

EUROPEAN FOREST INSTITUTE

Grant submission guidelines

G-06-2023

Characterization of European forest disturbances

Amended as of 7 December 2023

1. ACTIVITY TO BE SUPPORTED BY THE GRANT

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 including climate regulation, raw materials, habitats for biodiversity, and air pollution removal. On the other hand, climate change is a major challenge to European forests, as demonstrated by recent heat waves, extended drought periods, and disturbances (storms, wildfires, insect outbreaks). FORWARDS aims to prototype the ForestWard Observatory – a European observatory for forests' climate change impacts to support decision-making at strategic and operational scales. On the European and national scale, a major objective is to provide a broad perspective of disturbances, future risks, and critical vulnerabilities and threats to forests as strategic support. Current long-term forest monitoring networks provide important information on the impact of climate change on forests but are not designed to provide real-time information for studying forest disturbances. Prompt detection and characterization of forest disturbance as well as the production of official statistics are of primary importance and a crucial priority for effectively reacting to global warming and properly planning the current and future management of European forests. Accordingly, FORWARDS will provide a comprehensive and pan-European assessment of forest disturbances, as well as tools and operative frameworks for the near real-time monitoring of forest disturbance by exploiting satellite-based remote sensing data. Of primary importance, FORWARDS will provide a consistent, and statistically robust disturbance assessment for Europe.

Objectives and outcomes

With this call, FORWARDS aims to compile an exhaustive open-access European forest disturbance reference dataset. Such a dataset will allow for (i) producing statistically rigorous estimates of disturbances in Europe, (ii) developing new methods for the near real-time forest disturbance mapping using remote sensing data, and (iii) analyzing the effects of different types of disturbances over different forest types across Europe.

Projects supported by this call should contribute to the development of such an exhaustive and open-access forest disturbance reference dataset for Europe and are encouraged to address one or more of the following FORWARDS' aims:

- Integration of remote sensing-derived maps and reference data for the statistically rigorous estimation of forest disturbance area
- Near real-time mapping and characterization of forest disturbance using Sentinel-2 data
- Forest disturbances change over time and their relationship with climate change
- Remote sensing-derived metrics (e.g., magnitude and recovery) and their relationship with actual forest changes
- Reviewing strengths, weaknesses, limitations, and potential implementations of remote sensing in forest disturbance monitoring

Supported projects and activities

Supported projects will include compiling historical data (dating back to at least the year 2000) on disturbance types, year, and magnitude. Supported projects are recommended to follow existing systems of nomenclature for disturbance types, for example as developed by Stahl et al. 2023¹, or by Hermosilla et al. 2015².

¹ <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rse.2022.113416>

² <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rse.2015.09.004>

In addition, projects supported by this call are recommended to follow the procedures to acquire the forest disturbance reference data relying on photointerpretation of satellite or aerial imagery as presented by Chirici et al. 2020³, Francini et al. 2021⁴, or Francini et al. 2022⁵.

Data and results from the supported activities must be made available as open access upon completion of the project and feed into the ForestWard Observatory that is being developed by the FORWARDS project.

Available funding

The grant of max. €150,000 will allow for supporting the statistical assessment and characterization of forest disturbance in Europe via the establishment of new forest disturbance reference data and their integration with satellite remote sensing.

Projects are expected to start in April 2024 and last a maximum of 12 months.

To ensure that all European regions are covered, proposals must choose one of the following three European regions (lots), which follow country groups defined by Forest Europe in its State of Europe's Forests reports⁶.

1. North Europe
2. Central Europe
3. South Europe

Up to three projects will be funded under this Call, with a maximum of one per lot.

2. QUESTIONS

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

Questions can be sent until:

Questions and answers for this grant process will be published starting from 10 November at <https://efi.int/grants-training/grants/G-06-2023> until:

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-06-2023> regularly before the deadline for the submission of applications for any Q&A, updates or modifications regarding this grant process.

³ <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13595-020-00936-2>

⁴ <https://doi.org/10.1080/01431161.2021.1899334>

⁵ <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jag.2021.102663>

⁶ https://foresteurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/SoEF_2020.pdf

3. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

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

Applicants must, by the deadline for submission of the Application, 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

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-06-2023, Characterization of European forest disturbances

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

15 January at 21:00 UTC

5. AWARD CRITERIA

Criteria that will be applied for awarding of the grant:

A1	Excellence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Clarity and relevance of the objectives. ▪ Soundness of the proposed methodology, including the underlying concepts, assumptions, and interdisciplinary approaches.
A2	Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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. ▪ Capacity to collect forest disturbance reference data for multiple forest disturbance types ▪ Complementarity of the participants and extent to which the consortium brings together the necessary expertise. ▪ Appropriateness of the risk management approach.
A3	Coherence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Appropriateness of the proposed activities

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, and at least 2.5 for criterion A3 to be considered for the award of a grant and, a total score of at least 11 points overall to be considered for the award of a grant.

For each of the three European regions (lots) defined, 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 ranked application will be prioritised.

6. GRANT DISBURSEMENT

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

- 35% entry into force of the grant agreement
- 25% upon approval of the interim technical report, due in M6
- 40% upon approval of the final technical report, due in M12

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

7. GRANT AGREEMENT

Template grant agreement is provided as annex 5.

8. ETHICS

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

A. Validation of legal capacity

Following award of the contract, 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:

- Legal entities
 - Proof of registration or similar that the entity is established under national or international law
 - Authorisation for signatory
- 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

- 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 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