

## **Contracting Authority: Milieukontakt Albania**

*Within the framework of the project “Cleaner rivers - Cleaner seas (RiverClean)*  
EuropeAid/180788/DD/ACT/AL- Contract IPA III/2024/459-979

Support to civil society organizations in Albania in the fields of environment, culture, food  
safety and consumer protection

### **GUIDELINE FOR GRANT APPLICANTS**

Reference: 459-979 / RC14/2

Deadline for submitting the Application: 08.01.2026 by 16:30.

## Announcement

**This is an open call for full project proposals, where all required documents must be submitted together.**

All applications will undergo a single-stage evaluation process. First, the administrative compliance of the submitted application will be verified. Then, only proposals that are complete and meet all eligibility requirements will proceed to the qualitative evaluation phase. The eligibility check will be performed based on the supporting documents submitted with the full application and the declaration signed by the applicant. Applicants are strongly advised to carefully follow the instructions provided in the Call for Proposals to ensure completeness and compliance with the formal requirements.

The guidelines outlined in this document are intended to assist all applicants in preparing and submitting their applications correctly. The application package can be downloaded from the official website of Milieukontakt Albania [www.milieukontakt.org](http://www.milieukontakt.org), or can be requested by email at: [office@milieukontakt.org](mailto:office@milieukontakt.org).

## Table of Contents:

<b>1. RIVERCLEAN – Strengthening civil society's contribution to plastic reduction and circular solutions in Albania's river basins.....</b>	<b>4</b>
1.1 Background.....	4
1.2 Methodology to monitor Beach Macro Litter (>2.5 cm).....	5
1.2.1 What is the Beach Macro Litter (>2.5 cm) methodology and why is it used? .....	5
1.2.2 Beach Macro Litter Monitoring Protocol .....	5
1.5 Financial allocation by the contracting authority/ Fund available.....	10
<b>2. Rules for this Call for Project Proposals.....</b>	<b>10</b>
2.1 Eligibility/Eligibility Criteria .....	10
2.1.1 Actors: .....	11
2.1.2 Actions: .....	11
2.1.3 Eligibility of Applicants .....	11
2.1.4 What costs are allowed? .....	14
2.1.5 Ethics and Values .....	15
2.2. How to apply and the procedures you must follow .....	16
2.2.1. Supporting documents to be submitted .....	16
2.2.2. Submission of the application .....	17
2.3 Evaluation and Selection of Applications.....	17
2.4 Notification of results and right to appeal .....	21
2.5 Signing contracts .....	21
2.6 Indicative Process Calendar .....	22
<b>3. DOCUMENTS TO BE COMPLETED AND SUBMITTED BY THE APPLICANT .....</b>	<b>23</b>

# 1. RIVERCLEAN – Strengthening civil society's contribution to plastic reduction and circular solutions in Albania's river basins

## 1.1 Background

Plastic pollution has become one of the most pressing environmental challenges in Albania and across the wider Mediterranean region. The country's rivers and coastal areas are heavily affected by plastic waste, which originates from multiple sources, including poor waste management practices, high levels of single-use plastics, tourism activities, and riverine transport of waste to the sea. Beaches along the Adriatic and Ionian coasts, particularly those influenced by the Ishëm and Vjosa river basins, serve as accumulation zones for this pollution, acting as both indicators of environmental pressure and entry points of plastics into marine ecosystems.

The recent assessments conducted under European and regional frameworks, such as the **EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD)** and the **UNEP/MAP Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme (IMAP)**, highlight that monitoring of beach litter is essential for understanding the scale and sources of pollution. However, in Albania, systematic data collection remains limited, fragmented, and often focused only on isolated clean-up campaigns. While these efforts raise awareness, they do not generate consistent, scientifically robust data that can feed into policy processes or allow for comparisons over time and across regions.

The absence of structured monitoring creates a major gap: policymakers lack reliable evidence on litter composition, density, and sources, and communities are not sufficiently engaged in long-term observation and prevention. Without this evidence base, Albania risks falling behind in fulfilling its obligations under EU accession processes, as well as in contributing to regional frameworks such as the Barcelona Convention.

This Call for Proposals seeks to address this gap by introducing the **Beach Macro Litter Monitoring Protocol (>2.5 cm)**. The methodology is aligned with **EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD)** and is designed to be both scientifically rigorous and accessible to civil society organizations (CSOs), volunteers, and citizen scientists. By focusing on litter larger than 2.5 cm, the protocol provides a clear and practical framework that captures the majority of problematic plastic items, such as bottles, packaging, fishing gear, and other debris that accumulate on beaches.

