steering Committee (CSC)**. Eligible for EU funding are only 34 of the 36 organisations (check general eligibility criteria p. 14)

34 agencies from EU Member States or Horizon Europe Associated Countries eligible for EU funding for this call (*as recipients of the financial support, at the time of the closing of the call by 02.12.2026, 13:00 CET)

Austria: **BMLUK/FFG** (Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Climate and Environmental Protection, Regions and Water Management; Austrian Research Promotion Agency)

Belgium: **FNRS** (Fund for Scientific Research)
FWO (The Research Foundation Flanders)

Croatia: **MZOM** (Ministry of Science, Education and Youth)

Czech Republic: **TA ČR** (Technology Agency of the Czech Republic)

Estonia: **ETAG** (Estonian Research Council)
MoC (Ministry of Climate)

Finland: **MMM** (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry)

AKA (Research Council of Finland)

BF (Innovation Funding Agency Business Finland)

France: **ANR** (French National Research Agency)

Germany: **BMFTR/FZJ-PtJ** (Federal Ministry of Research, Technology and Space; Project Management Jülich)

Hungary: **NKFIH** (National Research Development and Innovation Office)

Ireland: **DAFM** (Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine)

Italy: **MASAF** (Ministry of Agriculture, food sovereignty and forests)

BOZEN (Autonomous Province of Bolzano)

Latvia: **LZP** (Latvian Council of Science)

LAAFS (Latvian Academy of Agricultural and Forestry Sciences)

Lithuania: **LMT** (Research Council of Lithuania)

Moldova: **ANCD** (National Agency for Research and Development of the Republic of Moldova)

The Netherlands: Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries, Food Security and Nature (**LVVN**), acting as representative of the State of The Netherlands

Norway: **RCN** (The Research Council of Norway)

Poland: **NCBR** (National Center for Research and Development)

Romania: **ANC** (National Authority for Research)

Slovakia: **CVTI SR** (Slovak Centre of Scientific and Technical Information)

Slovenia: **MESY** (Ministry of Education, Science and Youth)

Spain: **AEI** (Research State Agency)

CDTI (Centre for the Development of Industrial Technology and Innovation)

Sweden: **SWEA** (Swedish Energy Agency)

VINNOVA (Swedish Governmental Agency for Innovation Systems)

FORMAS (Swedish Research Council for Environment, Agricultural Sciences and Spatial Planning)

Switzerland: **SNSF** (Swiss National Science Foundation)

Türkiye: **TUBITAK** (Scientific and Technological Research Council of Türkiye)

UK: **DEFRA** (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs)

Two agencies NOT eligible for EU funding:

Brazil: **CONFAP** (Brazilian National Council to State Funding Agencies)

Bulgaria: **BNSF** (Bulgarian National Science Fund)



(4) TOPICS / EXPECTED IMPACTS OF THE CALL

I. Call Objectives

Forests play a critical role in climate regulation, biodiversity conservation, ecosystem services, and the bioeconomy, while facing increasing pressures from climate change, disturbances, and competing societal demands. Addressing these challenges requires coordinated and policy-relevant research and innovation that strengthens resilience, sustainability, and the multifunctional role of forests.

The call is aligned with key European policy frameworks, including the European Green Deal, the EU Forest Strategy for 2030, the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, and the EU Bioeconomy Strategy, as well as related policy developments relevant to climate, biodiversity, forest monitoring, and the circular economy.

This joint call supports transnational research and innovation activities across the spectrum from fundamental research to applied research and, where appropriate, demonstration activities. Projects are expected to generate new knowledge, develop practical solutions, and contribute to implementation in policy, management, or industry contexts, while considering diversity of forests and forest-based sector.

Proposals should clearly demonstrate their relevance to one or more of the call topics and associated objectives and, where relevant, explain how the proposed activities contribute to broader European policy priorities and practical implementation needs. Projects are also encouraged, where appropriate, to contribute to the science-policy interface through tools, methodologies, indicators, or other relevant outputs.

II. Topic areas

Applicants must select the single topic that best reflects the primary focus of their proposal.

The selected topic determines the evaluation panel and corresponding ranking list. Proposals may address multiple topics but will be evaluated and ranked under one primary topic. Evaluation criteria will be applied consistently across all topics.

The topics provide strategic direction and facilitate evaluation. They are not exhaustive and do not restrict the submission of innovative or cross-cutting proposals aligned with the overall objectives of the call.

TOPIC 1 – Climate-Resilient Forest Systems (“How forests function and respond to climate change”).

Scope: This topic supports research and innovation addressing the resilience, adaptive capacity, and long-term sustainability of forest ecosystems under changing environmental conditions, including climate change and increasing disturbance pressures.

Objective: To strengthen the scientific basis for climate-resilient forest systems and support their adaptation and mitigation to climate change, within broader environmental and socioeconomic contexts.

