

**EUROPEAN FOREST INSTITUTE**

**Grant submission guidelines**

**G-05-2023**

**Pilots of long-term climate impact forest monitoring sites**

**Amended as of 7 December 2023**

## 1. ACTIVITY TO BE SUPPORTED BY THE GRANT

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### Introduction

European forests cover more than 1/3 of the land area and they play a vital role in Europe's environment, economy, and society. Forests provide a multitude of benefits to society in terms of climate regulation, raw materials, habitats for biodiversity, and many other services. Climate change is a major challenge to European forests, as demonstrated by recent heat waves, extended drought periods and disturbances (storms, wildfires, insect outbreaks). Climate change may lead to shifts in tree species ranges, changes in forest productivity, tree mortality and increased disturbance damage. Hence, it is important to assess the extent of the impact of ongoing climate change on the functioning of trees and forests.

Forest monitoring and forest inventories are important means to assess the impact of climate change on forests over longer time periods. To understand the future trajectories of forest ecosystems we have to assess the past and current state of our forests. Past and recent changes of forest structures and functioning can be analysed with data from large long-term forest monitoring programs such as ICP Forests<sup>1</sup>, the national forest inventory (NFI) networks<sup>2,3</sup> or - in parts - networks such as ICOS<sup>4</sup> and LTER<sup>5</sup>. For example, the ICP Forests network with a high number and broad spatial coverage of plots, where many tree-related parameters are measured with yearly or sub-yearly resolution, is a perfect basis for such assessments. However, when these monitoring sites were established, they focused mainly on assessing the impact of air pollution and were not designed for providing close to real-time information on tree water and carbon relations. Moreover, they were not particularly meant to be linked to remote sensing (RS) information, which can, however, also be critical to understand the impact of climate change including extreme events on the European scale. The same is also true for other forest monitoring networks.

With this call, we thus aim to increase the potential of existing forest monitoring sites to assess the impact of climate and climatic extremes on trees and forests.

### Objectives and outcomes

FORWARDS is a Horizon Europe project that will prototype the ForestWard Observatory, a pan-European monitoring and evaluation tool that will help in demonstrating the impact of climate change on forests, guiding decision-making for practical forest management. As part of its activities, FORWARDS will establish a network of pilot monitoring plots/sites to assess the long-term impact of climate change on forest ecosystems. These pilot plots/sites need to be linked to existing forest monitoring networks and provide spatial representativeness as explained in detail below.

The call for pilots of long-term climate impact forest monitoring sites is closely linked to Work Package (WP) 2 of FORWARDS where the following main research frontiers are tackled:

Novel monitoring techniques are being implemented at existing forest monitoring sites where high-resolution dendrometer measurements allow detection of complex signals that include irreversible tree stem growth and reversible radial fluctuations due to stem water release and refill. Sub-daily measurements of stem diameter variations from dendrometers will provide valuable in situ metrics on the long-term

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<sup>1</sup> George, J.-P. et al. Long-term forest monitoring reveals constant mortality rise in European forests. *Plant Biology* 24, 1108-1119, doi:<https://doi.org/10.1111/plb.13469> (2022).

<sup>2</sup> Bontemps, J.-D., Bouriaud, O., Vega, C. & Bouriaud, L. Offering the appetite for the monitoring of European forests a diversified diet. *Annals of Forest Science* 79, 19, doi:10.1186/s13595-022-01139-7 (2022).

<sup>3</sup> Yu, Y. et al. Making the US national forest inventory spatially contiguous and temporally consistent. *Environmental Research Letters* 17, 065002, doi:10.1088/1748-9326/ac6b47 (2022).

<sup>4</sup> Heiskanen, J. et al. The Integrated Carbon Observation System in Europe. *Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society* 103, E855-E872, doi:<https://doi.org/10.1175/BAMS-D-19-0364.1> (2022).