Civil society has a critical role to play in this process. CSOs are uniquely positioned to bridge the gap between science, policy, and community engagement. They can mobilize volunteers, connect with schools and youth networks, and ensure that local voices are included in environmental governance. Through this call, CSOs will not only collect valuable data but also use monitoring activities as platforms for awareness-raising, education, and advocacy. By combining evidence generation with public engagement, this initiative ensures that monitoring is not a purely technical exercise but a catalyst for behavior change and policy impact.

The **“Cleaner Rivers – Cleaner Seas (RiverClean)”** project has already laid the foundation for mobilizing CSOs around plastic reduction through its first Call for Proposals, which focused on promoting alternatives to single-use plastics via the HAPI methodology. The second call shifts the focus from prevention tools to **systematic monitoring**, recognizing that prevention and monitoring are complementary pillars of a comprehensive strategy against plastic pollution. Together, they contribute to Albania's transition towards a **circular economy** and stronger environmental governance.

By supporting projects under this call, the contracting authority aims to establish a database of beach macro litter that can be shared with European platforms such as **EMODnet** and raise public awareness of the sources and impacts of plastic pollution. The ultimate goal is to create an active network of CSOs, schools, municipalities, and citizens working together to reduce plastic inputs into rivers and seas, strengthen environmental monitoring, and position Albania as a regional contributor to the fight against marine litter.

## 1.2 Methodology to monitor Beach Macro Litter (>2.5 cm)

### 1.2.1 What is the Beach Macro Litter (>2.5 cm) methodology and why is it used?

**The Beach litter monitoring methodology** is a well-developed monitoring tool to determine trends of litter in the environment. It can also supply detailed information on the composition and amount of litter, which can provide an indication of sources of litter and the potential impact of measures.

The beach macro litter methodology was prepared based on the following documents:

1. Guidance on the Monitoring of Marine Litter in European Seas<sup>1</sup>
2. The EMODnet Guidelines and forms for gathering marine litter data: beach and seafloor trawling Version 7.1
3. UNEP/IOC Guidelines on survey and monitoring of marine litter<sup>2</sup>
4. Joint List of Litter Categories for Marine Macrolitter Monitoring<sup>3</sup>.

The methodology remains aligned with the **Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD)**<sup>4</sup> and Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme the Mediterranean Sea (COP 19 Decision IG.22/7) (IMAP), making sure the information is scientifically accurate, but still easy to understand and useful for local people who are involved or affected.

### 1.2.2 Beach Macro Litter Monitoring Protocol

The implementation of the monitoring protocol includes **the following steps**:

#### 1) Selection of survey sites

The survey site is a beach or a section of a large beach chosen for placing one or more sampling units on which monitoring will be done. Ideally, the selected site should represent litter abundance and composition in that region and near the litter source. The selection of the site should be done on beaches following these indications:

- Composed of sand or gravel.
- Low to moderate slope.
- Clear access to the sea (not blocked by breakwaters or jetties).
- Accessible to survey teams all year round.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC83985>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.unep.org/resources/report/unepioc-guidelines-survey-and-monitoring-marine-litter>

<sup>3</sup> <https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC121708>

<sup>4</sup> [https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/research-area/environment/oceans-and-seas/eu-marine-strategy-framework-directive\\_en](https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/research-area/environment/oceans-and-seas/eu-marine-strategy-framework-directive_en)

- Be a minimum length of 100m along the water edge (i.e. sufficient to have at least one sampling unit).

Within the above constraints, the location of survey sites should be spatially stratified to reflect:

1. Different pressures and different levels of exposure to litter (e.g. close to river mouths, harbors/marinas, presence of touristic facilities nearby).
2. Different development and urbanization levels, including a balanced mix of urban, semi-urban, and remote/natural beaches.

The selection of survey site location is a critical step in ensuring scientifically valid and policy-relevant data collection. Selected site(s) should be representative of coastal conditions at the Vjosa and Ishmi basins and must not overlap with existing monitoring programs

A list of sites to be avoided due to overlapping monitoring is provided in Table 1.

Sites subject to mechanical cleaning methods should generally be avoided, as these can distort the data and impact biodiversity.

Country	Name of the beach	GPS Coordinates* (latitude, longitude)
Albania	Hamallaj Beach	Start point: 41.482912, 19.507102 End point: 41.482087, 19.506726
Albania	Delisuf Beach	Start point: 40.618045, 19.346021 End point: 40.618583, 19.345750
Albania	Cape of Rodon Beach	Start point: 41.583440, 19.459542 End point: 41.583998, 19.458549
Albania	Pashaliman Beach	Start point: 40.322639, 19.439833 End point: 40.322833, 19.4410

*Table 1: Beach litter monitoring locations to be avoided by applicants*

In addition, ecological sensitivity must be a priority in the site selection process. All necessary precautions must be taken to avoid disturbing protected or endangered species (e.g. sea turtles, marine mammals, shorebirds) or damaging sensitive coastal habitats, such as dunes and native vegetation. In many cases, this may exclude protected areas, though feasibility depends on local management regulations.