Proposals should address, where relevant:

- carbon dynamics measurement, monitoring and assessment of carbon stocks and sinks
- adaptation pathways and strategies to enhance the resilience of forest ecosystems and forest management under climate change
- forest ecosystem processes and dynamics in the context of climate change, biodiversity, forest structure and ecosystem functioning
- disturbance regimes, including wildfires and other abiotic and biotic disturbances, system responses, and integrated approaches for pest and disease management
- landscape-level interactions and spatial dynamics
- genetic diversity, and adaptive capacity of forest systems, including assisted migration

Proposals are expected, where appropriate, to:

- contribute to decision-support tools, models, or indicators
- support sustainable forest management, monitoring, planning, or policy implementation



- consider implications for ecosystem services and long-term system resilience
- support socio-economic benefits and sustainable value creation
- improve early detection and early warning systems for potential future disturbances

TOPIC 2 – Adaptive and Multifunctional Forest Management Systems (“How forests should be managed under changing conditions”)

Scope: This topic supports research and innovation focused on the implementation of adaptive and multifunctional forest management systems that enhance resilience, sustainability, and the provision of multiple ecosystem services.

Objective: To support forest management approaches capable of responding to ecological change, disturbance risks, and evolving environmental, economic, and societal demands.

Proposals should address, where relevant:

- silvicultural systems and management approaches supporting resilient & multifunctional forests
- sustainable harvesting and wood mobilisation methods
- monitoring, assessment, and planning tools for adaptive management including the practical applicability of predictive models
- integration of forest genetic resources (FGR) considerations into management strategies
- operational, digital, and technical innovations supporting forest management
- risk reduction and adaptation strategies under changing environmental conditions
- trade-offs and synergies between ecosystem services under different forest management approaches

Proposals are expected, where appropriate, to:

- focus on sustainable forest management, implementation and decision-making processes
- be grounded in ecological evidence
- assess transferability and scalability across regions and forest types
- consider socio-economic, cultural, and governance factors influencing implementation including employment and downstream value chains

TOPIC 3 – Timber and Innovative Wood-Based Products (“How wood is transformed into innovative products”)

Scope: This topic supports research and innovation on the development, performance, and uptake of timber and innovative wood-based products contributing to decarbonisation and the circular bioeconomy.

Objective: To advance the development and market uptake of sustainable wood-based products and systems, supporting the substitution of fossil-based and carbon-intensive materials and contributing to low-carbon construction and manufacturing.

Proposals should address, where relevant:

- engineered timber, timber construction systems and applications
- high-value wood-based products, chemicals and materials development, with improved material performance, durability, repairability and recyclability
- substitution of fossil-based and other carbon-intensive materials, including methodologies to assess substitution effects
- substitution of polluting treatments of wood and process practices of wood-based material with more sustainable alternatives
- standardisation, testing, and certification systems
- Circular and resource-efficient use of wood-based products
- use of currently underutilised softwood and hardwood species through innovative processing methods
- Innovative manufacturing technologies
- approaches to increase market demand and consumer acceptance and uptake

Proposals are expected, where appropriate, to:

- consider environmental performance and lifecycle impacts, including carbon storage

- consider links to forest resource availability and sustainable supply
- contribute to decarbonisation objectives in construction and industry, including cleaner production processes

TOPIC 4 – Forest Value Chains, Markets and Governance (*“How forest-based sectors, markets and governance are organised”*)

Scope: This topic supports research and innovation strengthening the resilience, sustainability, and functioning of forest-based value chains, markets, and governance systems, supporting the transition towards a sustainable and circular forest-based bioeconomy.

Objective: To support resilient, sustainable, competitive, and innovative forest-based value chains and governance systems capable of responding to environmental, economic, and societal transitions.

Proposals should address, where relevant:

- forest-based value chains and market organisation
- Innovative business models, economic viability, investment readiness, production costs, investment frameworks, and emerging markets
- policy, regulatory, and governance instruments, standards, and evidence-based decision-support tools
- barriers to market uptake, innovation deployment and sector transformation, and diversification
- cascading use, circularity and efficient resource use across value chains
- skills, labour, education, workforce upskilling and reskilling and capacity building within the forest-based sector
- European resilience in sustainable raw material supply, value chains, local processing capacities and forest-based economies

Proposals are expected, where appropriate, to:

- address system-level governance and institutional frameworks
- consider environmental, social, and economic sustainability
- engage relevant actors across value chains and sectors, governance systems
- analyse scalability, transferability, and implementation pathways
- assess socio-economic implications of forest sector transitions
- address profitability, scalability, technology readiness, demonstration at industrial scale, market uptake, assets for the local economy, and regulatory context
- Contribute to maintain a competitive EU wood industry, create new value chains and new industries

Cross-Cutting Integration

In line with the [Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda \(SRIA\)](#) of the FOREST partnership, proposals are expected, where relevant, to reflect the interconnected nature of forest ecosystems, management systems, value chains, and societal dynamics.

Addressing these interconnected challenges may require inter- and transdisciplinary approaches involving the scientific disciplines necessary to address the research questions proposed.