<sup>5</sup> Holmberg, M. et al. Modelling study of soil C, N and pH response to air pollution and climate change using European LTER site observations. *Science of The Total Environment* 640-641, 387-399, doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scitotenv.2018.05.299> (2018).

physiological response of trees to changing climate in terms of growth and water status<sup>3,9</sup>. Together with measurements of soil moisture availability and meteorological parameters, impacts of extreme heat and drought events as well as effects of other disturbances on growth and water relations and growth phenology will be captured. Combined with modelling approaches, regional scale nowcasting tools for stress and stress impact are being established. Drone- and aircraft-based proximate sensing is increasingly used to study tree and forest structure and function, and we are implementing this technology as part of FORWARDS. The big advantage is the high spatial resolution of the overhead imagery that can be directly linked to tree-level, ground-based assessments on the one hand and satellite products on the other. Tree and forest functional traits can be captured on the tree and stand scale with multi- and hyperspectral sensors and detailed individual tree-matched ground truthing can be performed. Thus, a direct relationship to ground measurements and comparable information to satellite-based remote sensing (RS) (though with higher spatial resolution) make such high-resolution proximate sensing a central technique to link classical ground-based monitoring with RS. Forest structural features assessed by LIDAR or classical forest mensuration is central to understand the forest C stock as well as the C sequestration potential. Such information is also important to be linked to satellite products that allows spatial extrapolation.

The primary aim of this call is to support additional measurements providing long-term data on forest functioning and forest disturbance impacts to better understand the impact of climate change on various time scales and to be able to link ground-based information to remotely sensed data. These data will contribute to the Europe-wide ForestWard Observatory and thus the projects submitted should allow integration of the data and the results generated into the broader scope of WP2 of FORWARDS as described above.

### **Supported projects and activities**

To achieve the primary aim, supported projects must address the following points:

- provide temporally resolved ecosystem-level information on the effects of climatic drivers on forest structure and function in near real-time.
- better link the ground-based monitoring information to satellite imagery for European forest monitoring.

The aim of the call follows the concept of "linking methods" as described in detail by Zweifel *et al.* 2023<sup>6</sup> where a handful of standardized methods for meteorological as well as soil- and tree-related parameters provide a data framework along which site-specific measurements can be scaled.

The projects supported by these grants are encouraged to follow methods detailed below to provide information with novel and improved measurements and sensors on the following focus topics:

1. High temporally resolved information on forest disturbances and status related to climate change based on complementary ground-based sensors for Stress nowcasting (soil moisture status and tree ecophysiological responses)
2. Validation and scaling of forest functional variables from the leaf to the tree-, plot- and landscape-level to link plot-level information and remote sensing products (Link ground based to remote sensing information)
3. Increased information on the carbon sequestration potential of forests (Carbon storage and stand structural information).

Either all three focus topics might be covered in one project or more focused approaches can be conducted: It is possible to only cover focus topic 1 in a proposal but topics 2 and 3 (as they provide the full suite of functional and structural forest information that is needed to link ground-based information with remote sensing) need to be combined in a proposal.

Following combinations of focus topics are possible:

- 1, 2 and 3 together
- 1 alone
- 2 and 3 together

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<sup>6</sup> Zweifel, R. et al. Networking the forest infrastructure towards near real-time monitoring – A white paper. Science of The Total Environment 872, 162167, doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scitotenv.2023.162167 (2023).

Data and results from the supported projects and activities must be made available open access either in a close-to-real time frame for stress nowcasting (Focus Topic 1; and the way how this will be possible is described below) or for other activities (Focus Topics 2 and 3) latest upon completion of the project, and feed into the ForestWard Observatory that is being developed by the FORWARDS project.

Stress nowcasting might provide novel information on impacts of climate change on forest functioning only after some time. Proposals that apply nowcasting (focus area 1) must therefore include a plan (incl. funding) that elaborates how the measurements will be continued for a minimum of three years beyond the duration of the project.

### Methods and work packages (related to the three core focus topics) suggested

One of the major aims of FORWARDS is to link ground-based assessments of trees and forests with information from satellite-based remote sensing. The design of a successful project needs to allow for such a link. This means that not only small single sites can be equipped but that the design needs to take into account a larger spatial representativeness for a given biogeographical region (i.e., covering several sites within an area of 20-100 km<sup>2</sup>).

A suitable way to approach the objectives of this call and to account for the requirements of the spatial representativeness is to establish supersites on highly equipped forest monitoring sites (e.g., ICP Forest level II plots) plus additional (less equipped) supporting sites surrounding the supersites (e.g., ICP Forests Level I sites) and integrate them into the FORWARDS forest monitoring network.