## 2) Sampling unit

According to Commission Decision 2017/848/EU, the standard unit for marine litter monitoring on beaches is **100 meters of coastline, measured as the number of items per litter category per 100 m of coastline.**

Each sampling unit extends from the water's edge to the back of the beach, encompassing the full beach width. On curved beaches, this should follow the natural curve; on straight beaches, a linear measurement is used.

Sampling units must reflect the overall characteristics and average litter conditions of the survey site. They should not be placed in areas likely to accumulate disproportionate amounts of litter, such as:

- Beach edges,
- Entrances,
- Parking zones,
- Locations near hotels or major infrastructure.

### 3) Survey frequency and timing

It is recommended that four marine litter monitoring surveys per year are conducted at each selected survey site. The following seasonal schedule is suggested:

- Winter: January
- Spring: April
- Summer: July
- Autumn: October

However, flexibility is required due to regional and local conditions, including adverse weather, restricted access, or other external factors.

### 4) Size of litter items to be recorded

During the survey, all visible macro (>2.5 cm) marine litter items on the surface of the sampling unit must be recorded, including items entangled in natural materials (e.g. seaweed).

Digging is not permitted. Fragile or degraded items should be classified on-site to avoid loss or breakage.

Each item will be classified using the Joint List of Litter Categories. After identification and recording, litter must be disposed of in accordance with local waste management regulations.

### 5) Quantification of litter and reporting

The standard unit for beach macro marine litter monitoring is the **number of items recorded per 100 meters of beach length**. During each monitoring campaign, all items must be counted, categorized, and weighed.

**All data must be inserted into:**

- The REMEDIES Mobile App, or
- The Litter Data Form if the REMEDIES mobile app is not used on-site.

The **REMEDIES mobile app and portal** are digital tools designed to support scientific marine litter monitoring activities by enabling data collection, validation, and reporting. They adhere to the REMEDIES protocols and EMODnet data standards, ensuring that collected data contributes to scientific research and policy reporting.

### Capacity building training for selected CSOs

All the steps that need to be followed during the implementation of the beach macro litter monitoring protocol **will guide the applicants** to better understand the methodology and **to select the appropriate locations in each basin**.

For the selected CSOs, a capacity-building training will be held before the start of the sub-grant implementation.

### Suggested indicators

In line with the objectives of the **RIVERCLEAN program** and the **Beach Macro Litter (>2.5 cm) methodology**, applicants are required to define how their proposed actions will be monitored and evaluated. To ensure consistency, transparency, and impact, each proposal must include measurable indicators that correspond to the **Beach Macro Litter Monitoring Protocol**.

The list below provides a non-exhaustive set of suggested indicators. Applicants may use these or propose additional indicators, as long as they are relevant, measurable, and clearly aligned with the proposed intervention.

#### 1. Beach macro litter monitoring indicators

- **Number of survey sites selected** along the Vjosa and Ishëm river basins (target: min. **two (2) survey sites/locations** selected by each CSO).
- **Number of monitoring events conducted annually** (target: **four (4) seasonal surveys/site**).
- **Weight and composition of litter** recorded (items/100 m per survey), disaggregated by material (plastics, glass, metal, wood, etc.).
- **Number of datasets validated and submitted** to EMODnet.

#### 2. Citizen Science & Community Engagement Indicators

- **Number of volunteers, students, and youth** engaged in monitoring events (target: >100 participants/organization).
- **Number of info sessions organized** (target: **at least two (2) info sessions/CSOs**).
- **Citizen Science Network** established and active (target: min. **2 clean-up activities/each location**).



### 3. Policy & Governance Indicators

- **Number of reports developed** using monitoring data (target: at least one (1) report/location).
- **Number of meetings/roundtables** organized with local stakeholders in the target areas (target: at least one (1) meeting/roundtable to present the reports developed by using the monitoring data).

#### 1.3 Relevance to this Call for Proposals

This Call for Proposals is directly linked to the objectives of the *Cleaner Rivers – Cleaner Seas (RiverClean)* project, focusing on systematic monitoring of plastic pollution through the **Beach Macro Litter (>2.5 cm) methodology**. The protocol provides a scientifically validated and EU-aligned methodology, ensuring that civil society organizations (CSOs) generate reliable and comparable datasets in line with the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) and regional monitoring commitments. Through its application, Albania will be able to establish a national baseline of beach macro litter and contribute to European knowledge platforms such as EMODnet.