This Joint Call intends to facilitate transnational collaborations among a variety of stakeholders (e.g., industry, small and medium-sized enterprises, stakeholder associations, research organisations, governmental organisations, non-governmental organisations). Where applicable, this multi-stakeholder approach encourages to make use of co-creation and co-implementation structures, via initiatives following, for example, a Living Lab² approach.

² **Living Labs:** Real-world experimentation environments fostering co-creation across disciplines and sectors, incorporating active user involvement, multi-stakeholder participation, co-creation, orchestration, and multi-method approaches, tailored to the complexity of forest systems, their multifunctionality and needs.

Consortia may cover basic and/or applied research and/or industrial research and development, close-to-market research. **Please check the “Funder Regulations” (Annex IV).**

III. Cross-Cutting Outcomes and Collective Impacts of Funded Projects

Projects funded under this call are expected collectively, , where relevant, to contribute to:

- enhance resilience and adaptive capacity of forest ecosystems under climate change
- improve forest management practices supporting multifunctionality and sustainability
- develop and increase uptake of sustainable forest-based products materials and solutions
- strengthen the competitiveness, resilience and strategic autonomy of forest-based value chains, markets, and governance systems
- contribute to climate mitigation and adaptation, biodiversity conservation, and the circular bioeconomy
- generate complementary knowledge and solutions across the four topic areas, supporting an integrated transition towards resilient forests and sustainable forest-based futures.

Projects should, where appropriate:

- support policy development and implementation
- provide practical tools, methodologies, or frameworks
- engage stakeholders across the forest-based sector and beyond



(5) GENERAL RULES FOR PARTICIPATION

I. GENERAL RULES

- **SCOPE:** The proposed research project must be consistent with the scope of this Call and address at least one of the topics mentioned in Chapter (4). The thematic priorities of the RFOs involved in the proposal must be respected (check Annex IV).
- **DURATION:** Projects funded under this call shall have a duration of 36 months. Possible start date for projects recommended for funding is December 2027 to April 2028.
- **AVOID DUPLICATION:** Applicants are responsible for ensuring that the proposed work does not overlap with, duplicate, or receive parallel funding from other sources. Duplication of funding is not allowed for the same (whole or part) research and innovation project.
- **BALANCED COOPERATION:** Proposals must demonstrate added value from the international cooperation, in comparison to national/regional projects, which should be evident in the layout and execution of the work packages. The work plan must show real cooperation and project outputs are expected to provide benefits to all Partner countries. Consortia also need to be balanced between countries both in terms of number of Partners and distribution of budget, such that all project Partners contribute to and benefit from an equitable and balanced cooperation. Please note that additionally some national/regional RFOs may have some funding limits per applicant (see Annex IV).
- **MULTI-STAKEHOLDER-APPROACH:** The initiative intends to facilitate transnational collaboration between a variety of stakeholders (e.g., research organisations, industry, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), stakeholder associations, governmental organisations, NGOs).
Interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary forms of cooperation are expected, i.e. between natural sciences, technological innovation, humanities and social sciences (societal impacts).
Additionally, involvement of a variety of stakeholders from different geographic areas will support overall European cooperation.
Where possible, use of co-creation and co-implementation structures, such as via initiatives following the Living lab approach, are encouraged.
- **GENDER BALANCE:** Proposals should strive to foster gender balance at all levels of personnel involved in projects; specifically, among the personnel named in the proposal primarily responsible for carrying out the research and/or innovation activities. In addition, gender equality should be promoted as well in terms of the expected benefit from the knowledge created.
- **EARLY-CAREER:** The participation of early-career scientists in consortia as well as knowledge transfer, network building, capacity building, and scientific literacy activities is encouraged.
- **COSTS:** The total project costs and requested funding in a proposal is by default not restricted; the costs must be appropriate to meet the project goals. Nonetheless, the individual national/regional budget per Partner per proposal is limited. Please check the “Funder Regulations” (Annex IV).
- **DISSEMINATION:** Plans for dissemination, communication and exploitation of the project and its results have to be described and will be taken into account in the evaluation as they increase the quality of the implementation, uptake of results and impact. Appropriate resources should be dedicated to the dissemination, communication and exploitation activities and the involvement of stakeholders.
- **DATA MANAGEMENT:** Plans for data management are an essential component of the success of a research and innovation project, allowing the practices of FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Re-usable data) and open data sharing as it improves the quality, efficiency and responsiveness of research. Therefore, applicants must include a Data Management Plan³ as a distinct deliverable within the first six months of the project. The projects will be requested to submit metadata on all the resources

³ The EC published Guidelines on FAIR Data Management in Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe: https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants_manual/hi/oa_pilot/h2020-hi-oa-data-mgt_en.pdf



directly generated by the project, as well as additional information on how this data will be used; if and how the data will be made accessible for verification and re-use; and how the data will be curated and preserved. This deliverable will evolve during the lifetime of the project in order to present the status of the project's reflections on data management.

