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Sustainable management models and value chains for small forests

CASCADE FUNDING- ANNEX 4- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)



SMURF Cascade Funding Programme

FAQ - Frequently Asked Questions

Opening: 2 September 2024 at 8:00 CET

Closing: 30 October 2024 at 17:00 CET

Funding Call information, documents and templates:

<https://www.smurfproject.eu/cascade-funding-smurf-project/>



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Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

1. What is the **SMURF** project?

SMURF is a 48-month Horizon project that will try to shape the future of Small Forest Holdings in Europe, with strong participation of sectoral representatives. **SMURF** will review existing business and management models and will propose and essay new alternatives that could enrich and diversify the European forest value chains.

In particular, a new system for forest carbon credits at the European level will be launched, trying to consolidate functional Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) systems. Proposals to improve the general support systems and the legal framework for Small Forest Holdings will try to improve the situation of small forest owners.

Through its research and multi-actor approach, **SMURF** aims to avoid risks of abandonment of forest management, identify values and arguments that could motivate small forest owners and consolidate proper land management and local forest value chains.

2. Why should I apply?

This call encourages and supports small forest owners associations across Europe to provide their insights and 'real life' knowledge to the **SMURF** project in order to capture the diversity of forest associations and cooperatives throughout Europe and benefit from their experience in the support of Small Forest Holdings.

This is more than just a funding opportunity. By participating, you'll be joining a network of forward-thinking forest owners associations and other forest stakeholders. You'll have the chance to be part of living labs, new management and business models and activities involving the complete forest value chain, testing and refining ideas that could reshape our industry.

3. Who can apply?

Applicants should be forest owners associations or forest owners cooperatives, at local, regional or national level, representing Small Forest Holdings (SFH), private or public, from any of the 27 European Member States. At this level, a forest holding will be considered small when it has less than 500 hectares of forest land.

Other types of entities (such as Individual forest owners, forest consultants and contractors, companies, universities, start-ups, etc.) might be subcontracted by these associations to conduct the activities but can not be directly eligible as beneficiary of the call.

4. Should the applicant belong to any specific sector?

Yes, we're seeking forest owners cooperatives and associations to participate in some of the **SMURF** project activities.

5. What kind of resources should I commit in order to participate in the call?

In this call you will be submitting surveys, interviews, reports and communication activities so you should commit to deliver materials on time. By committing to deliver materials on

time you can ensure that you are well-prepared, presentable, and capable of participating effectively in the call.

6. Do I need to cooperate with the SMURF project?

Yes, the entities are expected to collaborate in the activities of the **SMURF** project that are being funded in this call as indicated in section activities to be supported by the grant.

7. What happens if I do not submit my application within the deadline?

Once the deadline is finished (30th of October at 17:00 CET) you will not be able to submit your [application](#) and you will receive an email with a "call closed" message. After the close of call you will not be able to modify your proposal so no additions or changes in received applications will be taken into account.

8. How many Calls are planned for Cascade Funding?

A second call with a budget of €800,000 is planned to engage organisations in other **SMURF** project activities, such as attending workshops and trainings, setting up living labs focused on new business models and demonstrative stands for close-to-nature silviculture, promoting pilot projects for carbon credits, and communicating and disseminating activities during the years 2026 and 2027.

This second call is expected to open in January 2025 and close in April 2025, with the results scheduled to be published in July 2025.

If the entire budget of €200,000 from the first call is not fully utilised, the process will be restarted to provide another opportunity to complete the consumption of the funds as part of the second call.

Organisations may apply to one or both calls. Even if they are beneficiaries of the first call, they can still be eligible for the second call.

The second call will have a new website within the [SMURF - CASCADE FUNDING platform](#). Once the announcement begins, the homepage will feature specific links and websites for each call.

9. Will I be able to modify my proposal after submission?

No, after the submission process is completed you will not be able to modify your proposal.

10. Can my organisation submit two ideas within the same application?

In this call, all entities are requested to perform the same prefixed activities that have been specified in the proposal in the section activities to be supported by the grant.

