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Novel ecosystems: biodiversity, socio-ecological consequences and future trajectories (BiodivFuture), Nederlandse Organisatie voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek

Document 1: Announcement of Opportunity

The Funding Organisations in Biodiversa+ Partnership have joined efforts to organise and fund an international call for transnational research proposals on

Novel ecosystems: biodiversity, socio-ecological consequences and future trajectories (BiodivFuture)

1. Introduction

The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) published the Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES, 2019) which provided unequivocal evidence that biodiversity is declining at a faster rate than at any other time in human history. Multiple anthropogenic direct and indirect drivers are implicated in the unprecedented and rapid change to our natural world. Major direct drivers of biodiversity loss are climate change, land- and sea-use change and intensification, pollution, invasive alien species and over-exploitation of natural resources. Key indirect drivers identified include demographic change, socio-cultural, economic and governance changes, and technological progress. The combined effects of these direct and indirect drivers are leading to detrimental consequences, including negative impacts on ecosystem functioning, water availability and quality, soil quality, food security and nutrition, human, plant and animal health, and resilience to the impacts of climate change (IPBES, 2025). Taken together, our planet and our societies are changing resulting in novel ecosystems (Hobbs et al. 2013; Box 1). Anticipating the future natural world and embedded human social systems create a major challenge for proactively supporting biodiversity and ecosystem services (Evers et al. 2018).

As a response to the global biodiversity crisis, the Convention on Biological Diversity sets out the global 2050 vision of 'Living in harmony with nature', also corresponding to the European Union (EU) vision that, by 2050, biodiversity and its benefits to people will be protected, valued, enhanced and restored (8th EU Environmental Action Programme, EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030). To achieve these visions, 196 countries adopted in 2022 the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KM-GBF, 2022). The framework defines four long-term goals for desirable and resilient socio-ecological systems: (A) to protect, enhance and restore ecosystems; (B) to prosper with nature; (C) to share benefits fairly; and (D) to invest and collaborate.

In this context, the European Biodiversity partnership – Biodiversa+ – is launching a joint research call to **support future-looking research and innovation projects that will address biodiversity and novel ecosystems** (see Box 1), **as well as their socio-ecological dynamics and consequences relating to the sustainability goals of the KM-GBF and associated future pathways and trajectories of change.** Anthropogenic influences on nature are leading to far-reaching changes in ecosystems' functions and species compositions, sometimes up to the emergence of novel ecosystems. In fact, only a very limited proportion of ecosystems can still be considered genuinely "natural" or under historically near-pristine conditions. Human-driven changes can have both negative and/or positive outcomes for certain species and ecosystem functions. This raises important questions for biodiversity protection and ecosystem restoration, including how human influence can be adequately considered as a shaping factor, how restoration goals and baselines can be defined under changing conditions, and how ecosystem functions can be maintained or restored in highly modified environment. For example, the implementation of environmental legislation, conservation programmes and sustainable ecosystem management practices in recent decades has, in some contexts, contributed to improvements in the conservation status of species, biodiversity, and certain habitats (EEA, 2020). In any case, the pervasive and accelerating human influence that defines the Anthropocene will continue to shape and structure novel ecosystems, with a wide range of possible outcomes, that inevitably include risks, opportunities, benefits, and trade-offs. Against this background, this call addresses the need to advance our fundamental understanding of novel ecosystems and their biodiversity, their complex socio-ecological dynamics under current and future trajectories of change, and their ecological, societal, economic and cultural implications, as a basis for a global transition towards ecological sustainability and societal security.

Box 1. Novel ecosystems – a conceptual framework to set the scene
Novel ecosystems have been defined by Hobbs et al. in 2013 as "*a system of abiotic, biotic and social components (and their interactions) that, by virtue of human influence, differ from those that prevailed historically, having a tendency to self-organise, and manifest novel qualities without intensive human management*". Since the publication of this paper, the limits of this definition have been challenged by different disciplines and other definitions have emerged. Overall, the conceptual framework of novel ecosystems usually comprises of (1) new ecological communities (including species living outside their historical native ranges), (2) which present a suite of interactions and processes consistent with a self-organised, functioning ecosystem, and (3) are unlikely to revert to conditions preceding their emergence, with or without human intervention, due to significant biotic and abiotic changes. Building on this framework and acknowledging the plurality of views and definitions, proposals submitted to this call must demonstrate how they are addressing novel ecosystems.

2. Objectives of the call

Moving beyond the traditional approach to biodiversity conservation, which focuses on species assemblage with reference to historical baselines, **this call focuses on understanding novel ecosystems, their evolution and associated (complex) socio-ecological (incl. biodiversity) dynamics along current and potential future trajectories of change**. Applicants should pay particular attention to the ecological functioning as well as the species composition and structure of novel ecosystems, including the present and future environmental, social, economic and political drivers that shape their emergence. They should investigate current trajectories of change andexplore future scenarios, encompassing biodiversity, ecosystem functions, and the socio-economic structures and processes that these ecosystems support and are shaped by. Accounting for the diverse world views, applicants should address the risks, opportunities and trade-offs related to novel ecosystems. Intensively managed systems that are highly simplified in their ecological community and processes compared with natural and semi natural ecosystems (e.g. monocultural agricultural systems, intensive aquaculture and plantation forestry) are out of scope. How novel ecosystems interact with and are impacted by these intensively managed systems could be in scope.

In the face of inevitable and potentially irreversible change, **knowledge generated under this call should ultimately lead to actions to achieve impacts that sustain resilient, interconnected, diverse and ecologically functioning ecosystems**. This could include critical reflection on what constitutes ecosystem states that best preserve or restore natural resources by taking multiple costs and benefits (trade-offs) into account and the diversity of contexts, scales, perspectives and world views. Well-functioning ecosystems should benefit people and protect nature at scales from local to global and emphasise biodiversity, trophic complexity, economic vitality, and societal well-being.

Research supported by this call should investigate the causes (drivers), effects (biological responses), and outcomes (including opportunities, risks and trade-offs) of current and future trajectories of change. It should bring to bear the best current understanding of ecosystem assembly rules, of ecosystem dynamics and test our current theories of how ecosystems respond to changes in drivers and composition. It should preferably explore the full range of options to address ongoing change (e.g., the Resist-Accept-Direct [RAD] framework) and identify potential pathways to resilient socio-ecological dynamics that could be supported in a cost-effective manner. The call seeks strategies to better understand and navigate irreversible ecosystem change, including pathways and actions to support resilient outcomes across different ecological and societal contexts. Such outcomes may include the enabling of transitions to new ecological states that are non-degraded, future-resilient ecosystems better adjusted to the new conditions, with halted or reversed biodiversity loss. Alongside this, it can also include approaches aiming to increase societal acceptance of ecological transitions. Additionally, projects should consider how adaptive management of novel ecosystems can ensure and enhance long-term societal acceptance and economic resilience through ongoing monitoring and adjustment of strategies to promote sustainable outcomes, and responsible use of natural resources in the face of uncertainty. It is critical that advances in knowledge consider, respect and account for diverse worldviews and recognise the plurality of nature's values to human societies.

By doing so, projects are expected to support research, knowledge generation and innovation that will contribute to inform policy and interventions to support progress towards the 2050 sustainability goals adopted through the KM-GBF (2022), and to guide future frameworks for action beyond 2050.

3. Expectations of funded projects: excellence, impact and transnational added-value

Research supported under this call is expected to significantly improve our understanding of novel ecosystems and their related socio-ecological dynamics, based on strong empirical evidence and/or

theoretical concepts and system modelling. Projects should provide sound scientific basis to develop and implement concrete practical policy and management strategies leading to resilient futures. The projects are not intended to implement these strategies themselves, but to provide indications on how suggested measures might work in practice. This can be demonstrated by including experimentation and evaluation in the project design, from pilot tests, iterations and validations in real-world conditions up to demonstrating solutions in representative contexts (territorial, urban, rural, productive or sectoral). Also, approaches encompassing new technologies (remote sensing, eDNA, genomics, etc.) as well as qualitative and relational approaches for detecting, understanding, monitoring and predicting changes in ecosystems are welcome under this call. In this regard, the call builds upon the outcomes from research funded under previous Biodiversa+ thematic priorities. **The combination of novel, excellent research, high societal and political impact and significant transnational added-value** are core expectations of this call. Regardless of the geographical location of the ecosystems studied, proposals should clearly demonstrate how the findings and recommendations of the funded projects will be of broad relevance to Europe and/or at the global level, even when novel ecosystems outside Europe are included.

Projects are strongly encouraged to pursue inter- and transdisciplinary approaches, underpinned by effective communication, targeted outreach, and open science principles. This covers both blue skies fundamental and applied research, with an integrative perspective on novel ecosystems and socio-ecological dynamics, and underpinned by a clear and robust theoretical framework. Knowledge gaps on novel ecosystems and their emergence, functioning, and resilience should therefore be addressed by consortia comprising researchers from a range of relevant disciplines, which may consist of the natural sciences, social sciences, humanities, environmental economics, policy studies and/or the arts. Engagement of experts and stakeholders outside academia[1] is encouraged while ensuring that such transdisciplinary collaborations adhere to the ethics and principles of responsible research. Collaborations may include local communities, indigenous peoples, managers, policy makers, local governments, and industry, etc.). The Biodiversa+ Stakeholder Engagement Handbook is a practical guide on how projects can be co-designed and co-produced with relevant stakeholders.

Projects are encouraged to develop research methods that can be used by different research communities to explore pathways of socio-ecological dynamics in the context of novel ecosystems. Of particular interest are interdisciplinary methods and tools to assess, monitor and forecast biodiversity status or changes/trends that can be applied across multiple spatial and time scales. Projects are expected to apply or develop approaches and indicators to evaluate the progress to resilient socio-ecological dynamics and to assess changes under different ecological and societal conditions.

4. Research priorities

Research priorities to be addressed under this call have been structured into three themes mirroring the KM-GBF sustainability goals (2022). Projects are welcome to address one or several of these themes and may freely combine specific topics. The work plan must be realistic for 3-year projects.