The relevance of this call also extends beyond data collection. It emphasizes the role of CSOs as facilitators of **citizen science, environmental awareness, and policy advocacy**. By engaging students, youth networks, volunteers, and local stakeholders, projects will not only provide technical evidence but also foster community ownership, behavioral change, and strengthened environmental governance.

Applicants are required to demonstrate how their proposed actions will apply this standardized protocol in at **least two (2) different locations/survey sites** within the **Ishëm and Vjosa river basins**, ensuring monitoring is carried out **four (4) times/year** in line with the seasonal schedule. **The location might be in the same basin but on different beaches.**

#### 1.4 Program objectives and priority areas

The overall goal of this Call for Proposals is to **reduce plastic pollution in Ishem and Vjosa river basins and coastal areas** by empowering civil society organizations to implement the **Beach Macro Litter Monitoring Protocol (>2.5 cm)**. The initiative aims to produce data aligned with EU and Mediterranean standards, and foster Albania's transition toward a **circular economy and stronger environmental governance**.

**The specific purpose of this call for project proposals is to strengthen the role of civil society organizations** as key actors in environmental monitoring, awareness, and advocacy by **implementing systematic beach macro litter monitoring** in the Ishëm and Vjosa river basins

**The priorities of this call are:**

1. **Implementing the Beach Macro Litter Monitoring Protocol (>2.5 cm)** in the Ishëm and Vjosa river basins (including data collection, categorization, analysis of macro litter and reporting).

2. **Establishment of the citizen science network**, especially mobilizing students, youth, and local volunteers in monitoring, clean ups and awareness activities.
3. **Promoting circular economy transition**, by linking monitoring results with actions to reduce single-use plastics and improve waste management in local contexts.

### 1.5 Financial allocation by the contracting authority/ Fund available

The total amount made available under this call for project proposals is **EUR 75,000**.

The contracting authority reserves the right not to distribute all available funds if the necessary quality of the submitted project proposals is not ensured.

This call for proposals covers only Lot 2 – Implementation of the **Beach Macro Litter (>2.5 cm) methodology** in the Ishmi and Vjosa river basins. In case the funds allocated to this lot cannot be used due to the insufficient number or unsatisfactory quality of applications received, the contracting authority reserves the right to reallocate the funds to another lot in the framework of a subsequent call.

### Grant Size

Any grant requested under this call for proposals must respect the following financial limits:

- **Minimum amount allowed for grant:** EUR 12,000
- **Maximum amount allowed per grant:** EUR 15,000

Each grant will cover **100% of the total eligible costs of the action**.

## 2. Rules for this Call for Project Proposals

These guidelines set out the rules for the submission, selection and implementation of actions/project proposals to be financed under this call for proposals, in accordance with **the Practical Guide to European Union External Aid Procedures (PRAG)**, which is applicable to this call.

The PRAG Guide is available online at:

<https://wikis.ec.europa.eu/display/ExactExternalWiki/ePRAG>

### 2.1 Eligibility/Eligibility Criteria

There are three sets of admissibility/admissibility criteria related to:

### 2.1.1 Actors:

- **The lead applicant** (hereinafter referred to as the “applicant”), i.e. the entity submitting the application form;
- If any, his/her **co-applicants**;
- If any, **affiliated entities related** to the applicant or any co-applicants (unless otherwise specified, “applicant(s)” refers to both the lead applicant and its co-applicants).

### 2.1.2 Actions:

- Types of actions for which a grant may be awarded under this call;

### 2.1.3 Eligibility of Applicants

To be eligible to receive a grant under this call, the applicant must:

- Be a legal entity;
- Be a non-profit organization (e.g. non-governmental organization, center, association, foundation);
- To be established and to exercise its activity in the territory of the Republic of Albania;
- Be directly responsible for the preparation and implementation of the project, in cooperation with co-applicants and/or affiliated entities (if any), and not act as an intermediary;
- Not be in any of the exclusion situations provided for in section 2.4 of the Practical Guide (PRAG).
- In any case, be without legal precedent in fraudulent or corrupt activities.
- In any case, not to be involved in religious activities;
- Not be a political group/party/entity;

### Applications are welcomed from:

- Civil society organizations with experience in environmental issues, waste management, or community engagement;
- Community centers or youth organizations operating in the areas around the Ishëm and Vjosa rivers, registered as legal entities and fulfilling the eligibility criteria listed in section 2.1.