11. Can my organisation submit two different applications?

No, a maximum of one application per organisation is allowed for this call. The cascade funding program is designed to benefit one organisation per application; therefore, consortia of applications between organisations will not be admitted for consideration.

12. What happens after applications are submitted?

Firstly, Cesefor will conduct an initial screening to verify the admissibility and eligibility of the proposals based on the eligibility criteria. Proposals that do not meet the basic requirements will be rejected at this stage.

Then, the evaluation committee will evaluate the proposals considering the award criteria defined in previous sections of the call document.

13. What are the different evaluation phases and the expected schedule?

The evaluation process will follow different stages. Firstly, Cesefor will randomly distribute the accepted applications among the evaluators from the evaluation committee.

The evaluation committee will evaluate the applications considering the award criteria defined in previous sections of this document and the phases outlined in the table below.

Phase	Description process	Timeline	Output
Assignment of the applications to the evaluators	Applications will be randomly distributed among two evaluators from the evaluation committee	18/11/2024	
Individual evaluation	Each eligible application will be reviewed independently by the two evaluators	29/11/2024	Applications individual evaluations
Joint evaluation and list with scores	The value of the two evaluations for each applications are compared and a list of applications with scores is made by Cesefor	6/12/2024	Integrated list of applications with scores
Final evaluation of applications and ranked list of evaluations	The overall ranking of applications is conducted, and final selection decisions are made	13/12/2024	List of applications granted
Communication of results to the applicants	Results will be communicated to the applicants via email with feedback from the consensus reports	20/12/2024	Publication and communication of granted applications

14. How much funding might get each programme/proposal?

The grants in this first call are 5,000€ for each selected entity.

15. Do selected beneficiaries get any money in advance?

Yes, there is an advanced payment of 50% grant at the signature of the grant agreement, and the rest after submission of deliverables for the different activities.

16. What is the payment schedule and payment conditions?

Payments will be disbursed in two phases of meeting designated milestones and delivering specific outputs:

Payment schedule	Amount	Date
1st payment	50% (2,500€)	January 2025, after signature of grant agreement
2nd payment	50% (2,500€)	After the activities are completed, deliverables are sent and verification of execution is made by Cesefor

The payment will be made according to the justification of activities with the activity final report.

The payment method would be bank transfer, so it is mandatory that the association has a legal bank account in its name.

17. When the subgrant/award agreement will be signed?

The grant agreement is expected to be signed on 3/01/2025.

18. What services does the SMURF project offer for beneficiaries/subgrantees in the supported programme?

By exploring innovative business and management models, SMURF seeks to enrich and diversify European forest value chains, prevent management abandonment, and motivate small forest owners.

19. Is any accountability required on the way the funds have been used, e. g. invoices and other financial documents?

No, beneficiaries will receive a lump sum of up to €5,000 to cover staff, materials, travel, and equipment needed for the required activities. This sum will be provided upon the justified completion of these activities and the submission of the associated deliverables. This call only covers costs deemed eligible under the provisions of the Horizon Europe program.

20. What types of activities are meant to be funded?

Activities funded by this call will involve the following; conducting surveys and interviews to characterize associations, forest owners and holdings, legal regime and support systems, participation in the Small Forest Holding Conference and communicate activities and results to SMURF project and to your associates.

21. What does the NUTS acronym mean?

In this call, NUTS will be used as an indication of the territorial level of the applicants. In this sense, it will be one of the award criteria used by the evaluation committee to assess applications.

The Nomenclature of territorial units for statistics, abbreviated NUTS is a geographical nomenclature subdividing the economic territory of the European Union (EU) into regions at three different levels (NUTS 1, 2 and 3 respectively, moving from larger to smaller territorial units). Above NUTS 1, there is the 'national' level of the Member States.



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[https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Glossary:Nomenclature of territorial units for statistics \(NUTS\)](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Glossary:Nomenclature_of_territorial_units_for_statistics_(NUTS))