The “**GENERAL RULES FOR PARTICIPATION**” will be strongly taken into account by the International Expert Panel during the evaluation of the pre-proposals and full proposals.

II. TYPES OF PARTNERS

- **PARTNER:** A Partner in a proposal and transnational project is an entity or person performing tasks and requesting funding from one of the RFOs. Accordingly, a Partner must be eligible for funding from a RFO participating in this Joint Call.
- **ASSOCIATED PARTNER:** An Associated Partner in a proposal and transnational project is an entity or person performing tasks and contributing to the project in various forms (in steering committees, as advisors, as providers of data, etc.) having costs budgeted while not directly requesting funding from any RFO participating in this Joint Call.
 - Partners from THIRD countries (not participating in the Joint Call) are also encouraged to join a consortium as Associated Partners. This does not affect the minimum requirement of three Partners from three different countries participating in this Joint Call (see Chapter 3 “Participating countries and organisations”). Projects including third country partners must ensure that the exploitation of results focuses on the participating countries (see Chapter (3.)).
 - Associated Partners shall finance their activities from other sources and shall provide, as part of the pre-proposal, a “Letter of Intent” outlining their intended support for the project. At the full proposal stage, a “Letter of Financial Commitment” specifying their own or other source of funding must be provided (please check 6. General eligibility criteria).
 - It is mandatory for Associated Partners to complete the Partner profile in the submission and evaluation system for proposal submission.
- **COORDINATOR:** The Coordinator is a Partner and thus an entity, which coordinates and manages the research consortium at pre-proposal and full proposal stage, as well as over the entire lifetime of the transnational project. The Coordinator appoints one Principal Investigator (PI) who is the central contact point for the Call Office and all Partners of one proposal and selected project, respectively.
- **PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:** Each partner in a proposal, including the Coordinator as well as each Partner and Associated Partner, need to appoint a Principal Investigator (PI). The PI is the person having access and login for the submission and evaluation system and is the contact point for the Call Office and RFOs. Accordingly, the PI of the coordinating institution is the person initiating and submitting the proposal. The same person cannot act as Principal Investigator of a Coordinator for more than one proposal.
- **STAKEHOLDER:** Contributors to a proposal which do not perform any tasks but play a role as e.g., advisory body, can be listed as Stakeholder.
- **INDIVIDUAL IN SEVERAL PROPOSALS:** An individual researcher affiliated to several organisations may represent only one partner organisation in a proposal and accordingly cannot request funding from more than one RFO in one proposal.

(The number of Partners per consortium is not limited, but the manageability of the consortium must be demonstrated (efficient consortia typically consist of 4-8 Partners for medium-sized projects). Failure of a Partner to meet any of the eligibility criteria, including the RFO's specific eligibility criteria, will result in the rejection of the entire proposal. In any case, applicants should be aware that a higher number of represented countries or Partners in a consortium will not automatically result in a more positive evaluation of the proposal.)

Further information on DMP can be gained here: www.openaire.eu/how-to-comply-with-horizon-europe-mandate-for-rdm



III. ETHICS ASSESSMENT

For all proposed research activities funded by the European Partnership FOREST, the ethical dimension is an integral part of research from the beginning to the end, and ethical compliance is seen as pivotal to achieving real research excellence.

Applicants are required to describe any potential ethical aspects of the work to be carried out, and how the project will fulfil applicable requirements in institutional, national/regional and EU legislation, in a specific Ethics Self-assessment section of the proposal. For more information on each of the ethics issues and how to address them, including detailed legal references, see the EC Commission guidelines on '*How to Complete your Ethics Self-Assessment*'⁴.

Any proposal deemed to violate fundamental ethical principles shall not be selected. Assessment of the significance of ethics issues will be made applying the criteria published by the European Commission in its guidelines for the Horizon Europe Framework Programme.

If the proposal is selected for funding the applicant is reminded that, before starting an action task raising ethical issues, s/he must have obtained all approvals or other mandatory documents needed for implementing the task, notably from any (national or local) ethics committee or other bodies such as data protection authorities.

If activities undertaken in non-EU countries raise ethics issues, the applicants must ensure that the research conducted outside the EU is legal in the remaining partner countries as well.

IV. ACCESS TO GENETIC RESOURCES AND BENEFIT-SHARING

Transnational Research and Innovation Project Coordinators and partners participating in projects falling within the scope of the regulations on access to genetic resources and benefit-sharing (as identified in the ethics section of the proposal) will be required to provide evidence to demonstrate compliance with these obligations and must ensure that all data relating to such genetic resources or associated traditional knowledge are kept in order to demonstrate that the necessary due diligence has been exercised in accordance with the Nagoya Protocol.

The Transnational Project must also comply with the EU "Do no significant harm" principle (DNSH)⁵. The applicant must integrate environmental considerations into all stages of research and innovation projects, from design to implementation and evaluation. It ensures that research, even if beneficial in one area, does not cause significant harm to other environmental objectives

⁴ Link: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/how-to-complete-your-ethics-self-assessment_en.pdf

⁵ EU „DNSH" principle: <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/support/faq/15485>



(6) **ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**

Failure of one Partner or Associated Partner to meet any of the eligibility criteria, including the individual RFOs eligibility criteria, will result in the rejection of the entire proposal.