THEME A – NOVEL ECOSYSTEM FUNCTIONING

Under this theme, projects should focus on understanding the functioning of novel ecosystems and their links to socio-cultural and socio-economic dynamics, identifying mechanisms and developing approaches that can facilitate biodiversity gains. Specific topics that could be considered are (non-exhaustive list):

- Understanding novel ecosystem functioning, ecological integrity and trophic interactions, including how functional processes relate to biodiversity outcomes and ecosystem services under future conditions.
- Identifying when and how ecological changes become persistent, including changes in species composition, and determining when functional integrity can compensate for compositional change and how it effects ecosystem services.
- Assessing how novel ecosystems affect biodiversity, including extinction risk, species persistence and their potential recovery under different environmental and socio-ecological conditions.
- Evaluating genetic diversity, adaptive potential and the genetic consequences of rapid species turnover, including implications for resilience under climate change.

[1] *Note however that Funders cannot endorse or support specific proposals during the evaluation phase, and can therefore not be engaged as stakeholders. Applicants may list government authorities or ministries – including organisations that are members of the partnership – as relevant stakeholders. Nevertheless, during the application process these bodies will not express institutional interest in a proposal's objectives or potential impact, nor can they provide any form of support to individual applications submitted to our joint Calls.*

- Developing models and scenarios to analyse the functioning of novel ecosystems and their ecological and societal implications.
- Developing tools (e.g. social, economic, and environmental diagnostics, remote sensing and socio-ecological decision support systems) to map novel ecosystem conditions and prioritise conservation and restoration interventions, supported by transparent and replicable metrics and inclusive participatory processes.
- Evaluating and developing robust quantitative and qualitative indicators compatible with KM-GBF reporting frameworks on the health, quality and functionality of novel ecosystems, while accounting for the socio-ecological dimensions.

THEME B – PATHWAYS TO NOVEL ECOSYSTEMS

Under this theme, projects should focus on studying robust, plausible, and concrete pathways to novel ecosystems and associated socio-ecological dynamics to prosper under temporal asynchronies and uncertainties. Specific topics that projects could consider under this theme are (non-exhaustive list):

- Understanding ecosystem functions, services and disservices in changing socio-ecological systems, including trade-offs and context-specific outcomes across sectors (e.g. urban systems, food, climate)
- Developing and testing robust data- and/or model-driven scenarios to analyse drivers of ecosystem and biodiversity change leading to novelty, including future biodiversity trajectories.
- Examining broader drivers and implications of ecosystem change, including global interconnections, socio-economic factors, and issues of equity and distribution across regions and generations.
- Assessing how biodiversity and society respond to different trajectories, recognising temporal asynchronies between environmental change, biodiversity responses (e.g. extinction debts, and lags in recovery and dispersal), and societal and economic impacts, which may disproportionately affect future generations rather than those who initiated the change.
- Understanding uncertainties in trajectories of socio-ecological dynamics and how they can be better reflected and ideally reduced to improve forecasting, including investigating long-term stability and regime shifts: evaluating if novel ecosystems are alternative stable states and how to predict and anticipate successional trajectories.
- Studying socio-ecological pathways for embedding emerging nature in spatial planning: biodiversity responses and governance dynamics within land-use change processes.

THEME C – BIODIVERSITY BENEFITS AND EQUITY IN THE CONTEXT OF NOVEL ECOSYSTEM

Under this theme, projects should focus on studying fair and equitable sharing of biodiversity benefits in the context of novel ecosystems, supported by inclusive, collaborative, and investment-oriented pathways for nature-positive socio-ecological transformation. Specific topics that projects could consider under this theme are (non-exhaustive list):

- Assessing costs, benefits and trade-offs in relation to novel ecosystems across different contexts, including implications for well-being, equity, and distribution of benefits focusing on the diversity of contexts, scales, perspectives and world views.
- Analysing governance, power relations, justice and equity perspectives to understand who benefits, who is affected, and how decisions on novel ecosystem management are shaped, considering intergenerational and international contexts.
- Understanding how global structures, processes and (geo-)political trends shape the emergence, functioning, and trajectories of novel ecosystems, including the ways in which biodiversity change is interconnected with global markets and inequalities, and how actions by consumers, policy makers, and other stakeholders across sectors and regions generate distant socio-ecological effects (telecoupling).
- Developing inclusive and participatory approaches for co-creation, knowledge exchange, and long-term stewardship, including and working with diverse knowledge systems and communities.
- Exploring the ethical aspects of whether management for ecological novelty conflicts with cultural or conservation values, whether it risks supporting economic exploitation, and the risks of normalising environmental degradation under the concept of novel ecosystems could be.
- Exploring how individuals and social groups (including stakeholders, Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities) understand, interpret, value, accept, resist and/or adapt to ecological novelty, and what significance or influence this could or should have on socio-ecological transformation. This could include understanding local drivers and barriers of ecosystem stewardship and how ecosystem stewardship may be maintained over time.
- Conceiving novel ecosystems and trajectories of change that motivate people to contribute to the maintenance, enhancement, or restoration of the functional integrity, connectivity, and resilience of novel ecosystems over the long-term.
- Identifying pathways, decision-support tools and governance frameworks under deep uncertain-

ties, as well as leveraging financial resources, capacity building and knowledge transfer to support fair, adaptive and sustainable management of novel ecosystems under changing conditions.

5. Procedures, eligibility and assessment criteria

5.1. Submission, deadlines and time schedule

Submission

A two-Step process will apply, with a mandatory submission of pre-proposals at Step 1 and submission of full proposals at Step 2. Pre-proposals and full proposals (in English) must be submitted electronically with the Electronic Proposal Submission System (EPSS). Instructions for electronic submission will be available on the Biodiversa+ website at https://www.biodiversa.eu/BiodivFuture in September 2026.

Please note that:
- The online platform will stay open 5 minutes after the official deadline. Any proposals not correctly submitted at this moment will be declared ineligible.
- All completed proposals will be submitted automatically when the platform closes, to avoid a situation where an applicant does not have time to click on the submit button. In this situation, the proposal will be evaluated as it stands.

At Step 1, applicants have to submit pre-proposals: information (in English) on the project consortia, a 5-page description of the project and the required budget for each Partner must be submitted on the EPSS. **Submission of pre-proposals is mandatory**; it is not possible to enter the procedure at a later stage.

Only eligible pre-proposals can be invited to submit full proposals.

At Step 2, only invited applicants have to submit full proposals: information (in English) on the project consortia, a 16-page description of the project and the required budget for each Partner must be submitted on the EPSS.

The information submitted at Step 1 and Step 2 will be used to complete an eligibility check, to find appropriate evaluators, and to evaluate the pre- (Step 1) and full (Step 2) proposals.

In case very few proposals are received, the CSC can decide with absolute majority to invite all eligible consortia to submit a full proposal in Step 2 without organising an Evaluation Committee in Step 1. Note however that the eligibility check will still be done in Step 1.

Deadlines and time schedule

The selection procedure will consist in an eligibility check and an evaluation of pre-proposals at Step 1 and an eligibility check and an evaluation of full proposals at Step 2.

The call will go through the following processes and applicants must pay attention to the deadlines outlined below in the time schedule:

	9 June 2026	**Pre-announcement of the call**
Step 1	**9 September 2026**	**Official launch of the call**
	10 September 2026 at 13:00 CEST	**General webinar of the Call**
	10 November 2026, 12:00 CET	***Deadline for submitting pre-proposal***
	December 2026	First eligibility check completed by the Call Secretariat and Funding organisation Contact Points (FCPs)
	Late January / early February	First EvC Meeting
	Mid-February 2027	**Results of the first Evaluation Committee (EvC) meeting** – Selected applicants are invited to submit full proposals. A general feedback from the Evaluation Committee will be communicated to all invited applicants. Note however that no individual feedbacks will be sent at this stage. – Applicants that are not invited to submit a full proposal will receive feedbacks from the EvC regarding the strengths and weaknesses of their pre-proposals with respect to the assessment criteria used in Step 1 (see Document 6) tentatively in May 2027. No score nor rank will be communicated.
Step 2	**16 April 2027, 12:00 CEST**	**Deadline for submitting full proposals**
	May 2027	Second eligibility check completed by the Call Secretariat and FCPs
	June or July 2027:	Second EvC meeting *Ranked list of proposals established by the EvC*
	Late September 2027:	**Recommendation for funding projects by the Call Steering Committee (CSC)** – Results communicated to applicants – Both selected and non-selected applicants will receive feedbacks from the EvC regarding the strengths and weaknesses of their full proposals with respect to the assessment criteria used in Step 2 (see Document 6) tentatively in October 2027. No score nor rank will be communicated.
	1 December 2027:	*Earliest possible start of funded projects*
	1 April 2028:	*Latest possible start of funded projects*

During the entire procedure, strict confidentiality will be maintained with respect to the identities of applicants and the contents of the proposals.

5.2. Eligibility of projects and Partners (Call criteria):

The call is open to proposals and research consortia that meet the following criteria:

- The international, scientific research projects are performed by eligible organisations. Funding Organisations eligibility criteria (see Funding Organisations' rules) apply to all Partners, including research entities and private sector (for- or non-profit) organisations;
- The Project Partner Coordinator (i.e., person in charge of the whole project, also referred to as Partner 1) must be eligible to be funded by one of the countries participating in the call and is eligible and employed by an eligible organisation according to the terms and conditions of the participating Funding Organisation to which they apply for support;
- The Project Partner Coordinator (i.e., person in charge of the whole project, also referred to as Partner 1) can only participate as Project Partner Coordinator in one proposal of this call. Otherwise, applicants can participate in several proposals (as long as this is in line with their Funding Organisation's eligibility rules);
- The project must be a transnational project involving **eligible Partners from at least three different countries participating in the call** and requesting support from at least three different Funding Organisations; including eligible Partners from at least two different EU Member States or Associated Countries[2] participating in the call.
- An individual researcher affiliated to several organisations cannot request funding for more than one of their affiliated organisations. The individual researcher must declare which Partner within

[2] https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/list-3rd-country-participation_horizon-euratom_en.pdf NB: not all associated countries listed at this link participate in this call. Only researchers from countries that confirmed their participation and reserved a budget for this call can be eligible for funding. See TABLE 1: LIST OF FUNDING ORGANISATIONS AND THEIR FUNDING COMMITMENTS below to verify whether your country participates or not in this call.

the consortium they represent. They will not be considered as two different Partners within the consortium.

