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## I. INTRODUCTION

### 1. Project summary:

The **Life Rhodope Vulture** project is focused on the recovery of the iconic Cinereous vulture in one of the vulture's strongholds in Europe – the Rhodope mountains. In the Balkan Peninsula, the Cinereous vulture is restricted to only one small colony located in Greece, consisting of 32 pairs, and recently reintroduced birds in Central Bulgaria, where 3 pairs had fledglings in 2023. The small population in Greece still experiences high unnatural mortality which threatens its long-term survival. The project intends to use a holistic approach in addressing the anthropogenic threats, improving the ecosystem and the trophic chain and benefiting at the same time a top scavenger. The actions will be boosting the anti-poisoning work in Greece, where the poisoning is the main factor preventing Cinereous vulture to increase, unlike Spain, where population increased. This will be done by including anti-poisoning actions in the daily work of the state forest services and creating joint dog patrols with NGOs and hunters. The project will mitigate the human-wildlife conflict that is the root cause for poisoning. Substantial efforts will be dedicated to increase the natural food base, through reintroduction of deer, increasing the number of semi-wild horses and applying for the first time in Bulgaria the EU legislation that allows feeding outside feeding stations to support both vultures and the management of dead animals by farmers. Additional actions are also envisaged to reduce threats, namely lead intoxication and collision with wind farms. The project will be an urgent effort to mitigate the effect of the mega fire that destroyed almost the whole breeding area of the species in Greece in 2023. The aim is to establish a new breeding colony in Bulgaria, thus boosting the species recovery and decreasing the risk of regional extinction. The project will have a substantial effect in other policy areas as it tackles wind farm development, management of protected areas and supports farming close to nature.

Further information on the project can be found on the project website: <https://rewilding-rhodopes.com/life-rhodope-vulture/>

### 2. Main objectives of call for replication

The main objective of the open call for replication proposals is to provide direct financial support to entities to ensure replication, share results, lessons learned, findings and recommendations from the current project to other areas, regions, and sites.

This call provides targeted financial support to legal entities aiming to replicate and transfer successful elements of the LIFE Rhodope Vulture project.



## Restoration of the Cinereous vulture population and trophic chain in the Bulgarian-Greek cross-border region



LIFE23-NAT-BG-LIFE Rhodope Vulture- 101148254

Financial support will be granted in accordance with Article 207 of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509 (the EU Financial Regulation), which governs financial support to third parties and the provisions of the LIFE Programme Model Grant Agreement apply, including in particular Articles 6 (eligible costs) and 11 (procurement).

## II. FUNDING

**Total available budget: €20,000**

**Grant range per proposal:** Minimum €2,500 /Maximum €7,000

Maximum number of projects supported: 8

The financial support will take the form of reimbursement of eligible actual costs. Lump sums and flat-rate financing are not permitted. Beneficiaries must submit a detailed budget based on real costs that are directly linked to the implementation of the proposed replication action.

The exact amount of support per project will be determined based on the following criteria:

1. No lump sum payments will be accepted
2. Staff costs for management and administration cannot exceed 10 % from the overall budget.
3. A detailed, cost-based budget must be presented as per Annex – 2 Budget
4. Outputs to be achieved with support
5. Sustainability and follow-up potential

The "best value for money" principle will be applied. Please note that no grants will be awarded without the submission of a complete and detailed application form and budget. Funding decisions will be based on quality, feasibility, and cost-efficiency.

## III. WHO CAN APPLY / ELIGIBILITY & APPLICANT PROFILE

### Eligible Applicants:

Only legal entities are eligible (e.g., NGOs, public authorities, research institutions, etc.).

Natural persons cannot apply.

Applicants must be legally established in one of the following:

- Any EU Member State (including overseas territories)

- A third country formally associated to the LIFE Programme such as Iceland, North Macedonia, Moldova, Ukraine, Montenegro, see: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/life/guidance/list-3rd-country-participation\\_life\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/life/guidance/list-3rd-country-participation_life_en.pdf)

Applicants must have proven experience in nature conservation, species protection, wildlife crime prevention, or related applied research.

They must also have adequate financial and operational capacity to carry out the proposed action and to comply with the financial provisions of the EU grant framework.

## IV. ELIGIBLE ACTIONS

The following activities are eligible under this grant:

1. Develop, improve and finalize feasibility studies for Cinereous vulture and Red deer reintroduction in other areas.
2. Activities directly contributing to establishing a new Cinereous Vulture breeding colony.

Priority will be given to those that are in more advance stage and those that can start implementation earlier.

3. Visits in Bulgaria and Greece to get acquainted with the project experience. Priority will be given to those dealing with reintroduction and preventing wildlife crime. Visits in other areas to select animals for reintroductions.

4. Preparatory work for establishment of anti-poisoning dog units and monitoring of threats using vultures and preventing wildlife crime. Creation, operation, and management of joint patrol collaboration of law enforcement Forest Officers with NGOs and hunting clubs using anti-poison dog units. Activities directly contributing to building and improvement of the capacity of the governmental institutions and public authorities to fight poisonings in the future and setting up clear procedures to combat the illegal use of poisons in the wild.