*In this context, Supersites* are defined as forest monitoring sites with multiple information layers measured on the ground and with proximate sensing for capturing canopy dynamics as well as water and carbon cycling with high temporal resolution and with near-real-time data delivery for better integration with RS time series. In ICP Forests Level II sites many different measurements related to tree growth as well as water and nutrient relations are carried out continuously building a prerequisite for the establishment of a supersite within the FORWARDS project. The availability of such measurements might also be given at other sites and/or networks, which might have another focus (e.g., ICOS, LTER) and then also qualify for the establishment of supersites. Long-term measurements of growth, soil water availability and nutrient availability need to be available (and complying with the methods defined in the ICP Forest<sup>7</sup> or ICOS<sup>8</sup> manuals).

Highly equipped forest monitoring sites, where high temporal resolution tree functioning measurements are not standard, can qualify as candidates for super sites. Additional close-to-real time measurements of tree water deficit and growth with point dendrometers<sup>9</sup> as well as of soil moisture and matric potential sensors together with depth-dependent or horizon-specific soil properties (texture, coarse fragment content, humus content, bulk density) carried out with the funding available from this call will allow to qualify these sites as supersites and to integrate these sites into a network of pilot supersites (Fig. 1). The Europe-wide pilot supersite network will then enable nowcasting of climate change effects and disturbances on forests on a European scale. Such a supersite framework as being established in FORWARDS will provide data which will feed into a Bayesian nowcasting model framework.

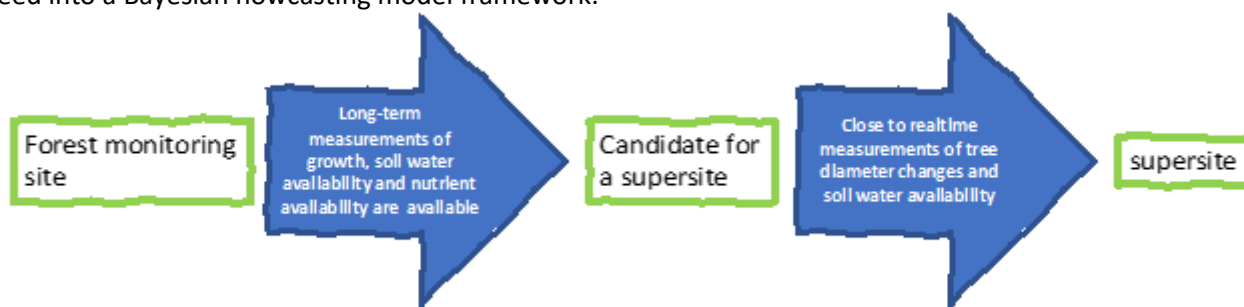


Fig. 1: Minimal requirements for a supersite within the FORWARDS supersite pilot framework

To link ground assessments and remote sensing information of high spatial resolution (cm to m), successful projects are recommended to acquire multispectral or hyperspectral imagery (for example from crewed (aircraft) or uncrewed (drones) aerial vehicles) from which continuous reflectance spectra or reflectance

<sup>7</sup> <http://icp-forests.net/page/icp-forests-manual>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.icos-etc.eu/icos/documents/instructions>

indices providing information on forest function can be obtained. Fig. 2 describes the additional measurements that could be considered (red: aircraft or drone-based assessments; blue: point dendrometer which need to be supplemented by high temporal resolution and near real-time soil matric potential measurements that minimal requirements for forest monitoring sites to qualify as supersites; see Fig. 1) and that might be set up at highly equipped forest monitoring sites (see Fig. 2 as well as descriptions in the text above for minimal requirements for supersite candidates) representative for a region, forest type or country. If soil moisture and matric potential measurements are already available at given sites (and they qualify as supersites according to Fig 1), we suggest including these sites but to develop a number of additional forest monitoring sites into supersites. At the supersites (as defined for their minimal requirements in Fig 1), additional repeated measurements on forest structure (e.g., height and diameter measurements of trees, terrestrial laser scans) might be performed and these measurements should also be conducted on additional (normally less equipped) supporting sites surrounding the supersites (e.g., ICP Forests Level I sites or sites by other monitoring networks).

### **Methodological details:**

We welcome proposals addressing all three focus topics. Focus 1 can be focused on as standalone project but Foci 2 and 3 must be combined.