**Important to note:** Organisations, as well as individuals affiliated with organisations that have already been awarded a grant under the First Call, are not eligible to apply under the Second Call.

The applicant may apply individually or in collaboration with co-applicants. In case the grant is awarded, the applicant will be considered the main beneficiary, identified as the coordinator in the Contract.

The coordinator will be the sole interlocutor of the contracting authority and will represent all co-beneficiaries (if any), as well as coordinate the design and implementation of the project.

### Co-applicant

Co-applicants participate in the design and implementation of the project, and the costs they incur are eligible in the same way as those of the main applicant itself.

Co-applicants must meet the same eligibility criteria that apply to the main applicant. Co-applicants must sign the mandate in **Part B, Section 4** of the grant application form.

In case the grant is awarded to the project, the co-applicants (if any) will become **co-beneficiaries** of the project, together with the coordinator.

Each actor should only participate **in a single role** within a project. This is to avoid any potential conflict of interest and to guarantee a clear division of rights and obligations, as well as certainty regarding the acceptability of costs.

### Eligible actions/activities: activities for which an application can be submitted

**Definition:** An action consists of a set of logically linked activities, which take place within a defined timeframe, in function of the objectives of this call.

**Duration:** The duration of an action must be **12 months**.

**Location:** Actions should be developed on the territory of the Ishmi and Vjosa river basin areas.

**Thematic area:** Actions should address the goal and priorities set out in section 1.4 of these guidelines, related to the implementation of the Beach Macro Litter Monitoring Protocol and establishment of the citizen science network, especially mobilizing students, youth, and local volunteers in monitoring, clean ups and awareness activities.

### Types of eligible actions (examples, non-exhaustive list):

Applicants may propose different types of actions, as long as they contribute to the objectives of this call. Below is a non-exhaustive list of eligible actions:

1. **Implementation of the Beach Macro Litter (>2.5 cm) Monitoring Protocol**, including selection of survey sites, establishment of sampling units, and seasonal monitoring campaigns.
2. **Data collection, categorization, and analysis of macro litter**, aligned with EU MSFD, UNEP/MAP, and EMODnet standards.
3. **Citizen science engagement activities**, including training of students, youth, and community members to participate in monitoring.
4. **Clean-up activities**

5. **Awareness-raising events linked to monitoring**, such as info sessions on the results of surveys and their implications for local communities.
6. **Development of reports and policy briefs** using monitoring results to inform local authorities, schools, and communities.
7. **Organization of stakeholder meetings or roundtables** to present monitoring results and discuss local waste management improvements.
8. **Dissemination of results through digital platforms** or social media to increase public visibility and awareness.

**Ineligible activities for funding include (non-exhaustive list):**

- Individual sponsorships for participation in conferences or seminars;
- Support for political parties or related initiatives;
- Activities that are already funded by other EU programs;
- Purchase of land or buildings (except where it is essential and ownership is transferred);
- Activities that discriminate based on gender, sexual orientation, religious belief, or ethnic origin;
- Activities that have started before the contract was signed.

**Applicability and promotion of EU funding**

Regardless of the nature of the activity, all applicants are obliged to take appropriate actions to ensure the visibility of the support provided by the European Union through the RIVERCLEAN project, in accordance with the communication and visibility guidelines.

**Number of applications and grants for applicants/affiliated entities**

- **The applicant** may submit **only one application** to this call for proposals, regardless of whether he/she apply as the lead applicant or as a co-applicant.
- **Each co-applicant** may only participate in one application under this call.
- **Affiliated entities**, if any, can only be included in one application in the same call.

If an applicant, co-applicant, or related entity is involved in more than one application, all relevant applications will be considered **ineligible**.

### 2.1.4 What costs are allowed?

Only eligible costs can be covered by the grant. The budget submitted by applicants represents a general estimate of eligible costs, which will be considered during the evaluation and negotiation of the contract.

#### Categories of allowable costs

A cost is considered allowable if it meets all of the following conditions:

- is included in the approved project budget;
- it is necessary for the implementation of the action and is directly related to its activities;
- is completed during the project implementation period, as specified in the contract;
- is real, verifiable, and documented with invoices, contracts or other legal evidence;
- is in compliance with national legislation on taxes, social security and accounting rules;
- is reasonable, proportionate and justifiable in relation to the expected results of the project;
- It has not been funded or envisaged for funding from any other public or private source.