- To prevent any conflict of interest, researchers from an organisation under the same Participant Identification Code (PIC; i.e., 9-digits code identifying organisations registered under the EU funding and tenders portal) as a Biodiversa+ partner may not participate in a proposal submitted under this call, even if they are Self-financed.
- Proposals must be written in English;
- The submission of a pre-proposal is compulsory. Applicants cannot submit a full proposal at a later stage otherwise;
- Pre- and full proposals must be received before the deadlines set for the submission;
- Pre- and full proposals must meet all the formal criteria: submitted electronically on the EPSS (see Call Documents 2 and 3 for indicative pre- and full- proposals application forms respectively), respect page limits and the number/type of attachments allowed;
- The information given in the pre-proposals regarding the research questions and objectives of a proposed project is binding. No change regarding the scientific content will be allowed by the Call Steering Committee (CSC) between the pre-proposals and full proposals. However, it is still possible to make minor changes to improve your proposal if the objectives remain unchanged (you will have to declare these changes in your full proposal). Regarding the administrative details, a limited number of changes may be allowed by the Funding Organisation Contact Point (FCP) and/or CSC, provided they are in line with the general rules of the call and the rules of the Funding Organisations:
  - **Change of budget can be allowed by the relevant Funding Organisation**. The FCP can decide according to its own rules whether it needs a justification for it. There is no need to inform the Call Secretariat.
  - **Changes in the consortium composition**:
    - **No change of Project Partner Coordinator (person in charge) will be allowed**, except in case of force majeure. A request of change of Project Partner Coordinator must be submitted to the Call Secretariat, at least one week before the deadline for submitting full proposals and it will be discussed on a case-by-case basis by the CSC.
    - Changes in the consortium composition are allowed (maximum three changes of Partners), provided approval by the concerned Funding Organisations. Please note that the following actions are considered as changes: addition or removal of a Partner (incl. self-financed Partners). Replacement of a Partner (i.e. removal of a Partner and addition of a new Partner) counts as two changes. Please note that the maximum number of changes applies to "Partner"; it does not apply to "team member" or "subcontractors".
      - In case of a removal of a Partner, consortia have to make sure that their consortium still includes the minimum number of requested Partners. If this is not the case, the project will be declared ineligible and won't be evaluated.
      - All new Partners have to comply with their respective Funding Organisation's rules. If a new Partner is declared ineligible at Step 2, the whole consortium will be declared ineligible and won't be evaluated.

      In terms of procedure: The eligibility of new Partners should be confirmed by the concerned Funding Organisation(s) at least one week before the full proposal submission deadline. Applicants are strongly advised to seek confirmation of the changes and the eligibility of new Partners from the FCP, who needs to check the national/regional eligibility of the new Partner and agree with the change, before it is implemented on the EPSS. The changes must be declared on the EPSS in the "disclosure of changes" box.
      Please note that the following cases are not considered as one of the maximum three changes but the procedure mentioned above remains the same:
      - If the change is explicitly requested by a Funding Organisation after the eligibility decision at Step 1
      - If a researcher in charge (person) remains the same but changes the institutions (within the same country), provided the institution fulfils eligibility criteria of the same funding organisation. This does not apply to the Project Partner Coordinator.
      - Similarly, if the institution remains the same but the researcher in charge (person) changes, provided the researcher in charge fulfils eligibility criteria of the same funding organisation. This does not apply to the Project Partner Coordinator.
  - **The change(s) should not change the substance of the proposal.** Applicants will have to indicate in their full proposal the changes made as compared to the pre-proposals (for information for the EvC and the Call Secretariat).

  Please indicate the acronym of your project when you contact the Call Secretariat and/or your Funding Organisation.
  - Compliance with Funding Organisation eligibility criteria and rules (e.g. eligible budget items) is mandatory; it is thus strongly recommended that applicants approach their respective Funding Organisation Contact Point to make sure they respect all the eligibility criteria and

rules (contact list and main Funding Organisations' rules are available in the call documents published on the Biodiversa+ website).

If one Partner is not eligible, the whole proposal will be considered ineligible and will not be evaluated, unless the eligibility issue(s) can be fixed without changing the substance of the proposal.

Summary of allowed changes in consortium composition[1]

Modification Type	Counts as one of the limited changes in consortium composition	Conditions
Addition of partner (standard FO)	**Yes**	One of three changes allowed
Addition under widening option	No	Only if FO of newly added partner is undersubscribed
Removal of partner	**Yes**	One of three changes allowed
Replacement of partner	**Yes**	Counts as two changes (removal + addition)
Addition of team member	No	Same institution under same FO
WP restructuring	No	If it does not affect significantly the research questions and objectives or roles/tasks described in the pre-proposal
Budget redistribution within partner	No	If no structural impact

[1] **IMPORTANT TO NOTE**: This is a summary of the changes allowed **at the level of the Call** (please make sure to carefully read the details), however eligibility rules of the concerned Funding Organisations still apply, which may not allow certain changes at the national / reginal level. **Please make sure to confirm all changes with the concerned FO prior to the submission of full proposal.**

5.3. Project Duration

The project duration is 3 years. Projects are expected to act as transnational project and not as a mosaic of national or regional projects; to this end, as far as possible Partners should participate in the project for its entire duration. However, as needed, position of some team members can be requested for only part of the project's duration, as long as at least one member of each Partner remains involved for the whole project duration.

5.4. Evaluation and Selection

General information:

Potential applicants are advised to take careful note of the scope and objectives of the call as described above in the Announcement of Opportunity. Applicants are strongly advised to assess the relevance of their proposed research against the scope and objectives of the call set forth in the scientific text of the call; any project that does not fit this will not be recommended for funding, regardless of its quality.

Biodiversa+ aims at funding excellent scientific research projects that can demonstrate societal relevance, including policy relevance, and engage with stakeholders. Proposals will thus be judged on both scientific excellence and their expected impact on society and policy, in addition to project implementation. Proposals should therefore focus on clear research questions with tractable and testable hypotheses and clearly explain expected societal and policy impact as well as their stake-holder engagement approach. Research projects should generate new knowledge and solutions based on the production of new primary data and/or by making use of available data.

Proposals from the natural sciences, technical sciences, and social sciences and humanities are welcome.

Evaluation process:

A two-Step evaluation process will be organised[3].

1) **Step 1:**
   An eligibility check will be performed by the Call Secretariat and Funding Organisation Contact Points (FCPs) as well as Step 1 evaluation of eligible pre-proposals by an independent Evaluation Committee (EvC) against the following criteria:
   (i) Fit to the scope of the call,
   (ii) Novelty of the research

[3] In case very few proposals are received, the CSC can decide with absolute majority to invite all eligible consortia to submit a full proposal in Step 2 without organising an Evaluation Committee in Step 1. Note however that the eligibility check will still be done in Step 1.

(iii) Impact
Only successful pre-proposals will be invited to submit full proposals.

2) **Step 2:**
An eligibility check of full proposals will be performed by the Call Secretariat and Funding Organisation Contact Points (FCPs).
Eligible full proposals will be evaluated by an independent Evaluation Committee (EvC) as well as by external reviewer(s) where deemed necessary by the EvC against the following criteria:
(i) Excellence,
(ii) Quality and efficiency of the implementation,
(iii) Impact

The Call Steering Committee (CSC) will establish an EvC, comprising both scientific experts from natural sciences, technical sciences, social sciences and humanities, and policy/management experts relevant to the Call. The EvC composition should allow to cover, as far as possible, the range of topics within the scope of the call.

Members take part in the EvC as independent experts and do not represent any organisation nor can they send any replacements. This means that their work on this Committee does not represent any organisation or nation.

The EvC will assess the proposals according to the criteria defined (see "Assessment criteria" document in the call documents). At Step 2, where relevant (i.e. specifically requested by the EvC), the EvC will also moderate the assessments provided by the external reviewers.

The EvC will discuss the proposals and establish the final ranking of pre- and full proposals based on the set of assessment criteria defined.

After Step 1: 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 EvC.

After Step 2: The CSC will decide on which projects to recommend for funding, and selection must be made strictly following the final ranking list established by the EvC.

Upon the final decision by the CSC, a list of funded projects will be published on the Biodiversa+ website.

Please note that **no appeal can be brought at the EvC and CSC levels to challenge the results of the selection procedure**. However, the decisions taken by the CSC do not take precedence over possible mandatory national, regional or organisational requirements for eligibility and appeal processes.

In case of funding failure, an equivalent re-evaluation procedure may be implemented. The exact process will be agreed on by the CSC in an ad hoc manner.

6. Funding

For this call a total amount of ca. 33 M€ has been provisionally reserved by the participating Funding Organisations (see the list in the table below).

The European Commission (EC) will also provide funding for the funded projects depending on the final total funding amount for research proposals committed by the participating Funding Organisations eligible for EC-funding.

The indicative total budget for this call is thus of over 40 M€, including the EC contribution.

Total indicative budget for each Funding Organisation is given below. Please note that Funding Organisation may have defined maximum requested budget per project. Each participant in a funded project will be preferentially funded by their Funding Organisation(s) participating in the call. The additional funding provided by the EC for the funded project will be distributed through the EC-eligible Funding Organisations.

The aim of the call is to fund medium size projects (with a total budget of typically 1.2–1.5M€ on average; but note that this constitutes an indication rather than a formal limit). The requested funding should be justified and relevant with regards to the work planned within the project.