5. Activities that will result in replication of using the GPS tracking of wild and translocated Cinereous Vultures to help analyze and identify poisoning and other threats for vultures. The use of GPS tracking has become a major tool in conservation management in the last decades and has a growing capacity in terms of technical solutions.

6. Activities that will address the prevention of bird mortality associated with wind farms - improvement of the methods for impact assessment studies and promoted to management agencies that require energy companies to implement proper prevention protocols.

7. Activities that will increase the natural food base for vultures through the establishment of deer populations in new areas – the release of wild prey species is widely applicable in cases where prey species management is needed (e.g. hunting enterprises, areas managed by hunters, reserves or

others). This result can be easily upscaled by hunting associations that want to sustain game species and manage their population in areas with low densities.

8. Activities related to the promotion of lead-free ammunition thus the threat of lead poisoning is decreased.

The project team will support the selected grantees in the implementation of the replication actions through organized supplementary events.

## V. ELIGIBILITY OF COSTS:

### General eligibility:

The general eligibility conditions are the following:

For actual costs: Actual costs incurred by third parties under third-party support are eligible only if they meet all the following conditions:

1. Actually incurred by the beneficiary
2. Incurred during the implementation period as defined in the third party agreement
3. Included in the approved budget (Annex 2) under the corresponding cost category
4. Linked to the action and necessary for its implementation, as described in Annex 1
5. Identifiable and verifiable, and recorded in the beneficiary accounts in line with applicable accounting standards and their usual cost accounting practices.
6. Compliant with the applicable national law, tax and social security regulations
7. Reasonable, justified, and compliant with the principles of sound financial management, particularly economy, efficiency, and effectiveness.
8. Supported by proper documentation (e.g. contracts, invoices, reports, timesheets, etc.) and available for audit and verification.
9. Not reimbursed under another EU or non-EU funding scheme (no double financing of the same cost is permitted).

### Specific eligibility conditions

Direct costs:

1. Personnel costs for direct interventions - costs for employees (or equivalent) are eligible as personnel costs if they fulfil the general eligibility conditions and are related to personnel working for the beneficiary under an employment contract (or equivalent appointing act) and assigned to the action. They must be limited to salaries, social security contributions, taxes and other costs linked to the remuneration, if they arise from national law or the employment contract (or equivalent appointing act) and be calculated on the basis of the costs actually incurred, in accordance with the following method:

*{daily rate for the person multiplied by number of day-equivalents worked on the action (rounded up or down to the nearest half-day)}.*

*The daily rate must be calculated as: {annual personnel costs for the person divided by 215}.*

The number of day-equivalents declared for a person must be identifiable and verifiable. The total number of day-equivalents declared in EU grants, for a person for a year, cannot be higher than 215.

## 2. Costs for subcontracting.

Subcontracting costs for the action (including related duties, taxes and charges, such as non-deductible or non-refundable value added tax (VAT)) are eligible, if they are calculated on the basis of the costs actually incurred, fulfil the general eligibility conditions and are awarded using the beneficiary's usual purchasing practices — provided these ensure subcontracts with best value for money (or if appropriate the lowest price) and that there is no conflict of interests.

Beneficiaries that are 'contracting authorities/entities' within the meaning of the EU Directives on public procurement must also comply with the applicable national law on public procurement. Subcontracting may cover only a limited part of the action.

3. Purchases for the action (including related duties, taxes and charges, such as non-deductible or non-refundable value added tax (VAT)) are eligible if they fulfil the general eligibility conditions and are bought using the beneficiary's usual purchasing practices — provided these ensure purchases with best value for money (or if appropriate the lowest price) and that there is no conflict of interests.

### 3.1 Travel and subsistence costs are eligible if based on actual costs incurred and in line with the beneficiary's usual internal rules:

- travel: (e.g. flights, trains, mileage) must be reasonable and reflect actual expenses.
- accommodation: hotel or lodging costs must follow usual practice and reflect actual prices paid.
- subsistence: meals and daily allowances must be based on actual costs and respect internal policies.

### 3.2 Equipment costs are eligible only with clear justification, showing that the equipment is directly linked to the project activities, and is essential for implementation and will be used specifically for the action, not exceeding 50% of the overall project budget.

### 3.3 Other goods, works and services must be based on actual expenses incurred, and directly linked to the action. This includes (but is not limited to): consumables and supplies, communication, promotion, and dissemination materials, translations, publications and other goods and services necessary for the implementation of the action.

Ineligible costs or contributions are those that do not comply with the conditions set out above and in particular:

- costs related to return on capital and dividends paid by a beneficiary.
- debt and debt service charges
- provisions for future losses or debts
- interest owed.
- currency exchange losses

- bank costs charged by the beneficiary's bank for transfers from the granting entity
- excessive or reckless expenditure
- deductible or refundable VAT
- in-kind contributions by third parties
- costs or contributions declared under other EU grants (or grants awarded by an EU Member State, non-EU country or other body implementing the EU budget).