**Please note:** The cost of staff should not exceed **35%** of the total grant budget.

#### Ineligible costs

The following costs **will not be accepted** as eligible:

- VAT
- Loans and subsidies to third parties;
- Expenses declared and already financed by another public or private grant;
- Fines, penalties, legal sanctions, and court costs;
- Customs, import tariffs, and any other similar duties;
- Bank fees (except those related to the opening and maintenance of the dedicated project account);
- Foreign exchange expenses or losses related to changes in exchange rates;
- Depreciation costs for fixed assets;
- Debts and expenses for their processing;
- Interest on debts;

- Provisions for possible losses or unforeseen liabilities.

#### *About the Budget:*

Reimbursement of eligible costs will be based on the approved budget, specified in units and unit costs.

The Contracting Authority decides whether to accept the proposed amounts according to the initial budget submitted by the applicant, by analyzing the factual data of grants carried out by the applicant or from similar projects.

In 'Appendix B: Budget', "Justification of costs submitted", for each budget item, the applicant must:

- Describe the information and methods used to determine the unit cost, lump sum costs, *and* /or flat rates *of* the costs to which you refer;
- Clearly explain the formulas used to calculate the final allowable amounts.

### **2.1.5 Ethics and Values**

In order to ensure integrity, transparency, and accountability throughout the entire cycle of this call for proposals, all applicants and stakeholders involved must respect the highest ethical standards and commit to complying with the fundamental principles of the European Union and the relevant legal rules. The following provisions are mandatory and form an integral part of the conditions of eligibility and implementation of the potential contract.

All applicants, co-applicants, and affiliated entities must act in accordance with the highest ethical and legal standards during the preparation, submission, and implementation of proposed projects.

#### **Lack of conflict of interest**

The applicant must not be affected by any conflict of interest and must not have similar links with any other applicant or party involved in this call for proposals. Any attempt to obtain confidential information, to enter into illegal agreements with competitors, or to improperly influence the evaluation committee or the contracting authority will lead to immediate exclusion from the procedure and may entail disciplinary measures in accordance with the Financial Regulation in force.

#### **Respect for environmental legislation and basic labor standards**

Applicants selected for funding must comply with national and international environmental protection legislation, including multilateral agreements for its protection, as well as with core labor standards, as defined by the International Labor Organization (ILO) Conventions, such as freedom of organization and collective bargaining, the elimination of forced labor and child labor.

#### **Respect for the fundamental values of the European Union**

Applicants selected for funding must be committed to respecting the fundamental values of the EU, such as human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law, and human rights, including minority rights.



## **Zero tolerance for exploitation, abuse, and sexual harassment**

The European Commission applies a **"zero tolerance" policy** towards any inappropriate behaviour that undermines the professional integrity of applicants. Physical or psychological violence, threats, sexual exploitation, harassment, or other forms of intimidation are strictly prohibited.

## **Anti-corruption and anti-bribery**

Applicants must comply with all applicable laws and codes against corruption and bribery. The contracting authority reserves the right to suspend or cancel funding if corrupt practices are found at any stage of the selection procedure or during the implementation of the contract. This includes any offer of personal financial gain or assistance as a reward for any action or omission related to this call.

## **Unusual business expenses**

Applications will be excluded, or contracts cancelled, if it is found that the proposal or implementation of the project has been accompanied by unusual commercial costs, such as unjustified commissions, payments to tax havens, or payments to fictitious companies. Grant beneficiaries found to have incurred these costs may be excluded from EU funding or future EU funds.

## **Breach of obligations, irregularities or fraud**

The contracting authority reserves the right to **suspend or cancel the procedure** if it turns out that it has been accompanied by significant breaches of obligations, irregularities or fraud. If these are found after the selection, the authority may refuse to conclude the contract.

## **2.2. How to apply and the procedures you must follow**

Applications for project proposals must be submitted in full compliance with the instructions of this Call for Proposals and prepared using the Application Form (Annex A). Applicants must complete the application form in English and provide a summary in the Albanian language, as indicated in the application form. Any error, major discrepancy or lack of information may result in the automatic rejection of the application. Clarifications may be requested only if the information submitted is unclear and hinders an objective assessment by the contracting authority.

### **2.2.1. Supporting documents to be submitted**

To be considered valid, applications must be accompanied by the following supporting documents: In the case of applicants who are legal entities (NGOs):

- Court registration decision (photocopy);
- Statute and Deed of Establishment of the organization (photocopy);
- Certificate of registration with the Tax Office (NIPT) (photocopy);
- Organization profile that reflects its experience in relevant fields (such as plastic pollution, environmental and litter monitoring, waste management, community initiatives, or other areas related to the goals of the Call).



- The organization's financial statements for the past year, stamped by the Regional Tax Directorate.
- Judicial Records Certificate (Dëshmi Penaliteti) for the legal representative, issued within the past 12 weeks.