TABLE 1: LIST OF FUNDING ORGANISATIONS AND THEIR FUNDING COMMITMENTS[1,2]

Country	Funding organisation	Acronym	Reserved budget
Austria	Fonds zur Förderung der wissenschaftlichen Forschung	FWF#	2,000,000.00 EUR
Belgium	Belgian Science Policy Office	Belspo	*Pending*
Belgium (Wallonia-Brussels)	Fonds de la Recherche Scientifique	FNRS#	*Pending*
Belgium (Flanders)	Fonds Voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek-Vlaanderen	FWO#	*Pending*
Brazil	Brazilian National Council of State Funding Agencies	CONFAP#	100,000.00 (tbc) EUR
Bulgaria	Bulgarian National Science Fund	BNSF#	900,000.00 EUR
Czech Republic	Technology Agency of the Czech Republic	TA CR#	1,000,000.00 EUR
Denmark	Innovation Fund Denmark	IFD#	2,000,000.00 EUR
Estonia	Estonian Research Council	ETAg	300,000.00 EUR
Estonia	Ministry of Climate	MoC	150,000.00 EUR
Faroe Islands	The Faroese Research Council	RCFI#	100,000.00 EUR
Finland	Research Council of Finland	RCF / AKA	850,000.00 EUR
France	Agence Nationale de la Recherche	ANR#	2,000,000.00 EUR
Germany	German Research Foundation	DFG#	1,500,000.00 EUR
Germany	Forschungszentrum Juelich GmbH (on behalf of BMFTR)	FZJ-PTJ (on behalf of BMFTR)	2,000,000.00 EUR
Hungary	National Research Development and Innovation Office	NKFIH#	*Pending*
Israel	Ministry of Environmental Protection	MoEP#	120,000.00 EUR
Italy – Bolzano	Autonomous Province of Bolzano/Bozen	BOZEN#	450,000.00 EUR
Latvia	Latvian Council of Science	LZP/LCS#	600,000.000 EUR
Lithuania	Lietuvos mokslo taryba	LMT#	300,000.00 EUR
Moldova	National Agency for Research and Development	NARD	100,000.00 EUR
Netherlands (the)	Dutch Research Council	NWO#	3,000,000.00 EUR
Norway	Research Council of Norway	RCN#	2,270,000.00 EUR
Poland	Narodowe Centrum Nauki	NCN#	1,000,000.00 EUR
Romania	The Executive Agency for Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation Funding	UEFISCDI#	500,000.00 EUR
Slovakia	Slovak Academy of Sciences	SAS#	360,000.00 EUR
Slovakia	Centrum vedecko-technických informácií Slovenskej republiky	CVTI SR	800,000.00 EUR
Slovenia	Ministry of Education, Science and Youth	MIZM#	900,000.00 EUR *Pending*
Spain	Agencia Estatal de Investigación	AEI#	*Pending*
Spain	Fundación Biodiversidad	FB#	*Pending*
Switzerland	Swiss National Science Foundation	SNSF#	2,600,000.00 CHF[3]
Taiwan	National Science and Technology Council	NSTC#	810,000.00 EUR
Tunisia	Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research	MHESR#	500,000.00 EUR
Türkiye	Türkiye Bilimsel Ve Teknolojik Arastirma Kurumu	TÜBITAK#	350,000.00 EUR *Pending*
United Kingdom	United Kingdom Research and Innovation	UKRI#	3,000,000.00 £[3]

1 The full up-to-date list of participating funding organisations joining this Call and their reserved budget is available on the Biodiversa+ website: https://www.biodiversa.eu/research-funding/open-call/participating-funding-organisations/

2 The Funding Organisations marked by "#" have defined maximum allowed budget per project and/or per Partner. Please consult the Funding Organisations' rules and contact your Funding Organisation Contact Point for more information.

3 *The exact amount in EUR will depend on the exchange rate at the time of funding.*

Please note that all Funding Organisations have defined specific rules – including restrictions with regards to the environments they support. Carefully read the Funding Organisations' rules and contact your Funding Organisation Contact Point in case of any questions or doubts regarding these rules.

7. Programme structure and management

Programme activities

The funded projects are considered to form part of an international research programme for which joint activities will be organised, in particular:

- A **kick-off meeting** at the beginning of the funding period
- A **mid-term meeting** to present and discuss the mid-term reports,
- A **final meeting** to present and discuss the final reports; and disseminate the project results at the end of the funding period.

These events will be possibly organised back-to-back with other workshops (such as clustering workshops, data management workshops, synthesis workshops, etc.)

At least the Project Partner Coordinator of each funded consortium should participate in these joint activities. **The costs for attendance to two physical meetings should be included in the budgets of their proposals (at least one event will be done remotely).**

Project management and reporting

Funded projects will be requested to submit via the Project Partner Coordinator a **mid-term report and a final report** on research and activity progress. Some Funding Organisations may request additional specific reports.

8. Eligible budget items

Eligible costs and the maximum allowed requested budget per project and/or per Partner are governed by Funding Organisations' specific rules. Specific questions should be addressed to the Funding Organisation Contact Points (updated list available on the Biodiversa+ website).

In case of a significant financial pressure on a Funding Organisation due to the high number of teams requesting budget from this Funding Organisation in the submitted applications, the applicants may be asked to adjust downward their budget.

9. Measure to encourage participation and success of countries / regions with small research communities and/or where research applications have been less successful at Step 1 (pre-proposals)

A "widening option" will be set-up between Step 1 and 2 of the evaluation process:
- On a **voluntary basis,** consortia invited to submit a full proposal in Step 2 will have the possibility to include one or several new Partner(s) from undersubscribed funding organisations between Step 1 and 2. The inclusion of one or several new Partner(s) should be **relevant for the proposal**, and new Partners should be well integrated in the consortium.
- The addition of a Partner from undersubscribed funding organisations **is not considered as one of the maximum three changes allowed but the eligibility procedure remains the same and funding organisation national/ regional rules must be respected.**

On the Biodiversa+ website:
a) An updated list of undersubscribed funding organisations will be made public
b) The acronym, title and keywords of the pre-proposals invited to Step 2 will be published

On the Partner Search Tool (PST):
a) Applicants from undersubscribed funding organisations can declare their interest to join a consortium invited to Step 2. To facilitate contact with the coordinator of the full proposal, applicants are invited to include the acronym of the proposal they want to join when declaring their interest in the PST. They are also encouraged to check the PST for new offers of interest by successful consortia.
b) The successful consortia may use the PST to look for new Partners from undersubscribed funding organisations, in case they would like to add expertise to their consortium. They will have the opportunity to post a detailed offer on the Biodiversa+ PST.

Please note that the Evaluation Committee will assesses the overall quality of the proposal solely according to the assessment criteria defined in Document 6, regardless of whether a new Partner has joint the consortium via the Widening Option or by other means.

10. Further information

General management of the Call, including information on the call secretariat vs. fundingorganisation at a national or regional level:

The Call Secretariat is responsible for organising the call implementation procedure and for all communication with applicants related to joint aspects of the call and procedure.

However, for Funding Organisation eligibility criteria, the Funding Organisations' documented rules must be consulted and Funding Organisation Contact Points should be approached (the information are published and updated on the Biodiversa+ website), in particular with regard to eligibility of Partner, eligible costs and other country-specific aspects of the call. The compliance with Funding

Organisations' rules is mandatory, and relevant Funding Organisation Contact Points should be contacted to obtain further information if needed.

According to their respective rules, the Funding Organisations may require that the project members selected for funding establish a project consortium agreement to release the funds. The requirement will thus apply to all the project members, even if their respective Funding Organisation does not require a project consortium agreement.

Use of generative artificial intelligence in application preparation

This section sets out the responsibilities of individuals involved in the preparation of research proposals to be submitted under this call.

Applicants must apply caution when entering information into generative AI tools to develop their application(s). Sensitive or personal data of others must never be input into a generative AI tool without formal consent from the concerned individual(s).

They should also consider the risk of bias when using outputs from the generative AI tool or model and consider mitigation.

Applicants must apply caution when using outputs from generative AI tools to develop their application(s). They must ensure this does not contain any information that is:
- confidential and used without consent
- falsified
- fabricated
- plagiarised
- misrepresented

All applications must comply with relevant intellectual property and data protection legislation.[4]

In line with current sector good practice, applicants and applications are expected to be transparent where they have used generative AI tools in the development of an application. This information will not affect the evaluation process.

Data Management

Applicants' attention must be drawn to the fact that they will be requested to produce data management plans and regularly update them in the course of your project (data management plan should indeed be seen as living documents). Biodiversa+ strongly encourages applicants to make available publicly the new databases, with metadata that they will produce within their project. Please note that the respective Funding Organisation may also have specific requirements in terms of open access to data. Applicants are thus strongly encouraged to plan resources to ensure data open access and comply with the requirements of their Funding Organisations (if any). For more information, please refer to the "Open Science and Fair Data" (Document 5 in the call documents) and Biodiversa Guidance document on data management, open data, and the production of Data Management Plans.

Applicants' attention must be drawn to the fact that if they plan to use genetic resources and traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources in their project, they will have to ascertain towards the competent authorities and focal point that these used genetic resources and traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources have been accessed in accordance with applicable access and benefit-sharing legislation or regulatory requirements, and that benefits are fairly and equitably shared upon mutually decided terms, in accordance with any applicable legislation or regulatory requirements.[5] Please refer to the competent authorities for more information.

Contractual requirements

In this call for proposals, being co-funded by the European Union, Partners are considered as third parties of Funding Organisations. All Partners commit to the following articles of the Horizon Europe

[4] Regulation – EU – 2024/1689 – EN – EUR-Lex and https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/document/download/2b6cf7e5-36ac-41cb-aab5-0d32050143dc_en?filename=ec_rtd_ai-guidelines.pdf

[5] Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilisation (ABS) to the Convention on Biological Diversity and REGULATION (EU) No 511/2014 OF THE EuropEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL on compliance measures for users from the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilisation in the Union and related implementing acts.

Annotated Grant Agreement[6] and related regulations of Annex 5:
- Conflicts of interest (Article 12)
- Confidentiality and security (Article 13)
- Ethics and values (Article 14)
- Visibility (Article 17)
- Specific rules for carrying out the action (Article 18)
- Information obligations (Article 19)
- Record-keeping (Article 20)

Moreover, the bodies mentioned in Article 25 (e.g. granting authority, the European Court of Auditors (ECA), the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF)) have the right to carry out checks, reviews, audits and investigations on the Partners, and in particular to audit the payments received. If access is denied by the project partners, the costs will be rejected.

Additional resources

Biodiversa+ regularly publishes guides that can help in the application process and development of a project, see at https://www.biodiversa.eu/library/#1. Where relevant, applicants and grant holders are notably encouraged to consult the following material:
- The Stakeholder Engagement Handbook
- The Guide on Policy Relevance of Research
- The Citizen Science Toolkit
- The Guidance Document on Open Science and Data Management

Main contact points:

- **For technical questions regarding submission, please contact the Call Secretariat:** biodiversa.cs@agencerecherche.fr
- **For technical questions regarding the Electronic Proposal Submission System (EPSS), please contact the EPSS technical helpdesk:** Taavi Tiirik: epss.biodiversa@g.etag.ee
- **For budgetary questions and other national/ regional issues, please contact the relevant Funding Organisation Contact Point (FCP)** – who are listed and updated at www.biodiversa.eu/research-funding/open-call/participating-funding-organisations.
  Funding organisations' rules are also advertised and updated on the Biodiversa+ website and are mandatory. Should you have any question on these aspects, please contact the relevant FCP.