## VI. DURATION OF THE PROJECT PROPOSAL

The proposed action should be implemented not later than **18 months** starting from the date the contract is signed.

Funded replication actions must be completed within 18 months of signing the agreement. The exact implementation period will be defined in the agreement with each third party.

## VII. APPLICATION, QUESTIONS AND SUBMISSION

The Applicant should complete the following application pack:

Application form – Annex 1

Budget form – Annex 2

Declaration for non double financing – Annex 3

For reference:

Contract for awarding Financial support to third party – Annex 4

**Questions for clarifications** can be sent until 10 days before the deadline for submission or until **5<sup>th</sup> November 2025** to the following e-mail address: [info@rewilding-rhodopes.com](mailto:info@rewilding-rhodopes.com). Acknowledgement receipt will be returned to the sender of the question.

Questions and answers will be published on the Rewilding Rhodopes foundation website: [www.rewilding-rhodopes.com](http://www.rewilding-rhodopes.com) within 3 days, following the day of receiving the question.

**The Application pack** should be submitted to the following e-mail address: [info@rewilding-rhodopes.com](mailto:info@rewilding-rhodopes.com)

Annex 1- Application form and Annex 3 – declaration to be sent signed, stamped and saved in pdf file.

Annex 2- Budget – to be sent in Excel file.

**Deadline for submission** of the application: **15 November 2025**.

Each successfully submitted application within the deadline stated above, will receive registration number.

## VIII. SELECTION CRITERIA

### 1. Criteria for administrative compliance and eligibility

**The applicant should comply with all criteria with YES in order to pass to the Quality Check – Quality evaluation.**

No:	Criteria	Yes	No
1	The application form is submitted within the announced deadline		
2	The applicant has completed the Application form-Annex 1 and budget – Annex 2 in the required template and has provided declaration for non double financing – Annex 3		
3	The applicant is a Legal entity registered in EU and LIFE eligible countries, which main sphere of activities is directly related to nature protection and conservation actions, research organizations – NGO-s and public bodies as set out in the Guidelines.		
4	The requested financial support for the action is within the budget limits set out in part II of the Guidelines		
5	The time frame of the proposal is within the set duration period		
6	The proposed actions are compliant with the eligible actions set out in part IV of the Guidelines		
7	The foreseen costs are compliant with the cost categories set out in part V of the Guidelines.		

### 2. Criteria for quality evaluation of the proposal

**max score 70, threshold to pass the quality evaluation – 30**

No:	Criteria	Score	Justification
	Relevance	0-20	
1.	The project proposal will lead to replication of specific action of LIFE Rhodope Vulture project	1 to 10	1 – not satisfactory 10 – fully satisfactory
2.	The project actions fully comply with the objectives of the call for replication	1 to 5	1 – not satisfactory 5 – fully satisfactory
3.	The expected results are realistic and measurable	1 to 5	1 – not satisfactory 5 – fully satisfactory
	Quality	0-30	
4.	The applicant has relevant experience and has implemented at least 2 previous similar projects.	1 to 10	1 – not satisfactory 10 – completely satisfactory
5.	Effectiveness - the expected results as well as the consequences of the project implementation are well defined and analysed	1 to 10	1 – not satisfactory 10 – completely satisfactory

6.	Efficiency - it is assessed to what extent the expected costs are realistic in relation to the requirements of the call for replication actions, the planning and structuring of activities	1 to 10	1 – not satisfactory 10 – completely satisfactory
	Impact	0-20	
7.	The project proposal is well-founded and demonstrates conclusively the achievement of replication, contributing to the achievement of the overall objectives of the Life Rhodope Vulture project	1-10	1 – not satisfactory 10 – completely satisfactory
8.	The project proposal clearly demonstrates potential and presents a clear vision for the sustainability of the results	1-10	1 – not satisfactory 10 – completely satisfactory
	Total score	Max. 70	

## IX. APPLICATION PROCESS AND TIMELINE

Call launch:	18 <sup>th</sup> September 2025	
Deadline for submission:	15 November 2025	Single-stage submission
Deadline for sending questions for clarifications	5 <sup>th</sup> November 2025	E-mail for sending clarification questions: <a href="mailto:info@rewilding-rhodopes.com">info@rewilding-rhodopes.com</a>
Applicants should submit their application through:	<a href="mailto:info@rewilding-rhodopes.com">E-mail: info@rewilding-rhodopes.com</a>	
Evaluation and selection	15 <sup>th</sup> November 2025 - 15 <sup>th</sup> December 2025	
Granting third party support completed:	15 <sup>th</sup> December 2025	Indicative
Projects implementation	From 1 <sup>st</sup> January, 2026	Indicative
Projects end	30 <sup>th</sup> June, 2027	Indicative