### 2.2.2. Submission of the application

Applications must be submitted:

- in printed version (one original copy), and
- in electronic format (USB or CD), where the application must be identical to the printed version.

Both versions must be submitted in a sealed envelope to the following address, accompanied by the inscription:

**“Not to be opened before the opening session –Second Call for Project Proposals”.**

**Full Mailing Address:**

**MilieukontaktAlbania**

Kodi Postar 1001

Rruga Xhoxhi Martini, Pallati Teuta Konstruksion Shkalla 3, Apartamenti, 8, Tiranë, Shqipëri

Applications and electronic copies sent by email will not be accepted.

The deadline for submitting applications is **January 8, 2026, by 16:30.** Any application submitted after the deadline will be automatically rejected.

## 2.3 Evaluation and Selection of Applications

All applications will be examined and evaluated by the Contracting Authority. They will be assessed according to the following steps and criteria. If, during the examination of the application, it turns out that the proposed action does not meet the eligibility criteria mentioned in Section 2.1, the application will be rejected on this basis alone.

### Step 1: Opening, Administrative Control

During this step, the following will be considered:

- If the proposal is submitted within the specified deadline. Otherwise, the application will be automatically rejected.

- If the proposal meets all the criteria set out in the checklist included in Section 2 of Part A of the application form. This also includes an assessment of the admissibility of the action. If any of the requested information is missing or incorrect, the application may be rejected on this basis alone and will not proceed to the further evaluation phase.

<i>Administrative Criteria</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Reviews</i>
1. The proposal was submitted within the deadline.			
2. The application has respected the required format.			
3. The proposal is in English (unless otherwise specified in specific sections).			
<i>Supporting Documents</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Reviews</i>
<p>The applicant legal entity (NGO) has submitted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Court registration decision (copy);</li> <li>• Statute and Deed of Establishment of the organization (copy);</li> <li>• Registration with the Tax Office (NIPT) (copy);</li> <li>• Organizational Profile clearly demonstrating work experience as defined in section 2.2.1</li> <li>• The organization's financial statement for the past year, stamped by the Regional Tax Directorate.</li> <li>• Judicial Records Certificate (Dëshmi Penaliteti) for the legal representative issued in the past 12 weeks.</li> </ul>			
<i>Budget, duration, and number of applications</i>			
The total project budget is within the required limits.			
The project duration is <b>12 months</b> .			
The Applicant has submitted only one application (either as an Applicant or as a Co-Applicant).			

The application evaluation process will proceed with applicants who have passed the administrative screening phase.

## Step 2: Qualitative Assessment

Proposals that pass this check will be evaluated based on **the quality** of the proposed action according to the matrix below.

Each proposal will receive a maximum score of **100 points**, according to the breakdown below.

The evaluation criteria are divided into categories and sub-units. Each sub-unit will receive a score from 1 to 5 points, according to the scale below:

- 1 = very weak;
- 2 = weak;
- 3 = average;
- 4 = good;
- 5 = very good.

**For criteria of higher importance, the same scale will apply, but the maximum score will be doubled (i.e., up to 10 points) to reflect their increased weight in the overall evaluation.**

Only Proposals that receive a minimum of 65 points will be considered for pre-selection.

Evaluation Criteria	Points	Assessment Criteria	Score (to be filled by Evaluator)
<b>1. Relevance (40)</b>			
1.1. Does the project address <b>beach litter monitoring</b> in the Ishëm and Vjosa river basins?	10	The action is focused on one or both river basins and provides a strong rationale.	
1.2. Does the project demonstrate understanding and application of the Beach macro litter methodology?	0	The applicant shows clear knowledge of the Beach macro litter methodology and integrates it meaningfully into the project.	
1.3. Are the targeted groups (e.g. Youth, schools, volunteers) and policymakers) well defined and relevant?	5	Target groups are realistic and aligned with RIVERCLEAN objectives; inclusion of youth and schools is encouraged.	
1.4. Does the project contribute to citizen science and data reporting (e.g. to EMODnet)?	10	Clear interventions ensure systematic data collection, validation, and submission into recognized monitoring platforms.	