It is therefore essential that proposals meet all eligibility criteria.

I. GENERAL ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

1. Proposals must be written in English and submitted via the FOREST Electronic Submission and Evaluation System (ESES) that will be provided on the Joint Call website at <https://forest-partnership.eu/jointcall2026>
 - The submission of a pre-proposal is compulsory. Pre-proposals must be submitted by **02.12.2026, 13:00 CET**.
 - A full proposal submission is only possible following the invitation to submit a full proposal. Full proposals must be submitted by **02.06.2027 13:00 CEST**.
2. Proposals must be complete, respect any page and character limits and include any mandatory Annexes. There is a technical block to upload excess pages over the max. number of pages.
3. Project consortia must include:
 - at least three independent legal entities,
 - from at least three different EU Member States or associated countries participating in the Joint Call,
 - including at least two countries eligible for EU funding (see chapter 3 “Participating countries and organisations”).
4. Each consortium applying for funding must be led by a Coordinator which must be an organisation requesting funding from one of the agencies participating in the Joint Call (see chapter 3). As such, an Associated Partner cannot be Coordinator. The same natural person cannot act as a Coordinator for more than one proposal in this Call. Associated Partners’ contributions must not be essential for the successful implementation of the project, and they shall not be counted towards the minimum number of Partners
5. Associated partners are required to:
 - provide a “Letter of Intent” at pre-proposal stage, outlining their intended project support
 - provide a “Letter of financial commitment” at the full proposal stage, specifying their own or other source of funding. The absence of a letter of commitment may result in the rejection of the entire proposal.

II. NATIONAL ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

National/regional funding regulations apply within this Joint Call. In addition to the general rules and procedures laid down in this document, individual funding organisations may have limitations regarding the types of projects and organisations they can support.

If national/regional forms are required, these must be submitted directly to the respective Funding Agency. All Partners must read carefully the “Funder Regulations” (Annex IV) and are obliged to contact their RFOs before submitting a proposal to make sure that they respect all the RFOs eligibility criteria and rules.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to contact their respective RFOs no later than 17th November 2026, to ensure that funders have sufficient time to respond to eligibility confirmation requests.

Failure of one Partner to meet any of the eligibility criteria, including the individual RFOs eligibility criteria, will result in the rejection of the entire proposal. It is therefore essential that proposals meet all eligibility criteria.

(7) APPLICATION & EVALUATION

I. SUMMARY OF TWO-STEP PROCEDURE

	1 st step: PRE-PROPOSAL STAGE	2 nd step: FULL PROPOSAL STAGE
PRO-POSAL DEVELOPMENT	As a first step, a pre-proposal has to be submitted. The objective of a pre-proposal is to present the project idea and the consortium without providing a detailed work plan. The template for the pre-proposal is available within the document section of the submission and evaluation system.	The Coordinators of the selected pre-proposals will be invited via email to submit a full proposal (template available within the document section of the submission and evaluation system). The invitation letter may include conditions to be respected for the submission of the full proposal, e.g. an invitation to add Partners requesting funding from undersubscribed RFOs. Any new Partner must meet all eligibility criteria to receive funding from its RFO. The inclusion of additional Associated Partners has to be requested to the Call Office (see chapter 7, III) and is permitted ONLY upon submission of a letter of financial commitment. Any proposed change requires prior endorsement both by the Call Office and by the respective concerned RFO(s) (see chapter 7. III.).
SUBMISSION	Deadline pre-proposals submission 02.12.2026 (13:00 CET)	Deadline full proposals submission is 02.06.2027 (13:00 CEST)
EVALUATION	Proposals that are not submitted on time via the submission and evaluation system will be rejected. All proposals are subject to confidential evaluation in three steps: 1. FORMAL ELIGIBILITY CHECK: The proposals will first be checked for formal eligibility by the Call Office with regard to mandatory eligibility criteria defined in Chapter 6. Proposals not meeting the requirements will be rejected by the Call Office, following consultation with the CSC. 2. NATIONAL ELIGIBILITY: Afterwards the funding organisations will check the eligibility of the proposals and their possibility for national/regional funding in line with the restrictions laid down in the Annex IV. Some national/regional funding bodies <i>may</i> also require specific documents (application forms or similar) from “their” applicants at this stage. Such national documents are not submitted centrally, but directly to the relevant RFO. 3. SCIENTIFIC EVALUATION: Proposals complying with both sets of eligibility criteria above will be evaluated by the International Expert Panel (IEP) with regard to the criteria laid down in Annex I to this Call Announcement. The IEP members will be independent of the CSC; a strict Conflict-of-Interest policy will be followed. Each proposal is evaluated at least by three international experts. All IEP members must sign a “Confidentiality Agreement” as well as a “Declaration on Conflict of Interest” to ensure confidentiality and avoid any conflict of interest during the evaluation and ranking procedures of the Joint Call. At the end of the evaluation process, the IEP will establish a final ranking list of proposals per topic of the call.	
SELECTION	The Call Steering Committee (CSC) will decide on which projects to invite to Step 2, following the eligibility check and the evaluation made by the IEP.	Strictly based on the ranking lists per topic of the call and the available national/regional funding and EU contribution, with the objective of achieving a balanced portfolio across the call topics, the CSC will decide on the projects to be funded. This is in accordance with the Horizon Europe regulations and restrictions for co-funded calls in partnerships.