#### *Focus 1: Stress nowcasting - soil and tree ecophysiological data*

Forest monitoring sites (at least two sites that have the status of a candidate supersite; Fig 1) will be equipped with standardized sensors as described for TreeNet – the biological drought and growth indicator network<sup>9</sup> and will thus qualify as supersites according to Fig. 1). The set of sensors in the soil, air and tree are considered to follow the linking methods concept<sup>6</sup> and are meant to provide a link between the existing (heterogenous) infrastructure at the various sites and the FORWARDS nowcasting network depending on homogenous, standardized data.

The linking methods include:

- point dendrometers on tree stems (3-5 trees per tree species, coverage of the most important tree species in the stand; if the stand contains only one dominant species more than 3-5 sensors should be installed for this given species),
- soil water potential sensors (or, however, less preferable soil moisture sensors) in at least two depths (topsoil and deeper soil layer (e.g., 50 cm but depending on local soil conditions)
- temperature sensors in a soil profile (recommended to be defined according to the soil and rooting zone depth to ensure that for a given soil profile a justifiable depth profile is covered)
- air temperature and relative air humidity sensors.

All these sensors can be linked to a LoRaWAN data transfer device (see details in Zweifel et al. 2021<sup>9</sup>) to send the data in near real-time to a central data server compatible to the infrastructure currently run in TreeNet-Switzerland. The FORWARDS team at WSL in Switzerland will extend its servers structure so that the data provided by the grantees will feed into a joint database which is described in detail by Zweifel et al. 2021<sup>9</sup>. With such a homogenous infrastructure, data can be brought into a European wide context and assimilated into a drought impact nowcasting framework. Such a compatible infrastructure is necessary to allow close to real time data transfer and processing.

Applicants are expected to suggest ways of how to relate and scale the already existing site-specific measurements (e.g., eddy-covariance based fluxes, alternative ways of growth and biomass measurements, own soil water status measurements, vitality indices, etc.) with the help of the linking methods to the European scale (see Zweifel et al. 2023<sup>6</sup>). We further encourage to integrate suggestions for method synchronization approaches (e.g., for already existing dendrometers and soil measurements) into the applications. We strongly advise to follow the equipment suggestions mentioned above so that homogenous data sets can be generated. These datasets can then contribute (without temporal delay) to European-wide nowcasting models that will be established in FORWARDS.

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<sup>9</sup> Zweifel, R. et al. TreeNet–The Biological Drought and Growth Indicator Network. *Frontiers in Forests and Global Change* 4, doi:10.3389/ffgc.2021.776905 (2021).

### *Focus 2: Link ground based to remote sensing information*

Remote sensing of leaf/canopy reflectance information allows estimation of tree functional traits linked with forest health, acclimation, and adaptation. Spectroscopy (i.e., reflectance acquired in many narrow continuous bands) can be used to derive foliar biochemistry information either through narrow spectral indices or through machine learning modelling approaches. Among the most important foliar chemical constituents informing about tree function are element concentrations linked with the nutritional status of trees and pigments associated with the regulation of photosynthesis and photoprotection. Detection of changes in photosynthetic pigments via close-range remote sensing thus allows crown specific assessments of tree stress responses along a stress severity axis, going from early *pre-visual* vulnerability symptoms (e.g., downregulation of photosynthesis) to visible damage (e.g., leaf discoloration and defoliation). This focus aims at linking and scaling foliar nutritional status and stress symptoms assessed at the leaf level to the tree, plot and landscape level using airborne imaging spectroscopy coupled with georeferenced ground-truthing information at highly equipped forest monitoring sites (referred to as supersites; minimal requirements see Fig 1) and additional (less equipped) supporting sites (e.g., ICP Forests Level I sites).

The project should cover:

- Imaging spectroscopy flights of the supersites and supporting sites that are recommended to be carried out in 2024 during mid to late summer (peak greenness) via aircraft (or as a less preferred option by drone-based assessments) and
- Foliar biochemistry ground-truthing, consisting of sampling and analysis of foliar material simultaneously (i.e., on the same day or close in time under similar conditions) with imaging flights for at least the supersites.