Note: The language below is intended to be an annex to the call text to guide applicants regarding data management, data sharing and open science.

Document 5: Open Science and Fair Data

Open Science

In accordance with the principles of Open Science, Biodiversa+ projects must also comply with full and immediate Open Access for scientific publications. This implies publishing in full and immediate Open Access journals or publishing platforms, or full and immediate open access via a trusted Open Access Repository. The open access publishing platform Open Research Europe can especially be used. When using the repository option, Partners should ensure that electronic copies of published articles are machine-readable and openly licensed, including bibliographic metadata. Information should be provided about all the other scholarly objects, tools and instruments that are needed to validate the conclusions of the publication.

Biodiversa+ and the Belmont Forum have developed a guide on data management, open data and the production of data management plan. This guide is available here: https://www.biodiversa.eu/research-funding/guides-capacity-building/. You can also find more information on Science Europe website.

Why Data Management Plans (DMPs) are required.

Biodiversa+ supports transnational transdisciplinary research with the goal of providing knowledge in the context of this call related to biodiversity and ecosystem protection across land and sea.

To meet this challenge, Biodiversa+ emphasises open sharing of research data and digital outputs to

[6] https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/aga_en.pdf

stimulate new approaches to the collection, reuse, analysis, validation and management of data and information, thus increasing the transparency of the research process and robustness of the results. However, Biodiversa+ fully recognises that there are legitimate reasons to constrain access, for example, when an individual's privacy would be at risk from sharing data containing (or derived from) personally identifiable information.

For this call, the participating Funding Organisations consider that the development and implementation of project-specific Data Management Plans is an essential to enable the sharing of research data.

Research data and digital outputs include, but are not limited to:

- Quantitative and qualitative digital information and objects created during or reused in research activities such as experiments, analyses, surveys, interviews, measurements, instrumentation, observations, video, audio, and computer simulations;
- All metadata describing the data and digital outputs, their acquisition (including model description and related metadata for simulations and workflows), and other details for the use and the reuse of the data;
- Secondary data resulting from data reduction, transformation, analyses, and results, together with the associated code, software, workflows, and provenance information;
- Stakeholder-oriented digital outputs such as maps (including GIS layers), decision support tools, tutorials, videos, local language resources, lesson plans, curricula, policy memos, and whitepapers; and
- Descriptions of, and metadata relating to, physical samples connected with the call – but not the actual physical samples.

Each project awarded through this call is required to develop and implement a Data and Digital Outputs Management Plan to ensure ethical approaches and compliance with the FAIR Data Principles (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable).

Biodiversa and the Belmont Forum developed a guide on data management, open data, and the production of Data Management Plan.

Project should adhere to relevant standards and community best practices, which may vary by subject and disciplinary area. Data and Digital Outputs Management Plans should also comply with public access policies and applicable national / regional laws for the respective Funding Organisations supporting this call. Research data and digital outputs should be open by default, and publicly accessible, possibly after a short period of exclusivity, unless there are legitimate reasons to constrain access. Data and digital outputs must be discoverable through machine readable catalogues, information systems and search engines. To enable data and digital outputs (including models, workflows, software and methods, etc.) with acknowledged long-term to be discoverable, accessible, understandable, interoperable and effectively reused by others (including those outside the discipline of origin and the context of acquisition), sufficient metadata must be provided and made openly accessible. Data and digital outputs must be curated, including maintaining integrity, quality and veracity, using internationally or community agreed standards and protocols. Data and digital outputs must be preserved, protected from loss and remain accessible and usable for future research in sustainable and trustworthy repositories.

Resulting publications must list where or how to locate the underlying supporting data and other research materials, including agreed persistent identifiers, processing details and any workflows, software, and code. Academic journals may also set specific requirements for Data Accessibility Statements to be included within published research results (primary research articles). Researchers should ensure that metadata created to support research datasets and other digital outputs retained for the long-term is sufficient to allow other researchers a reasonable understanding and trust of those materials, thereby minimising unintentional misuse, misinterpretation or confusion.

In the development of data infrastructures, it is important to leverage existing resources, platforms, standards, and recognised practices together with a clear sustainability plan. Projects that propose to develop data infrastructures are asked to work closely with, and support relevant international networks, infrastructures, and standards organisations. They should make as much use as possible of existing certified domain, regional, national or international data repositories (for further information, possible resources include, but are not limited to, re3data.org, CoreTrustSeal, Group on Earth Observations (GEO) FAIRsharing.org, etc.). Projects should also coordinate with, and make use of, the products and practices developed by recognised research and operational data policy and sharing organisations such as the Committee on Data for Science and Technology (CODATA), the Research Data Alliance (RDA), and the ICSU-World Data System (WDS).

For assistance in developing data and digital outputs management plans, project leaders are

encouraged to first consult with relevant domain repositories, librarians and information specialists at their respective institutions. When appropriate repositories have been identified for depositing and sharing data and digital outputs, staff at these repositories can provide additional guidance on the preparation of data and digital outputs management plans, as well as processes for fulfilling specific requirements for organising and formatting data and metadata.

Applicants are strongly recommended to follow these guidelines when developing their data management plan, at the pre-proposal and full proposal phases. Teams must agree to cooperate with Biodiversa+ who will provide a support to the funded projects to further develop their Data Management Plans and ensure that they comply with these guidelines.

A data management workshop will indeed be organised at the beginning of the funded projects to exchange best practices related to data management, present hands-on advices, and work with the funded projects on how they can improve their data management plans (DMPs) and practices related to open data.

At least the Project Partner Coordinator of each funded projects is expected to participate to this workshop. The data manager of the project (if different from the Project Partner Coordinator) should also attend this workshop.

Data Management Planning Process

It is important to consider data management issues from the inception of a research project submitted to this call, in order to plan and budget appropriately for data sharing, management and curation. This section explains the expectations for Data Management Plans (DMPs) at the stages of pre-proposals, full proposals, and Awarded Projects.

Pre-proposals – Preliminary Data Management Information

Please refer to the document 2 "Pre-proposal application form" – section "Preliminary Data Management Information"

Full proposals – Proposed Data Management Plan Approach

Please refer to the document 3 "Full proposal application form" – section "Description of the project"

Awarded Projects – Full Data Management Plan

Awarded projects will be requested to provide a data management plan at the beginning of their project. They'll also have to report on updates made in their data management plan in their mid-term and final reports.

Please note that your Funding Organisation may also have specific requirements related to data management and data open access.

A full Data and Digital Outputs Management Plan (DMP) for an awarded project is a living, actively updated document that describes the data management life cycle for the data and other digital outputs to be collected, reused, processed and/or generated. As part of making research data as open as possible, findable, accessible, interoperable and re-usable (FAIR), the DMP for a funded project should elaborate on the information provided at the Full proposal stage, and include the following additional information:

1. Agreed standards to be used for data and metadata format and content (where existing standards are absent or deemed inadequate, this should be documented along with any proposed solutions or remedies);
2. Policies for broad access and sharing including provisions for appropriate protection of privacy, confidentiality, security, intellectual property, or other rights or requirements;
3. Policies and provisions for mining, reuse, re-distribution, and the production of derivatives;
4. Contact information for the person(s) responsible for updating the DMP as needed to comply with these guidelines, and
5. A list of anticipated trustworthy, long-term repositories or data centres that will be used to ensure preservation of access to data and digital outputs following completion of the project.

Applicants are advised to include the full costs of implementing the data management plan in their proposed project budget.

Document 6: Assessment criteria

A two-step selection process[7] will be organised:
- Step 1 will consist in an **eligibility check by the Call Secretariat and relevant Funding Organisations and an evaluation of the (eligible) pre-proposals by the independent Evaluation Committee** (EvC) against the following assessment criteria: fit to the scope of the call, novelty of the research and impact.
  The Call Steering Committee (CSC) will decide on the number of proposals to be invited to Step 2, following the evaluation made by the EvC. Only successful pre-proposals will be invited to submit full proposals.
- Step 2 will consist in an **eligibility check by the Call Secretariat and relevant Funding Organisations and an evaluation of full proposals by the EvC**. Upon explicit request by the EvC members, external reviewer(s) may also be asked to review a given full proposal. The EvC will convene to evaluate and make the final ranking of the submitted full proposals according to the following assessment criteria: excellence, quality and efficiency of the implementation, and impact; and taking into account the reviews obtained from external reviewers, where relevant.

The criteria to be used to assess the quality of pre- and full proposals are detailed below.

1. Criteria for Step 1

1. Fit to the scope of the call (yes/no)

Evaluation Committee members will assess the relevance of the proposed research against the scope and objectives set forth in the text of the Call; any project that does not fit this will not be recommended for funding, regardless of its scientific quality.

Please note that for the criterion 'Fit to the scope of the call', proposals should be evaluated according to the adequacy of their objectives and research questions with the scope and objectives of the present call. The quality of the methods however should not be evaluated as part of this criterion.

2. Novelty of the research (1–5; threshold: 3)

Evaluation Committee members will assess the following sub-criteria:
a) The novelty and originality of the research objectives:
   Explanation of the novelty of the planned research; e.g. how does the activity go beyond the state-of-the-art and advance knowledge; to what extent does the proposed work explore novel concepts and the advancement with respect to the scope and objectives of the call? To what extent does the proposed activity suggest and explore creative, original concepts?
b) Relevance of the proposed work and clarity of the theoretical framework, research questions, and hypothesis to be tested:
   To what extent the proposed work can lead to the purpose of the call?
   To what extent are the proposed theoretical framework, research questions and hypothesis to be tested clear?

NB: When reading the Call Text, please keep in mind that both research projects generating knowledge from the production of new primary data and research projects conducting research by making use of available data are equally welcome in this call and should thus be equally evaluated.