1.5. Does the action reflect local needs and stakeholders' participation?	5	Demonstrates stakeholder engagement (e.g. municipalities, CSO) and alignment with local waste management priorities.	
<b>2. Methodology (15)</b>			
2.1. Is the methodology realistic and well-articulated?	10	Activities (site selection, seasonal surveys, categorization, reporting) are feasible, well-sequenced, and aligned with the protocol.	
2.2. Does the methodology foresee engagement with local actors and ensure participation?	5	Involves relevant actors (youth, schools, municipalities, NGOs) in a meaningful way.	
<b>3. Feasibility and Implementation (10)</b>			
3.1. Is the timeline realistic and appropriate?	5	Activities are scheduled logically over the grant duration.	
3.2. Are the roles of applicants and partners clearly described and appropriate?	5	Division of responsibilities is clear and practical.	
<b>4. Impact and Sustainability (10)</b>			
4.1. Are the expected results and impact clearly defined and measurable?	5	Outcomes are specific, measurable, and relevant to project goals.	
4.2. Is there a clear strategy for sustainability beyond project funding?	5	Includes follow-up plans (e.g. citizen science networks, local partnerships, integration with ongoing monitoring).	
<b>5. Visibility and Communication (5)</b>			
5.1. Are visibility actions well-integrated?	5	Plans to ensure visibility of the monitoring results, awareness campaigns, and EU contribution are clear and adequate	

<b>6. Budget and Cost-Effectiveness (10)</b>			
6.1. Is the budget realistic and appropriate for the proposed activities?	5	Costs are justified and proportional to the proposed results.	
6.2. Are resources allocated efficiently and transparently?	5	No excessive costs; the budget shows financial coherence.	
<b>7. Financial and Operational Capacity (10)</b>			
7.1. Does the applicant demonstrate relevant experience?	5	Proven track record of implementing similar projects.	
7.2. Is the applicant capable of managing the proposed budget and activities?	5	Sufficient capacity in place to administer funds and deliver outcomes.	
<b>Total</b>	<b>100 points</b>		

**For objective reasons or for reasons beyond its control, the Contracting Authority may decide not to award any grant and cancel the Call for Proposals, without giving applicants any right of appeal or compensation.**

## **2.4 Notification of results and right to appeal**

All applicants will be notified in writing of the Contracting Authority's decision on the submitted application. The notification will be sent by e-mail and will include the application reference number, whether the application has been evaluated or not, and the relevant evaluation results.

Any applicant who believes that his/her application has been rejected as a result of a technical or procedural error during the evaluation process has the right to submit a written appeal within 5 (five) working days from the date of receipt of the notification of rejection. The appeal must be sent by email to the official project address. The Contracting Authority will review the appeal and provide a reasoned response within 5 (five) working days of receipt.

## **2.5 Signing contracts**

Before signing the contract, the Contracting Authority reserves the right to conduct technical and financial discussions or negotiations with the selected applicant in order to increase the efficiency of the project and ensure reasonable and justified costs.

After the completion of this process, the signing of the contract between the beneficiary applicant and

the Contracting Authority will follow.

Any other changes to the selected applicant's proposal or negotiation thereof are prohibited.

## 2.6 Indicative Process Calendar

INDICATIVE PROCESS TIMETABLE		
	date	Time
Public announcement of the Call for Project Proposals	November 4 <sup>th</sup> , 2025	12:00
Orientation Session no.1	November 21 <sup>st</sup> , 2025	
Orientation Session no. 2	December 5, 2025	
Orientation Session no. 3	December 10, 2025	
Deadline for submitting clarifying questions to the Contracting Authority	December 15 <sup>th</sup> , 2025	
Last date on which clarifications or updates are published by the Contracting Authority	December 24 <sup>th</sup> , 2025	
Deadline for submitting Applications	January 8 <sup>th</sup> , 2026	16:30
Informing applicants about the evaluation of the complete application	January 30 <sup>st</sup> , 2026	
Deadline available for appeal	February 6 <sup>th</sup> , 2026	
Grant award announcement	February 16 <sup>th</sup> , 2026	
Signing of Contracts	February 27 <sup>th</sup> , 2026	

### 3. DOCUMENTS TO BE COMPLETED AND SUBMITTED BY THE APPLICANT

- **ANNEX A** – *Grant Application Form* (Word format)
- **ANNEX B** – *Budget Proposal Form* (Excel format)
- **ANNEX C** – *Declaration on Honour on Exclusion and Selection Criteria* (signed by the applicant)
- **ANNEX D** – *Legal Entity Form*
- **ANNEX L** – *SEA-H Self-Assessment Questionnaire*

#### Supporting Documentation

- *Court registration decision (copy);*
- *Statute and Deed of Establishment of the organization (copy);*
- *Registration with the Tax Office (NIPT) (copy);*
- *Organizational Profile clearly demonstrating work experience as defined in section 2.2.1*
- *The organization's financial statements for the past year, **stamped by the Regional Tax Directorate.***
- *Judicial Records Certificate (Dëshmi Penaliteti) for the legal representative issued in the past 3 months.*
- *CVs of Key Project Staff (for applicant and, if applicable, co-applicants)*