To acquire consistent information the following data collection process is suggested:

- Coordinate and support imaging spectroscopy flights to be conducted by an airborne data provider in the frame of the FORWARDS project. Imaging data acquisition and processing should be conducted by the provider according to standardised procedures<sup>3</sup> so that different sites and regions can be compared. Successful applicants / projects are recommended to equip their sites with portable radiometric targets before an overflight, needed for data radiometric calibration and validation.
- Imaging flights are normally performed under clear sky conditions to reach optimal data quality. This means that in some cases the exact overfly day for a particular geographic region can only be set a few days in advance due to uncertainties in weather patterns, requiring flexibility from the ground teams.
- Foliar sampling and analysis for biochemistry ground-truthing according to ICP Level II protocols for foliar chemistry (see Part XII Sampling and analysis of needles and leaves, <http://icp-forests.net/page/icp-forests-manual>) and protocols for photosynthetic pigments (chlorophyll, carotenoids, xanthophylls) analysis as detailed in D'Odorico et al. (2021)<sup>10</sup>.
- Additional measurements on the days of flight (e.g., crown defoliation assessments, drone-based imaging, leaf-level photosynthesis and reflectance, other foliar constituents) are encouraged, as well as measurements on additional surrounding sites (e.g., ICP Forests Level I sites) included in the flight line.

### *Focus 3: Carbon storage and stand structural information*

Here we suggest two different methods, which might be combined. Moreover, these measurements should be performed on the supersites (see Fig. 1) as well as on the additional sites (e.g., ICP Forests Level I) that provide the spatial representativeness for a given region the link to satellite based remote sensing (see above).

A) Tree height and diameter measurements: Tree diameter and height are regularly assessed every five years in ICP Forest Level II sites and also at regular intervals on other sites that can qualify for supersites (e.g., ICOS, (e)LTER). Further annual assessments on the supersites, and one-time measurements on the additional sites (such as ICP Forests Level I sites) will increase the information on carbon stocks and the carbon sequestration

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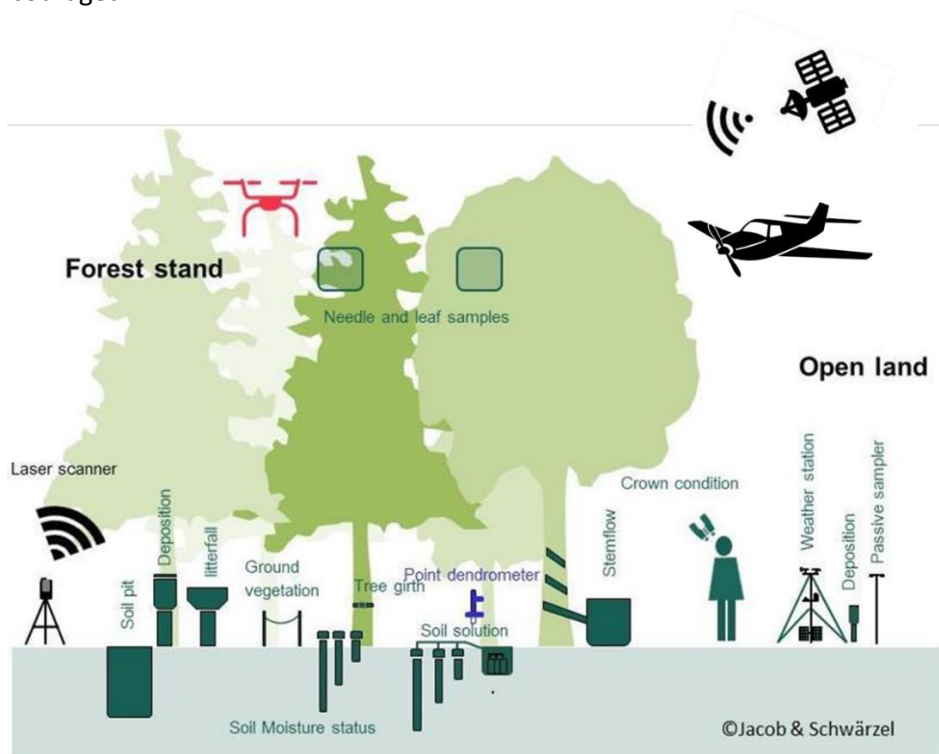
<sup>10</sup> D'Odorico, P. et al. Drone-based physiological index reveals long-term acclimation and drought stress responses in trees. *Plant, Cell & Environment* 44, 3552-3570, doi:<https://doi.org/10.1111/pce.14177> (2021).

potential of forests on the larger area scale. Such measurements should comply with the ICP Forests manual (<http://icp-forests.net/page/icp-forests-manual>).