3. Impact (1–5; threshold: 3)

Evaluation Committee members will assess the expected impact of a proposed project based on the following sub-criteria:
a) Potential contribution of the proposed research to society, including policy (sub-score 1–5):
   To what extent could the proposed work lead to novel / original contribution for tackling societal challenges, including policy challenges?
   To what extent does the project appear to have a credible approach/ambition towards stakeholder and/or end-user engagement to achieve the expected societal impact, including policy impact?
b) Transnational added value (sub-score 1–5):
   What is the transnational added value to be expected from the collaboration from the perspective of society, including policy (see Box 1 – what is meant by transnational added value?)

[7] In case very few proposals are received, the CSC can decide with absolute majority to invite all eligible consortia to submit a full proposal in Step 2 without organising an Evaluation Committee in Step 1. Note however that the eligibility check will still be done in Step 1.

2. Criteria for Step 2

1. Excellence (1–5; threshold: 3.5)

A- Fit to the scope and objectives of the call (yes/no):
Experts will assess the relevance of the proposed research against the scope and objectives set forth in the scientific text of the call. Any project that does not fit this will not be recommended for funding, regardless of its scientific quality.
Please note that for this criterion, proposals should be evaluated according to the adequacy of their objectives and research questions with the scope and objectives of the present call. The quality of the scientific methods however should not be evaluated part of this criterion but part of the sub-criterion "scientific excellence" (see sub-criterion 1.B); and the quality of, e.g. stakeholder engagement, will be evaluated part of the "impact" criteria (see criterion 3) by policy/management experts.

B- Scientific excellence (1–5; threshold: 3.5), including transnational added value will be assessed by means of the following sub-criteria:
   a) Scientific quality of the proposed research goals and objectives: how well does the activity advance knowledge and understanding within its own field and across different fields? Does the proposal contribute to scientific excellence and significant progress toward the state of the art?
   b) Novelty / Originality and innovation of the research goals and objectives: to what extent does the proposed activity suggest and explore creative, original concepts? Clarity of the hypothesis, theories and/or research questions.
   c) Transnational added value to be expected from the collaboration from a scientific perspective (see Box 1 – what is meant by transnational added value?)
   d) Level of mobilisation and integration of different scientific disciplines and competencies in the proposed research (level of interdisciplinarity; see Box 2 – what is meant by interdisciplinarity?). This should be evaluated in terms of relevance regarding the topics and research questions addressed (i.e. to what extent the right disciplines and skills have been mobilised to tackle these topics and research questions)
   e) Relation to other relevant programmes (does the project plan to link-up with other relevant existing programmes and initiatives with a similar focus than the topic of the call?)

Considering that a given project fits within the scope and objectives of the call, its scientific quality is considered before all other criteria and is a prerequisite for funding (as reflected by the threshold value and weighting system of the scores).

NB: When reading the Call Text, please keep in mind that both research projects generating knowledge from the production of new primary data and research projects conducting research from existing data sets are welcome in this call. They should thus be equally evaluated.

2. Quality and efficiency of the implementation (1–5; threshold: 3)

Evaluation Committee members will assess the quality and efficiency of the implementation of the project plan based on the following sub-criteria:

a) Quality and efficiency of the management structure and procedures, its organisation and coordination: how well conceived and organised is the proposed activity? Is there an operational plan with well-defined milestones in place?
b) Composition, complementarity, competence and expertise of the consortium (including knowledge and skills complementarity, and balance in terms of gender and career stage): how well qualified are the applicants in terms of scientific knowledge, expertise and experience to conduct the project? What is the quality of previous work in terms of past or potential contributions to, and impact on the proposed and other areas of research? Is the Leading Principal Investigator team (including any identified Co-Principal Investigators) able to lead the project, e.g. having strong management and leadership skills, or having complementarity of expertise and synergy of the members of the team? Is the team composition adequate and did the consortium consider gender balance and career stage balance in its composition?
c) Level of integration and collaboration between Partners involved in the proposal
d) Appropriateness of resources and funding requested, with justification (budget, staff, equipment): are the requested investments well justified and relevant?
e) Project feasibility and risk management, including demonstration of data availability/access where relevant
f) Data management plan overview and data sharing

3. Impact (1–5; threshold: 3)

The expected Impact of the proposed research for society, including policy, and the quality and efficiency of plans for stakeholder engagement (see Box 3) will be assessed by means of the two following criteria.

Criterion A relates to the expected societal impact, including policy impact, the proposed work seeks to achieve, and its transnational added value from the impact perspective, while criterion B relates to the approach to stakeholder engagement and precise engagement activities planned in the project.

A- **Societal relevance, including policy relevance, and importance of the research for solving pressing issues (sub-score 1–5):**
The criteria used to evaluate societal and policy relevance – which will be used by the experts and which applicants are invited to consider – are the following:
   a) Clear statement of the application for society, including policy. Any proposal must highlight the importance of the proposed work for solving wider pressing societal issues, includingpolicy issues, related to the scope and objectives of the call, specify how the results will be translated to policy, decision makers and/or other relevant stakeholders, and contain details on the relevance of the proposed research to, e.g., specific management plans and processes, policy instruments or current legislation.
   b) Clearly identified end-users of the research results and ways to engage them. End-users may be different (e.g. wider group) than stakeholders directly mobilised in the project (criterion B), while stakeholders may often also be end users of project outcomes. The proposal will be expected to clearly identify end-users of the project outcomes, highlight potential arrangements for their wider uptake of knowledge and results and, as far as possible, to name organisations and individuals with whom the project plans to work on towards the wider uptake of its results[8].
   c) Transnational added value to be expected from the collaboration from the perspective of society, including policy (see Box 1 – what is meant by transnational added value?)

B- **Approach to stakeholder engagement (sub-score 1–5):**
The criteria used to evaluate the level of transdisciplinarity, as defined in Box 3, and stakeholder engagement planned at the different stages of the project – which will be used by the experts and which applicants are invited to consider – are the following:
   a) Rationale for the stakeholder engagement planned in the project
   b) Identification of appropriate stakeholders to be engaged in the project, i.e. precise organisations and as far as possible, individual representatives of these organisations, what role they would have, and the desired outcomes of their engagement.
   c) Description of precise interests and support/investment from identified stakeholders on the specific aims of the project, including of their involvement at the proposal development stage[2] (e.g. relating precise project objectives to specific stakeholders' ongoing and/or future activities).
   d) Methods/activities proposed for engagement of relevant stakeholders, planning of the engagement and allocation of sufficient resources to its implementation
   e) Evidence that the necessary skills to engage stakeholders are available in the project team or will be obtained (e.g. through relevant training, or the use of external sources)
   f) Methods and plans for knowledge and/or technology transfer

Box 1 – What is meant by Transnational added value?
Transnational added value is the value resulting from the transnational research project, which is additional to the value that would have resulted from research projects funded at national or regional level.
Evidence of transnational added value can either be found directly among the countries involved in the research, or through indirect value accrued as a result of their joint work. Such value could for example include relevance to international policy and management processes, linking expertise and efforts across international teams, or upscaling or downscaling of efforts, methodology and knowledge across countries and regions.
Furthermore, for this call, the transnational added value should be end-user oriented and benefit environmental and societal actors beyond researchers, generating insights on the way.

[8] Biodiversa produced a stakeholder engagement handbook and a guide on policy relevance and science-policy interfacing for researchers preparing a proposal, both relevant to help plan the wider uptake of knowledge results in policy and/or society. These are accessible online (Stakeholder Engagement Handbook: https://www.biodiversa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/stakeholder-engagement-handbook.pdf; Guide on Policy Relevance: https://www.biodiversa.org/1563/download) and will be given as background information to the experts. We recommend you to use them when designing your project and preparing your proposal.

Box 2 – What is meant by interdisciplinarity?
Interdisciplinary science refers to the **involvement of multiple academic disciplines**. Research teams should therefore span all disciplines of relevance for their project, be it from natural, social, and technical sciences, humanities and/or arts. Proposals should demonstrate how they will ensure the equitable and appropriate combination and inclusion of relevant academic disciplines, collaboratively integrating their approaches and skills.
– This will be evaluated by scientific experts, part of the criterion "Excellence"

Box 3 – What is meant by transdisciplinarity?
Transdisciplinarity refers to the **inclusion of non-academic stakeholders working together with researchers from multiple scientific disciplines at the different stages of the project to co-produce new knowledge relevant for society**. Where relevant, stakeholders should be involved in different stages of the project (e.g., initial phase when defining research objectives and strategies, in implementing the project through data collection or analysis, to contribute to better dissemination of the knowledge gained, and/or to facilitate a systemic approach to a challenge. However, this involvement must not be an end in itself, but should be designed to add clear value to the project.

– Transdisciplinarity will be evaluated by policy/management experts, part of the criterion "Impact"

Box 4 – What is meant by stakeholders vs end-users?
A **stakeholder** is a person or group or anyone who is affected by or has an interest or stake in a particular issue. Examples of stakeholders include policy makers, governments; business leaders and industry representatives; representatives from non-profit groups or other citizen organisations; and individuals from loosely defined user groups.
An **end-user** is defined as a person or group that makes use of the knowledge and/or tools in a position to apply the information or tools being generated by a research project in a way that is of direct consequence to the concerned issue.
All end users could also be considered stakeholders, but not all stakeholders are end users.

3. Scoring system

Scoring system at Step 1

The first two criteria ("fit to the scope of the call" and "novelty of the research") will be assessed by the scientific EvC members, while the "impact" criteria will be assessed by the policy/management EvC members.

No additional criteria should be used for the evaluation.

For the criteria 'novelty of the research' and 'impact', a score out of a scale of five will be assigned to each proposal. The EvC members have the possibility to use half scores.

Threshold:

Proposals that do not meet the criterion 'Fit to the scope of the call' will not be ranked nor considered for invitation to Step 2.

Besides, there is no shared interest for proposals with a final score lower than 3 for 'novelty of the research' and for 'impact'. These proposals will not be ranked nor considered for invitation to submit full proposals evaluated at Step 2.

Final score:

The final score given to a proposal will correspond to an aggregation of the scores given to the two criteria (equal weight for the two criteria). The overall score will correspond to a score out of a scale of ten points.