II. CHECK OF ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Proposals are assessed as **either eligible or ineligible** based on the general criteria defined in this call (Chapter 6) and the applicable “Funder Regulations” (Annex IV).

Failure of one Partner or Associated Partner to meet any of the general eligibility criteria, will result in the rejection of the entire proposal.

Issues affecting compliance with national/regional or general eligibility criteria (incl. funding limits, or consortium requirements) will lead to ineligibility and cannot be corrected after submission.

The information given in the pre-proposals is binding. No substantial change to the scientific content (incl. scope, objectives, activities) outlined in a pre-proposal will be allowed by the CSC at the full proposal stage.

A limited number of changes with respect to the administrative details may be allowed upon approval by the Call Office and the RFOs concerned, provided they are in line with the general and national/regional rules of the call. A list of permissible changes is provided in the following section. The changes will have to be declared in the full proposal.

III. CHANGES between Pre-proposal and Full Proposal

Changes between pre-proposal and full proposal are limited to minor corrections and adjustments that do not affect the **scientific content** and objectives of the proposal, its eligibility or main consortium composition. The following changes between the pre- and full proposal stage are possible, but always require **prior endorsement both by the Call Office and by the respective concerned RFO(s)**.

1. BUDGET / ADMINISTRATIVE CHANGES

- A minor change of budget or administrative details may be allowed by the relevant RFO.
- The requested funding of a Partner in a full proposal may be lower, but should not be higher than in the pre-proposal. Deviations from this rule are allowed only in very exceptional cases.

Only in case of force majeure, a change of Principal Investigator of the coordinating entity can exceptionally be allowed.

2. ADDITION OF PARTNERS FROM UNDERREPRESENTED COUNTRIES

- Relevant partners from underrepresented countries may be added to enhance the original focus of the proposal, provided no changes are made to the scientific content.
- ONLY ONE new partner may be added per consortium (not the coordinator)
- The list of underrepresented countries and RFOs will be included on the official FOREST JC2026 website at the start of the full proposal phase. Partners from underrepresented countries might be found in the FOREST partnering tool.
- All new Partners must comply with the eligibility criteria (Chapter 6) as well as applicable RFO regulations (Annex IV) and will have to complete the Partner profile in the submission and evaluation system for proposal submission.

If any new partner in the full proposal is ineligible, the entire consortium will be deemed ineligible and the proposal rejected.

3. ADDING/REMOVING ASSOCIATED PARTNERS

- Adding and/or removing an Associated Partner does not necessitate the approval of a RFO but only of the Call Office.
- It is mandatory for Associated Partners in the full proposal stage to submit a “Letter of Financial Commitment” and complete the Partner profile in the submission and evaluation system for proposal submission.



- Associated partners may be more than one, when the scientific content will not change through this.

4. REQUESTED CHANGES (Do not need prior approval by call office or RFOs)

- The formal invitation to submit a full proposal (sent by the Call Office after the decision on pre-proposals recommended for full proposal stage) may include required changes the consortium has to implement within the full proposal. These changes may be proposed:
 - a) by the International Expert Panel during the scientific evaluation or
 - b) the respective RFOs during the national eligibility checks

(Minor issues that do not affect eligibility, e.g., small discrepancies between national and international budget tables, calculation errors not affecting funding thresholds, incorrect cost categorisation, minor administrative inconsistencies)

In order to request a modification of the project proposal data, applicants must contact the call office and the respective RFOs via E-mail and explain the motivation of the changes in relation to the project ambition and scope.

Since requests for changes may take time to be processed, they must be formally submitted via E-mail as early as possible within the first 4 weeks after invitation to submit a full proposal.

The requests for changes will be assessed and allowed by the call office and the RFOs involved in the proposal.

IV. INTERNATIONAL EXPERT PANEL (IEP)

On behalf of the Call Steering Committee, the Call Office will establish an International Expert Panel (IEP).

The experts will include researchers, practitioners and other stakeholders, with recognised expertise and skills in the research topic areas and overall objectives of the Joint Call, considering co-creation, interdisciplinary and cross-sectorial research, innovation and practice. The composition of the International Expert Panel is expected to be balanced in terms of nationality, gender and disciplinary background. Experts are obliged to be independent, impartial and objective, and to behave in a professional manner throughout. The identity of the Experts taking part in the evaluation will only be known to the CSC (whose representatives are requested to keep the identity of the experts confidential). The International Expert Panel will sign a "Confidentiality Agreement", perform a Conflict-of-Interest (CoI) check and sign a respective "Declaration on Conflict-of-Interest" prior to starting the evaluation process. In order to avoid any Conflicts of Interest, experts will **not** evaluate any proposal with potential CoI, and must also leave the virtual room during any discussion of this proposal.