B) 3D point clouds for structural information: Terrestrial laser scanning (TLS), Personal laser scanning (PLS), UAV-Lidar and/or point clouds from structure-from-motion based on high resolution RGB UAV images and/or terrestrial images; all these technologies can measure a range of structural attributes of forest sites and an appropriate one should be applied. 3D point clouds should cover existing supersites and additional Level I sites and should be referenced in absolute coordinate systems.

To acquire consistent information the following data collection process is suggested:

- The suggested method for collecting 3D point clouds is terrestrial laser scanning (TLS). Laser scanner quality should at least be comparable with a Riegl VZ400i
- The data should be collected very close to the time of the image spectroscopy flights and the field campaigns if methodological foci 2 and 3 are combined.
- The point clouds are absolutely referenced, and individual trees of the supersites and additional surrounding sites are segmented. Additional derived products (e.g., biomass) are encouraged.



**Fig 2:** Set up of supersites on highly equipped forest monitoring sites that qualifies as a supersite (see for minimal requirements Fig 1).

### Available funding

Proposals can request a contribution of max. 145,000 euro which will allow establishing infrastructure on existing monitoring plots where additional information on the impact of climate change on forests can be gained.

Projects are expected to start in April 2024 and last a maximum of 18 months, although with assured continuation of the nowcasting approaches (focus area 1) for a minimum of three years.

To ensure that all European regions are covered, proposals must indicate the European and biogeographic region(s)<sup>11</sup> targeted by the project. European regions (North Europe, Central-West Europe, Central-East Europe, South-West Europe and South-East Europe) follow country groups as defined by Forest Europe in its State of Europe's Forests reports<sup>12</sup>.

Up to 5 projects will be funded under this Call.

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.eea.europa.eu/data-and-maps/figures/biogeographical-regions-in-europe-2>

<sup>12</sup> [https://foresteurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/SoEF\\_2020.pdf](https://foresteurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/SoEF_2020.pdf)

## 2. QUESTIONS

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

forwards@efi.int

Questions can be sent until:

8 January 2024

Questions and answers for this grant process will be published starting from 10 November at <https://efi.int/grants-training/grants/G-05-2023> until:

10 January 2024

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

- Answers for questions received during the period 31 October - 8 November 2023 will be published on 10 November 2023.
- Answers for questions received during the period 9 November- 22 November 2023 will be published on 24 November 2023.
- Answers for questions received during the period 23 November - 6 December 2023 will be published on 8 December 2023.
- Answers for questions received during the period 7 December – 13 December 2023 will be published on 15 December 2023.
- Answers for questions received during the period 14 December – 8 January 2024 will be published on 10 January 2024

Individual questions will not be replied to separately.

Potential applicants are advised to visit <https://efi.int/grants-training/grants/G-05-2023> regularly before the deadline for the submission of applications for any Q&A, updates or modifications regarding this grant process.

## 3. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

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Grant applications can be submitted by one legal entity or a consortium of legal entities.

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

Criteria	Description of criteria	Clarification
E1	Applicant is a legal entity (legal person)	If the application is submitted by a consortium (grouping of legal persons represented by a coordinator), this criterion applies to all the participants This call is not open for applications from natural persons
E2	Applicant eligible for funding under the European Union Horizon Europe Research and Innovation Programme	If the application is submitted by a consortium, this criterion applies to all the participants

Furthermore, the following legal entities (legal persons) will not be eligible for funding:

- Beneficiary or associated partner of the FORWARDS project under the Grant Agreement No. 101084481



- Entities subject European Union restrictive measures
- Israeli entities due to activities in the territories occupied by Israel (European Commission Guidelines No 2013/C 205/05)
- Public interest trusts established under the Hungarian Act IX of 2021 or any entity maintained by such a public interest trust (Council Implementing Decision 2022/2506)

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

#### 4. ADMISSIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

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All applications shall apply the following structure:

- I. Administrative information
  - Application Form-Part A, following Template annex 1
  - Power of Attorney for Coordinator, as applicable, following template annex 3
  - Declaration, using Template annex 4
  - Gender equality declaration using Template Annex 4A
  - All the administrative information (Annexes 1,3, 4, and 4A) must be submitted in a single pdf document
  
- II. Technical Description
  - Application Form- Part B, following Template annex 2
  - The length of the technical description must not exceed 15 pages and shall be submitted in one single PDF document (this does not include the instructions and guidance provided in annex 2).
  - Technical Description must be written in English

Formatting rules for the documentation under subsections I. and II.

