

EUROPEAN FOREST INSTITUTE

Grant submission guidelines

G-07-2024

Characterization of European forest disturbances

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 many benefits including climate regulation, raw materials, habitats for biodiversity, and removal of air pollution. 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 and 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 monitoring carbon loss and recovery due to forest disturbances by exploiting satellite-based remote sensing data. Of primary importance, FORWARDS will provide a consistent, and statistically robust disturbance assessment for Europe.

Objectives

With this call, FORWARDS aims to support the compilation of an exhaustive open-access European forest disturbance reference dataset based on ground data. Such a dataset will allow for (i) developing statistically rigorous estimates of disturbances in Europe, (ii) developing and testing new methods for the quantification of the impact and carbon loss due to disturbances and recovery, and (iii) analyzing the effects of different types of disturbances over different forest types across Europe.

Supported projects and activities

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 ground reference data for the quantification of carbon loss due to different disturbances, different disturbance severity degrees and regrowth trajectories
- Characterization of forest disturbance using Landsat, Sentinel-1, or Sentinel-2 data
- Linking remote sensing information with ground reference data to quantify forest disturbance severity and canopy cover loss and recovery
- Remote sensing-derived metrics (e.g., disturbance magnitude and recovery) and their relationship with actual forest changes derived from ground, near-sensing and/or very high-resolution satellite observations
- Quantification from remote sensing of biomass recovery following disturbance
- Reviewing strengths, weaknesses, limitations, and potential implementations of remote sensing in forest disturbance monitoring through independent validation and accuracy analysis

Supported projects should focus on the systematic acquisition of ground data on forest disturbances and recovery across a range of conditions (i.e. types, timing and severity of disturbances). Sharing and enriching (i.e., remeasurement) of already available ground data is welcome, as long as precise coordinates are provided to permit the linking of ground and remote sensing data. Please note that funding cannot be provided for activities, for example collection of data, that have already been completed prior to the entry into force of the grant agreement. Ground reference data should include disturbance types, year, stump diameter, stand tree diameter and height, and canopy cover. Forest disturbances visited in the field should be of different type, over different forest types be based on statistically sound selection of samples, and acquired for disturbances that occurred over different years.

Importantly, supported projects should exploit the collected data to address one of the following aims: (i) developing statistically rigorous estimates of disturbances in Europe, (ii) developing and testing new methods for the quantification of the impact and carbon loss due to disturbances and recovery, and (iii) analyzing the effects of different types of disturbances over different forest types across Europe.

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

Each grant is in the maximum amount of €150,000.

Projects are expected to start in May 2025 and last a maximum of 24 months.

Proposals must indicate the European region that is targeted by the project. European regions follow the country groups as defined by Forest Europe in its State of Europe's Forests reports¹.

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

Up to five projects will be funded under this Call.

2. QUESTIONS

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

forwards@efi.int

Questions can be sent until:

18 January 2025

Questions and answers for this grant process will be published at <https://efi.int/grants-training/grants/G-07-2024>

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

- Answers for questions received during the call launch -2 December 2024, 2024, will be published on 11 December 2024
- Answers for questions received during the period 3 December 2024 – 3 January 2025 will be published on 14 January 2025
- Answers for questions received during the period 4 January 2025 – 18 January 2025 will be published on 24 January 2025

Individual questions will not be replied to separately.

Potential applicants are advised to visit <https://efi.int/grants-training/grants/G-07-2024> regularly before the deadline for the submission of applications for any Q&A, and updates or modifications regarding this grant process.

¹ 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 Program	If the application is submitted by a consortium, this criterion applies to all the participants

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

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)

4. ADMISSIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

All applications shall apply the following structure:

- I. Administrative information
 - i) Application Form - Part A, using template provided in annex 1
- II. Technical Description
 - i) Application Form - Part B, following Template annex 2
 - ii) The length of the technical description must not exceed 12 pages and shall be submitted in one single PDF document (this does not include the instructions and guidance provided in annex 2).
 - iii) Technical Description must be written in English

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

What procedures to follow for applying:

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

grants@efi.int

Please note that it is not allowed to send the email to another recipient (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-07-2024, Characterization of European forest disturbances

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

31 January 2025 at 21:00 UCT+2

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 in relation to the call topic.▪ Soundness of the proposed methodology, including the underlying concepts, and assumptions.▪ Spatial design that considers representativeness and scalability
A2	Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Quality, coherence, and effectiveness of the work plan, including extent to which the resources and tasks assigned are in line with the objectives of the activities.▪ Complementarity of the participants and extent to which the consortium brings together the necessary expertise.▪ Appropriateness of risk management.