The EvC groups the pre-proposals based on their scores and assigns them to one of the following three categories:
- "A" very favourable for invitation to Step 2;
- "B" could be invited to Step 2;
- "C" not favourable for invitation to Step 2.

As needed, and if deemed relevant, the EvC can differentiate proposals within group B (i.e. define sub-groups within group B).

The CSC will decide on the number of projects to be invited to Step 2, based on the groups made by the Evaluation Committee and their explanations.

Nota Bene:

- A general feedback from the evaluation committee will be communicated to the applicants invited to submit a full proposal in Step 2. However, no individual feedbacks will be sent to them at this stage.
- Applicants that are not invited to submit a full proposal will receive feedbacks from the EvC regarding the strengths and weaknesses of their pre-proposals with respect to the assessment criteria used in Step 1. They will receive this feedback in May, following the first step of the selection process. No score nor rank will be communicated.

Scoring system at Step 2

The overall aim of the ranking system is to allow a transparent ranking that still allows for some flexibility, and to fund as many high-level projects as possible.

The two first criteria ('excellence' and 'quality and efficiency of the implementation') will be assessed by the scientific EvC members and potentially external reviewer(s), if explicitly requested by the latter. The third criterion 'impact' will be assessed, by the policy/management EvC members and potentially by external reviewer(s) if explicitly requested by the latter.

No additional criteria should be used for the evaluation.

For each criterion, a score out of a scale of five will be assigned to each proposal. The EvC and external reviewers have the possibility to use half scores.

Threshold:

Proposals that do not meet the criterion 'Fit to the scope and objectives of the call' will not be ranked nor considered for funding.

Besides, there is no shared interest for proposals with a final score lower than 3.5 for 'excellence' and lower than 3 for 'quality and efficiency of the implementation' and for 'impact'. These proposals will not be ranked, and not be considered for funding.

Weighting system:

The following weighting system will apply for the different criteria:

Criteria	Weight
Excellence	7
Quality/efficiency of the implementation	3
Impact	6

The final score given to a proposal will correspond to an aggregation of the scores given to the three criteria, taking into account their respective weights. The overall score will be transformed into a score out of 15 points.

The EvC ranks as many projects as possible. However, around the threshold, the EvC can decide to equally rank proposals with a same final score that it considers of equal quality.

Example:

If a proposal receives a score of 4 for excellence, 4 for quality and efficiency of the implementation and 5 for impact, the aggregation of the scores taking into account their respective weight will give a score of 70. This score will be transformed into a score out of 15 points, i.e. 13.

Nota Bene: Both selected and non-selected applicants will receive feedbacks from the EvC regarding the strengths and weaknesses of their full proposals with respect to the assessment criteria used in Step 2 following the selection process. No score nor rank will be communicated.

4. Use of generative artificial intelligence in assessment

The Evaluation Committee members are selected for their expertise and experience in their field. We

seek their knowledge and judgement of an application in relation to the assessment criteria, and value their unique perspectives.

EvC members, including potential external reviewers, must:
- not use generative AI tools as part of their assessment activities
- comply with relevant EU level intellectual property and data protection legislation[9]
- not take into account or speculate within their assessment whether generative AI has been used to develop the application

The release of confidential material into generative AI tools constitutes a breach of confidentiality and integrity.

Document 7: Conflict of interest, confidentiality and non-disclosure policy

This code applies to the independent observer, the Evaluation Committee and the external reviewers.

Conflict of interest

An important aspect of this code is the avoidance of any conflicts between personal interests and the interests of the applicants. The independent observer, the Evaluation Committee and the external reviewers must perform their work impartially and take all measures to prevent any situation where the impartial and objective implementation of the work is compromised for reasons involving economic interest, political or national affinity, family or emotional ties or any other shared interest ('conflict of interests').

Definition of the conflict of interest.

The following situations will automatically be considered as conflict of interest:
- Being involved in (the preparation of) any pre- and/or full proposal;
- Having submitted a proposal as a principal investigator or a team member, under the call;
- Being director, trustee or Partner or in any way involved in the management of an applicant;
- Being employed or contracted by one of the applicants;
- Having close professional proximity, e.g. being a member of the same scientific institution with a hierarchical or department relation or impending change of the external reviewer/EvC member to the institution of the applicant in a position with a hierarchical or department relation or vice versa;
- Having close family ties (spouse, domestic or non-domestic Partner, child, sibling, parent etc.) or other close personal relationship with the applicants of the proposal;
- Having (or having had during the last five years) a close scientific collaboration (for e.g., but not restricted to, acting as co-author on a publication) with an applicant of the proposal;
- Having (or having had) a relationship of scientific rivalry or professional hostility with an applicant of the proposal;
- Having (or having had), a mentor/mentee relationship with the principal investigator of the proposal;
- Having a current or prior (past five years) activity in advisory bodies of the applicant's institution, e.g. scientific advisory boards;
- Having direct or indirect benefit if any proposal submitted is accepted or rejected;
- Having personal economic interests in the funding decision
- Biodiversa+ partners and representants of the European Commission may not be members of the Evaluation Committee

Other situation preventing the EvC members or external reviewers to participate in the evaluation impartially could be considered as conflict of interest and should be reported as such by the EvC members or external reviewers.

Biodiversa+ Partners (the list is available here: https://www.biodiversa.eu/about-us/Partners) and funding organisations that are part of the CSC (the list is available here: www.biodiversa.eu/research-funding/open-call/participating-funding-organisations/) cannot be part of a research proposals submitted under Biodiversa+ calls (would their participations be in-kind or in-cash). Their participation to a proposal makes it non-eligible. It will be the responsibility of the funding organisations to check during the eligibility check that no one from their organisation is part of a consortium.

[9] Regulation – EU – 2024/1689 – EN – EUR-Lex and https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/document/download/2b6cf7e5-36ac-41cb-aab5-0d32050143dc_en?filename=ec_rtd_ai-guidelines.pdf

Rules for the prevention of conflict of interest

The independent observer, Evaluation Committee members and external reviewers have to sign online a conflict of interest, confidentiality and non-Disclosure declaration to confirm that they will comply with the principles stated herein.

For each proposal they have to evaluate, Evaluation Committee members and external reviewers will have to declare online, through the electronic evaluation Submission system (EPSS) that they do not have a conflict of interest with the concerned proposal.

If Evaluation Committee members and external reviewers are (or become) aware of a conflict of interest, they must immediately inform the Call Secretariat and stop working until further instructions. External reviewers and EvC members must work independently, in a personal capacity and not on behalf of any organisation and should not be used in case of a conflict of interest.

Evaluation Committee members and the independent observer must leave the room during the discussion of a proposal in case of a possible conflict of interest.

Applicants included in a pre-proposal or a full proposal submitted to this call (including all the team members) may not serve as Evaluation Committee members or external reviewers.

The independent observer, external reviewers and EvC members may not apply for a project in the call.

Confidentiality and non-disclosure policy

All submitted proposals, the correspondence forwarded to you, the reviews and the identity of the EvC members / external reviewers must be treated as strictly confidential. They must not be revealed to third parties.

Therefore, the responsibilities of an EvC member / external reviewer may only be undertaken personally and may not be delegated to third parties.

The scientific content of the proposal may not be exploited for personal or other scientific purposes.

An EvC member / external reviewer should not identify themselves to the applicant or any third party.

The obligations under this document shall not extend to confidential information which is required to be disclosed by national applicable law or by order of a court of competent jurisdiction or other regulatory body.

Code of conduct for the independent observers, Evaluation Committee (EvC) members and external reviewers

Performing the task (for Evaluation Committee members and external eviewers only)

1. You must work independently, in a personal capacity and not on behalf of any organisation.
2. You must:
   - Evaluate each proposal in a confidential and fair way,
   - Perform your work to the best of your abilities, professional skills, knowledge and applying the highest ethical and moral standards;
   - Follow the instructions and time-schedule given by the Call Secretariat
3. You may not delegate the work to another person or be replaced by another person
4. If a person or entity involved in a proposal approaches you before or during the evaluation, you must immediately inform the Call Secretariat.
5. You may not be (or become) involved in any of the actions resulting from the proposal(s) that you evaluated (at any stage of the procedure).

Impartiality and Conflicts of Interests (for all)

As a member of the Evaluation Committee, an external reviewer or an independent observer, you will be asked to contribute to the evaluation process.

You must perform your work impartially and take all measures to prevent any situation where the impartial and objective implementation of the work is compromised for reasons involving economic

interest, political or national affinity, family or emotional ties or any other shared interest ('conflict of interests').

You might have a conflict of interest (see definition above) with one or more submitted proposals. Should any conflict arise during your term, or when asked to do a review, you must bring the matter to the attention of the Call Secretariat who will determine how the matter should be handled and will tell you what further steps, if any, to take.

No Use of "Insider" Information (for all)

Your designation gives you access to information not generally available to the public. You must not use that information for your personal benefit or make it available for the personal benefit of any other individual or organisation.

Confidentiality of Proposals and Applicants (for all)

Proposals are received with the expectation of protection of the confidentiality of their contents.

You must thus keep confidential all call related data, documents or other material (in any form) that are disclosed to you (whether in writing, orally, or any other form).

You must keep your work under this Call strictly confidential, and in particular:

- not disclose (directly or indirectly) any confidential information relating to proposals or applicants, without prior written approval by Call Secretariat
- not discuss proposal(s) with other persons that are not directly involved in the evaluation of the proposals
- not disclose:
  - details on the evaluation process or its outcome, without prior written approval by the Call Secretariat
  - details on your position/advice;
  - the names of other experts participating in the evaluation (both external reviewers and Evaluation Committee members).
- not communicate with applicants during the evaluation or afterwards.

Confidentiality of the Review Process and Reviewer Names (for all)

The names of external reviewers won't be made public.

The names of the Evaluation Committee members will be made public after the announcement of awards. Which EvC members assessed which proposals will however be kept confidential.

SIGNATURE

When signing in on the EPSS, you will be asked to confirm reading and accepting the *Code of conduct for conflict of interest, confidentiality and non-disclosure* and its terms.

[END OF CALL DOCUMENTS]

Call of the European Biodiversity Partnership on "Novel ecosystems: biodiversity, socio-ecological consequences and future trajectories (BiodivFuture)"

2026–2027 joint Call

Funding Organisations rules

You will find in this document all the eligibility rules of the different Funding Organisations participating to the 2026–2027 Biodiversa+ Call "BiodivFuture".