- Font: Calibri
- Minimum font size: 11 pt (except for tables and figures where it should be minimum 10 pt)
- Line spacing: 1
- Orientation: Portrait. For the tables or any Gantt/pert chart, landscape orientation can be used if necessary for the purpose of fitting of the tables or for legibility.
- Page size and margins: Page size A4, all margins (top, bottom, left, right) should be at least 2 cm (not including any footers or headers)

*All the documentation (application forms and annexes) must be submitted in PDF (Two separate pdfs for I. and II.).*

What procedures to follow for applying:

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

grants@efi.int

Please note that it is not allowed to send the email to another recipient (i.e. not in the To: field, the cc: field, or the bcc: field)

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

G-05-2023, Pilots of long-term climate impact forest monitoring sites

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

15 January 2024 at 21:00 UTC

## 5. AWARD CRITERIA

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Criteria that will be applied for awarding of the grant:

<b>A1</b>	<b>Excellence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Clarity and relevance of the objectives.</li><li>▪ Soundness of the proposed methodology, including the underlying concepts, assumptions, and interdisciplinary approaches.</li></ul>
<b>A2</b>	<b>Implementation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Quality and effectiveness of the work plan, including extent to which the resources and tasks assigned are in line with the objectives of the activities.</li><li>▪ Complementarity of the participants and extent to which the consortium brings together the necessary expertise.</li><li>▪ Appropriateness of the risk management approach.</li></ul>
<b>A3</b>	<b>Coherence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Appropriateness of the proposed activities</li></ul>

Applications will receive a score of 0-6 for criteria A1 and A2 and a score of 0-3 for criterion A3. Scores can be given in half points.

Applications must receive a score of at least 3.5 points for criteria A1 and A2, at least 2.5 for criterion A3, and a total overall score of at least 11 points to be considered for the award of a grant.

For each European region (lot), the application with the highest total score A1 + A2 + A3 will be awarded the grant.

In case of equal overall scores, applications will be prioritized according to score under criterion A3, then criterion A1, and thereafter criterion A2.

In case of equal scores under A1, A2, and A3, applications that address relevant aspects of the call that have not been covered by an equally or higher ranked application will be prioritised.

Should overall call budget be available, the highest ranked application not selected for award of a grant will be selected (regardless of European and biogeographic region area), and so forth, up to a maximum of two applications per European and biogeographic region area, until overall call budget is no longer available.

## 6. GRANT DISBURSEMENT

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

- 35% entry into force of the grant agreement
- 25% upon approval of the interim technical report, due in M9
- 40% upon approval of the final technical report, due in M18

Applicants must, however, as part of the Application include the global amount needed to cover all implementation of the project.

## 7. GRANT AGREEMENT

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Template grant agreement is provided as annex 5.

## 8. ETHICS

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Following award, before the contract can be signed by EFI, an ethics declaration/self-assessment provided by EFI must be signed and submitted by the Applicant, and approved by EFI. The self-assessment may include

a requirement to provide further information and documentation to ensure compliance with applicable international, EU and national law.

## **9. VALIDATION OF LEGAL AND FINANCIAL CAPACITY**

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### **A. Validation of legal capacity**

Following award, before the contract can be signed by EFI the following documentation must be provided by the Applicant (all legal entities) having been awarded the contract:

- i. Legal entities
  - Proof of registration or similar that the entity is established under national or international law
  - Authorisation for signatory
- ii. Consortia
  - If a application is submitted by a consortium, the above requirements apply for all members of the consortium.

### **B. Validation of financial capacity**

Applicants awarded a grant must provide the following documentation before the grant agreement can be signed by EFI: Profit and loss account, Balance sheet, Explanatory notes that form part of the above-mentioned financial statements.