Each eligible proposal will be evaluated individually by three IEP members, based on the criteria laid down in Annex I. The IEP members will then, discuss and agree on consensus scores as well as a Joint Evaluation Statement for each proposal.

On the basis of the evaluation results, four separate ranking lists (one per topic) are established. These ranking lists shall serve as the reference for the selection of

- a. pre-proposals to be invited to submit a full proposal, and
- b. Full proposals selected for funding

For more details, please see below V. Selection.

After a joint discussion in the frame of an expert panel meeting and based on the evaluation scores, final ranking lists of proposals per topic will be provided.

Full proposals identified as raising ethics issues through the ethics self-assessment, or evaluation process may be referred to the FOREST Ethics Advisor for review in order to fulfil the obligations outlined in Chapter 5. The FOREST Ethics Advisor will be bound by a confidentiality agreement.

All collected data will be handled in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), see also Chapter (9).

V. SELECTION

Pre-proposals to be invited to submit a full proposal

The decision on the invitation to submit a full proposal will be jointly taken by the CSC, following the order of the 4 ranking lists provided after the evaluation made by the IEP. Where required, and without affecting the relative order of proposals within a ranking list, the criteria set out below may be applied to arbitrate between the ranking lists.

These criteria are intended to ensure that:

1. the invited pre-proposals will normally correspond to national and/or regional funding requests not exceeding three times the available national or regional budget of each Research Funding Organisation (RFO). Where participating Research Funding Organisations increase their committed budget before invitations to submit full proposals are issued, the number of invited proposals may be adjusted accordingly.
2. the invited pre-proposals ensure broad participation of the countries involved in the Call;
3. an appropriate balance between topics, in terms of the number of proposals invited to second stage.

RFOs may adapt their funding commitments, in order to enable the invitation of as many highly ranked pre-proposals as possible, while respecting the ranking lists established by the International Expert Panel (IEP).

An independent expert will observe the selection procedure and its requirements (in particular, for the evaluation of the IEP and the ranking). This independent observer will document the process in a report.

Full proposals selected for funding

Funding recommendations shall be made following the ranking lists established by the IEP and within the limits of the available budgets of the participating Research Funding Organisations (RFOs) and EU contribution.

In a joint selection meeting, the CSC shall identify the highest-ranked proposals that can be supported within their committed budgets. Where appropriate, adjustments to funding commitments, may be made in order to maximise the number of highly ranked proposals that can be funded.

The final funding decision shall be taken by each RFO in accordance with its national or regional rules and procedures.

The allocation of financial contributions by each RFO shall follow the ranking lists and comply with national eligibility rules. While not all RFOs may be able to fund proposals under all topics, funding decisions shall respect the ranking order established by the IEP. (Please note that RFOs may have restrictions on the topics they are able to support. For details on each funder's thematic focus, please consult Annex IV.)

As in the pre-proposal step, the independent observer will again verify that the selection procedure meets the requirements (particularly for the evaluation of the International Expert Panel, the ranking and the evaluation meeting). The observer will document the process in a report.

VI. INFORMATION TO APPLICANTS

The Call Office will inform the coordinators of all research consortia of the outcome of each assessment phase as follows:

1. Outcome of the formal and national eligibility check
2. Proposal assessment results (incl. Joint Evaluation Statement and evaluation scores)

The coordinators of the consortia recommended for funding will additionally be informed of the next steps to be taken in order to start national/regional contract negotiations. The coordinators of the research consortia are responsible for communicating the decisions to the consortium partners.

VII. REDRESS

- A redress procedure at both stages of each Call will give applicants the opportunity to appeal against the decisions of the CSC on project funding, in case they see a breach of transparency or fairness in the Call processes. Therefore, the Coordinator of the proposal shall submit their appeal to the FOREST Call Office via email no more than 14 calendar days after the date of dispatch of the evaluation outcome email by the Call Office.
- These appeals will only be allowed on managerial aspects of the Call (such as procedural aspects of the evaluation, eligibility checks or selection) and not on the scientific or technical judgement of appropriately qualified experts of the International Expert Panel, which remains unchallengeable.
- The Call Office will, in agreement with the CSC, assess and answer to these appeals in due time.