Please note that the document may be adjusted through time. We invite you to make sure you have the latest version. If a new version is uploaded on the website, **a warning message will be indicated on the Biodiversa website.**

Please make sure to consult these rules and to contact your Funding Organisations Contact Point for more information and in case of any doubt. We draw your attention on the fact that **compliance with Funding Organisations' eligibility criteria and rules is mandatory**. Proposals that do not meet these criteria will be declared non-eligible and will not be evaluated.

The Netherlands – NWO

CONTACT

Country / Region	**Kingdom of the Netherlands**
Funding Organisation Full Name (Acronym)	Dutch Research Council (NWO)
Funding Organisation Contact Point(s)	Floor Hugenholtz Policy Officer +31 (0) 703494071 biodiversa@nwo.nl

FUNDING CONTRIBUTION AND BUDGET CAPS

Funding contribution to the Call (in EUR)	3,000,000 For this call, the budget for the Kingdom of the Netherlands is brought together by the Dutch Research Council (NWO) and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Food Security and Nature (LVVN).
Minimum amount of funding per awarded partner or project (in EUR)	Min. 50,000 / project
Maximum amount of funding per awarded project (in EUR)	Max. 400,000 / project

GENERAL ELIGIBILITY RULES

Eligible environment(s)/realm(s)	All (no restrictions)
Eligibility of a partner as a beneficiary institution	An application for funding from NWO may consider the following roles: – *National main applicant* (mandatory): the national applicant who leads the application to NWO and is the foreseen national project leader, in case a project is granted. – *National co-applicant* (optional): national applicants in addition to the national main applicant with an active role and responsibility in realising the project and requesting funding from NWO. Please note: national co-applicants are 'Team members' of the national main applicant in the Biodiversa+ application form. A researcher may only request NWO funding for one project (part of a European consortium) in this Call for proposals, either as national main applicant or national co-applicant within an application for NWO funding. **National main applicant** To be eligible to submit a proposal, researchers must be employed for an indefinite period (with the associated employment contract) or have a tenure track agreement at any of the following research organisations:

• universities and universities of applied sciences, as described in Section 1.8, subsection 1 of the Dutch Higher Education and Research Act, or universities referred to in the Policy Rules for Universities in the Kingdom of the Netherlands;
• university medical centres, as described in Article 1.13, paragraph 1 of the Higher Education and Scientific Research Act;
• KNAW institutes and NWO institutes;
• TO2 institutions[1];
• Netherlands Cancer Institute;
• Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics in Nijmegen;
• Naturalis Biodiversity Center;
• Advanced Research Centre for NanoLithography (ARCNL);
• Princess Máxima Center.

Researchers employed at a university of applied sciences and researchers employed at a TO2 institute may also submit as a national main applicant if they have at least a salaried position for a limited period of time.

Individuals with a zero-hour or fixed-term employment contract (other than a tenure track appointment) cannot submit a proposal. Applicants with a part-time appointment must ensure adequate supervision of the project and all project members for whom funding is requested.

It may be that the national applicant's tenure track employment contract ends before the intended completion date of the project for which grant funding is being requested, or that the national applicant's tenure agreement ends before this date due to their reaching retirement age. In such cases, the proposal must include a statement from the employer. In this statement, the research organisation in question guarantees that the project and all project members for whom funding is being requested will receive adequate supervision for the full duration of the project.

National co-applicant

All requirements regarding the employment contract described under National main applicant', also apply to national co-applicants.

National co-applicants must be affiliated with a research organisation either 1) eligible as a national main applicant (see above), or 2) with other research organisations as described in Article 1.1, paragraph 4 of the NWO Grant Rules 2024 that comply with the following cumulative conditions.

The organisation must:
• be established in the Netherlands;
• be a foundation, organisation or legal entity established and governed by public law (in Dutch: publiekrechtelijke rechtspersoon) (all other legal forms, including private and public limited companies, are excluded);
• have as its primary goal the independent conduct of its own fundamental research, industrial research or experimental development or with widely disseminating the results of those activities through teaching, publications or knowledge transfer;
• be able to state that the organisation keeps separate accounts regarding economic/non-economic activities and that undertakings with decisive influence on the organisation do not enjoy preferential access to the organisation's results.

Note: Prior to submission of a pre-proposal, NWO will assess whether an organisation complies with Article 1.1, paragraph 4 of the NWO Grant Rules 2024 and is thus eligible to participate as national co-applicant based on the above conditions. This assessment also helps to ensure NWO's compliance with regulations prohibiting state aid.

To enable the assessment to be carried out, the intended national co-applicant's organisation must submit the following documents by email to biodiversa@nwo.nl no later than 20 working days before the submission deadline (i.e. by 13 October 2026, 12:00:00 CEST):
• a recent extract from the Chamber of Commerce;
• a deed of establishment and/or current articles of association;
• the most recently available annual accounts, including an audit report[2];
• a completed Research Organisation Statement, which is available on the funding page of this Call for proposals.

Other relevant documents may also be included. NWO may also request additional information if the above documents do not allow for adequate determination of the organisation's eligibility to act as national co-applicant.

	If in a full proposal national co-applicants are added to the consortium who are not affiliated with any of the research organisations listed above, these new national co-applicants must be assessed based on the same conditions. Again, the intended national co-applicant's organisation must submit at least the above-mentioned documents by email no later than 20 working days before the submission deadline (i.e. by 19 March 2027, 12:00:00 CET). If the intended national co-applicant's organisation has already been assessed and found to comply with these conditions as part of a different NWO programme, please contact NWO at the above email address well before the applicable deadline to determine whether further assessment is necessary. If the intended national co-applicant's organisation fails to submit the documents required for assessment on time, NWO will not accept the organisation as national co-applicant. If a research organisation was already assessed and approved as a national co-applicant before submitting the pre-proposal, there is no need to have it assessed again for the submission of the full proposal.
Eligibility of costs, types and their caps	The available budget modules are: **1. Personnel**: Salary costs can be claimed for the following positions: • Postdoc: at least 1 position, for at least 12 months, for at least 0.5 fte, according to UNL or UMCNL rates, a benchfee is available; • Non-scientific personnel (NWP): according to UNL or UMCNL rates; • Research leave: max. 10% of the grant amount, according to UNL or UMCNL rates. • Personnel at universities of applied sciences, TO2 institutes and other organisations: using the Government Tariff Manual (HOT), Table 2, under 2.2 'average total salary cost per salary scale', column 'Hourly rate productive hours, excluding VAT' **2. Materials**: For project-specific material costs, up to 25% of the grant amount. Subsequently, up to 50% of the material budget can be used for work by third parties. Engagement of students may be included here according to the usual internship fee or HOT rates. **3. Knowledge utilisation**: For activities that promote the use of knowledge from the research, mandatory and at most 20% of the grant amount. **4. Project management**: Up to 5% of the grant amount. It is recommended to use the NWO budget template in the pre-proposal stage to confirm eligibility of budget items and correct use of tariffs. For full proposals, it is mandatory to submit the NWO budget form for the funding requested at NWO at the time of the transnational deadline to biodiversa@nwo.nl. Please note the following: – An application for NWO funding has one national main applicant, responsible for research and financial management. National co-applicants within an application for NWO funding are allowed. – Researchers employed at a university in the Kingdom of the Netherlands, umc or a research organisation, as referred to in Article 1.1, first paragraph, subparagraphs c to h of the NWO Grant Rules 2024 may not apply for a scientific or post-doc position for themselves. – PhD positions cannot be applied for in this call, due to the maximum project duration of 3 years. – Overhead costs are not eligible for NWO funding. The budget items "fellowships", "overheads", "equipment" and "subcontracting costs" in the Biodiversa+ format are not eligible for NWO funding. A detailed "Explanation of budget modules and indexing" can be found on the NWO funding page of this Call for proposals. Do not hesitate to contact the national contact point in case of questions.
Should VAT be included in the budget figures provided?	No
Additional specific eligibility rules	No

1 The TO2 Institutions are Deltares, NLR, TNO, WUR and MARIN
2 No audit report is necessary for organisations not legally required to have their annual accounts audited. However, such organisations must be able to provide proof of exemption from this legal requirement.

INFORMATION AVAILABLE AT:	Full details for project funding in this call and relevant forms are available on the NWO website: https://www.nwo.nl/biodiversa

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

Submission of the pre- and full proposal and other administrative requirements to be completed at the national/regional Level	Applicants are required to submit a NWO budget form by the deadline for full proposals. The completed budget form can be submitted to NWO via biodiversa@nwo.nl.
Submission of financial and scientific reports at the national/regional level	Submission of financial and scientific reports at national level is required in accordance with the rules of NWO. Granted consortia will be informed in due time.
Do you allow the addition of a new research partner between step 1 and step 2 at your national / regional level?	Yes, however the Dutch main applicant should remain the same. In case of changes between step 1 and 2 applicants must contact the national contact point at NWO before submitting the full proposal.
Does your organisation request funded researchers to sign a consortium agreement?	Yes, funded researchers must submit a consortium agreement to NWO. Consortia will be informed by NWO.
Other important information	The NWO Grant Rules 2024 and the Approval of Funding for Scientific Research are applicable to all applications for NWO funding. Any arrangements made regarding the grant from NWO must comply with the NWO Grant Rules 2024 and the European legislation on state aid. As stipulated in the NWO Grant Rules, Article 3.2, paragraph 2, the project cannot start until the conditions set out in the grant award decision regarding the start of the project are met. Please note, these conditions will include a signed Consortium agreement by all partners in the transnational project. Once proposals are recommended for funding on a transnational level, the consortia will be notified by the Biodiversa+ Call Secretariat and subsequently, the national granting process will be initiated by NWO. Under the Dutch General Administrative Law Act, any interested party has the right to lodge an objection to the decision taken by NWO within six weeks of the date of the decision letter. Further information about the objection's procedure can be found on the NWO website: https://www.nwo.nl/en/lodging-an-objection. NWO will, if necessary, apply a one-off indexation of personnel costs when awarding a grant. The current UNL/UMCNL/HOT rate on the national decision date applies. Please refer to the "Explanation of budget modules and indexing" on the NWO funding page, for more information on indexing.