The requirement to submit documentation will not apply if the Applicant awarded the contract is:

- a public body
- a consortium where one participant is a public body

Documents are to be submitted in English or as a certified translation to English.

EFI can waive the requirement if the required documentation is not available and not required under statutory applicable law, in which case a self-declaration will be required.

If an application is submitted by a consortium, the required documentation is to be submitted by all entities in the consortium.

Special requirements apply for the following types of entities:

- Subsidiaries: if own financial statements are not prepared, subsidiaries may provide consolidated accounts and the audit report of the parent company it belongs to if:
  - The subsidiary is exempt under national law from statutory audits;
  - Only consolidated statements of the parent company the entity belongs to are available; and
  - The parent company assumes joint liability for all debts of the subsidiary
- Entities operating cash-based accounting, must provide:
  - Bank statements containing information on available cash, savings, short and long-term bank debts
  - Signed declaration on liabilities (short and long-term payables and other non-bank debts, and assets (fixed assets, short and long-term receivables)
- Newly established entities that have not yet closed accounts must provide:
  - Estimated financial data in a business plan or similar document

### **C. Submission of documentation**

The Applicant awarded the contract must submit the required documentation under 8A and 8B within a deadline set by EFI. If the documentation is not submitted within the deadline EFI will in a new decision reject the application.

## 10. TERMS AND CONDITIONS FOR SUBMISSION OF AN APPLICATION

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- 10.1 In addition to what has been stated in the Call for grant and these Grant submission guidelines, EFI applies the EFI Grant rules which have been made available at <https://efi.int/grants-training/grants/efi-grant-rules>
- 10.2 By submitting an application for a grant, the applicant accepts all the terms and conditions set out in the Call for grant and these Grant submission guidelines (including its annexes), and waives all other terms.
- 10.3 EFI may reject an application that is not in compliance with the instructions in the Call for grant or the Grant submission guidelines.
- 10.4 No information communicated in this grant process, including the Call for grant and these Grant submission guidelines (including its annexes), bind EFI in any way to an award or a grant agreement. EFI shall only be bound by written grant agreements.
- 10.5 An applicant must be able to prove, to the satisfaction of EFI, any information given as part of its application. Failure to do so, within a time limit set by EFI, may result in rejection of the application.
- 10.6 EFI may ask the applicant for clarifications regarding any information submitted as part of the application. EFI may reject any applicant from the grant process that fails to submit the requested clarification.
- 10.7 Only applications sent to [grants@efi.int](mailto:grants@efi.int) will be considered.
- 10.8 Applications submitted after the deadline for submission will not be considered.
- 10.9 An Applicant may only submit one application. In case of multiple applications from the same Applicant EFI will only consider the last one received.
- 10.10 Withdrawal of an application shall be done in writing.
- 10.11 Information provided by the applicants cannot be considered confidential, unless so designated by EFI
- 10.12 All applications shall be quoted in Euros.
- 10.13 Expenses incurred in the preparation and dispatch of an application will not be reimbursed by EFI.
- 10.14 Applications must be legible. EFI may reject applications that are not legible.
- 10.15 EFI will disregard any information given by an Applicant outside the format for submission as stated in the Call for Grant or Grant submission guidelines.
- 10.16 The application shall be complete when submitted. EFI will disregard additional documentation or information submitted separately from the application, where not requested by EFI.
- 10.17 EFI may at its own discretion disclose the contents of any application, as well as information on the Beneficiary awarded the grant as well as any other information of the grant awarded.
- 10.18 Unless otherwise stated in the Call for grant and these Grant submission guidelines, the Application and all correspondence related to it shall be in English. EFI retains the right to correspond in English with the Applicant even if the application may be submitted in a language other than English.
- 10.19 Applicants are not entitled to contact EFI staff members or any other person referred to in the EFI grant rules after the closing date of the receipt of applications to ask for information on the evaluation. EFI may eliminate from the evaluation any Applicant contravening this provision.

### ANNEXES

- Annex 1: Application Form Part A
- Annex 2: Application Form Part B
- Annex 3: Power of Attorney for Coordinator
- Annex 4: Declaration
- Annex 4A: Gender equality declaration
- Annex 5: Grant Agreement Template