(8) INFORMATION FOR FUNDED PROJECTS /MONITORING

I. GENERAL

- Once the Coordinators have been informed of the funding decision, all Partners of the proposals selected for funding will need to get in contact with their respective RFO in order to start the grant negotiation process according to the applicable national regulations.
- This means that, although this Call is co-funded by the EU, research funding will be managed by national funding organisation, i.e., the final decision on the total grant for each Partner is decided by the respective RFO. All research grants will be administered through the participating Research Funding Organisations and applicants must comply with the respective terms and conditions (see Annex IV), subject to clarification of any specific ethical issues raised by the evaluation or the FOREST Ethics Advisor.
- The EU contribution is managed by the RFOs. It is not possible to apply for the EU contribution directly, but only to apply for funding from RFOs listed in Chapter (3) "Participating countries and organisations".
- Applicable EU and national/regional regulations on all aspects of funding must also be respected, e.g., state aid regulations (see, e.g., https://competition-policy.ec.europa.eu/state-aid/overview_en).

II. FOREST PUBLICATION OF SUCCESSFUL PROJECTS

- After the final selection meeting a list of the successful projects (project title and acronym) will be published on the FOREST partnership website and related communication channels, mentioning that this decision is subject to final approval by the RFOs concerned.
- Upon completion of all contract negotiations, the following full proposal information will be added: project duration, publishable project summary, total requested funding, Coordinator organisation and country (incl. contact information of its Principal Investigator (PI)); Partner organisations and countries (incl. principal investigator name of each (associated) Partner)
- Regularly, projects are also requested to prepare popular science summaries of the project contents for FOREST publications (e.g. for brochures, digital newsletters, the website).

III. MONITORING

- **REPORTS:** In addition to the standard requirements of a Research Funding Organisation, consortia will be asked for one midterm (M18) and one final summary report (M36). Reporting will consist of a project status report and an in-depth monitoring survey to measure project progress and the contribution made to the overall aims of the Joint Call and FOREST's general objectives. The reports will include an update on the ethics self-assessment and documentation on how potential ethical issues are addressed. These reports will feed into the monitoring of the implementation of the FOREST partnership. Detailed information on the monitoring procedures as well as templates will be provided to the coordinators of the funded projects right after the projects have started. The Coordinator of each project will be responsible for compiling and submitting reports to the FOREST Partnership on behalf of the project consortium.
- **EVENTS:** Representatives from funded consortia have to participate and represent their projects in formal kick-off, mid-term and final meetings. The seminars will aim to bring together researchers and stakeholders from industry, academia and policy-making organisations in the forest-based bioeconomy sector in order to discuss the projects' objectives/results as well as to facilitate information exchange and networking. **Coordinators must accordingly include budget for attendance of five mandatory joint network meetings** in their finance plan of the proposal (in addition to their own project meetings)

IV. OBLIGATIONS OF FUNDED PROJECTS

- **CONSORTIUM AGREEMENT:** For some RFOs, a signed consortium agreement (also including associated partners) might be required prior to start of the project for release of funds. It is strongly recommended that successful consortia check this requirement with their RFOs. Support for the preparation of a Consortium Agreement can be found on the DESCA webpage (<https://www.desca-agreement.eu/desca-model-consortium-agreement/>).
- **DATA MANAGEMENT:** is an essential component of the success of a research and innovation project, allowing the practices of FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Re-usable data) and open data sharing as it improves the quality, efficiency and responsiveness of research. Therefore, applicants must include a Data Management Plan⁶ as a distinct deliverable within the first six months of the project. The projects will be requested to submit metadata on all the resources directly generated by the project, as well as additional information on how this data will be used, if and how the data will be made accessible for verification and re-use, and how the data will be curated and preserved. This deliverable will evolve during the lifetime of the project in order to present the status of the project's reflections on data management.
- **OTHER ACTIVITIES:** In addition to the research seminars from above (III. Monitoring), FOREST will also arrange meetings focusing on specific aspects (e.g., communication) or overarching partner-ship events. Coordinators must include accordingly budget for attendance of two meetings (additional to the three monitoring events listed under 8.III) to be able to attend (some of) these meetings. For budgeting purposes, it is suggested to assume these meetings will take place in Brussels.
- **CHANGES:** In case of significant deviations from the work programme or changes of the consortium composition during the lifetime of the project, the Coordinator must inform the Follow-Up Secretariat (details on this will be announced to successful proposals), who will contact the relevant funding organisations to agree on the proper action to be taken.
- **REFERENCE:** Communication and dissemination of project-related information and results, including scientific publications, must always provide a clear reference to the FOREST partnership and its co-funding provided by the European Union. Partnership communication guidelines, incl. the use of a common visual identity have to be used, where applicable. The RFO's regulations in terms of acknowledgement of national/regional grants must also be respected.

⁶ The EC published Guidelines on FAIR Data Management in Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe: https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants_manual/hi/oa_pilot/h2020-hi-oa-data-mgt_en.pdf

Further information on DMP can be gained here: <https://www.openaire.eu/how-to-comply-with-horizon-europe-mandate-for-rdm>

(9) DATA PROTECTION

All personal data provided to the FOREST partnership in the execution of the Call (e. g. proposals, reviewers and expert assessments, mailing lists, tracking websites, registration for activities and events) will be collected, stored and processed in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (Regulation EU 679/2016).

For more information, please consult the privacy policy on the submission and evaluation system.