Applications will receive a score of 0-5 for criteria A1 and A2. Scores can be given in half points.

Applications must receive a score of at least 3.5 points for criteria A1 and A2 to be considered for the award of a grant and, a total score of at least 8.5 points overall to be considered for the award of a grant.

Subject to applications meeting or exceeding the thresholds, at least one grants will be awarded in each of the lots 1,2, and 3: the application receiving the highest total score A1 + A2.

In case of equal scores, the following will apply: applications will be prioritised according to score under criteria A1 and then A2. In case of equal scores under A1 and A2, applications will be prioritized according to gender balance in respect of the personnel that will primarily carry out the tasks in the project.

Should, after the selection of the grant recipient per lot, or if no application within a lot meets or exceeds the minimum threshold, overall call budget be available, the highest ranked application not selected for award of a grant will be selected (regardless of lot), and so forth, until overall call budget is no longer available. No more than two grants will, however, be awarded for any of the lots. A maximum of five grants will be awarded under the call.

6. GRANT DISBURSEMENT

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

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

7. GRANT AGREEMENT

Template grant agreement is provided as annex 3.

Please note that the Grant Agreement is only signed by EFI and the successful Applicant(s) (all Participating organizations) following decision by EFI on award of the Grant(s).

8. NEGOTIATION PHASE

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

9. TERMS AND CONDITIONS FOR SUBMISSION OF AN APPLICATION

- 9.1 In addition to what has been stated in the Call for grant and these Grant submission guidelines, EFI applies the EFI Grant rules which have been made available at <https://efi.int/grants-training/grants/efi-grant-rules>
- 9.2 By submitting an application for a grant, the applicant accepts all the terms and conditions set out in the Call for grant and these Grant submission guidelines (including its annexes) and waives all other terms.
- 9.3 EFI may reject an application that is not in compliance with the instructions in the Call for grant or the Grant submission guidelines.
- 9.4 No information communicated in this grant process, including the Call for grant and these Grant submission guidelines (including its annexes), bind EFI in any way to an award or a grant agreement. EFI shall only be bound by written grant agreements.
- 9.5 An applicant must be able to prove to the satisfaction of EFI, any information given as part of its application. Failure to do so, within a time limit set by EFI, may result in rejection of the application.
- 9.6 EFI may ask the applicant for clarifications regarding any information submitted as part of the application. EFI may reject any applicant from the grant process that fails to submit the requested clarification.
- 9.7 Only applications sent to grants@efi.int will be considered.
- 9.8 Applications submitted after the deadline for submission will not be considered.
- 9.9 An Applicant may only submit one application. In case of multiple applications from the same economic operator EFI will only consider the last one received.
- 9.10 Withdrawal of an application shall be done in writing.
- 9.11 Information provided by the applicants cannot be considered confidential, unless so designated by EFI
- 9.12 All applications shall be quoted in Euros.
- 9.13 Expenses incurred in the preparation and dispatch of an application will not be reimbursed by EFI.
- 9.14 Applications must be legible. EFI may reject applications that are not legible.
- 9.15 EFI will disregard any information given by an Applicant outside the format for submission as stated in the Call for Grant or Grant submission guidelines.

- 9.16 The application shall be complete when submitted. EFI will disregard additional documentation or information submitted separately from the application, where not requested by EFI.
- 9.17 EFI may at its own discretion disclose the contents of any application, as well as information on the Beneficiary awarded the grant as well as any other information of the grant awarded.
- 9.18 Unless otherwise stated in the Call for grant and these Grant submission guidelines, the Application and all correspondence related to it shall be in English. EFI retains the right to correspond in English with the Applicant even if the application may be submitted in a language other than English.
- 9.19 Applicants are not entitled to contact EFI staff members, or any other person referred to in the EFI grant rules after the closing date of the receipt of applications to ask for information on the evaluation. EFI may eliminate from the evaluation any Applicant contravening this provision.

ANNEXES

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