

[< Go back](#)**FUNDING INSIGHT** 03 AUG 2023

Opportunity profile: Protecting genuine green growth

By Fiona McIntyre

Share [f](#) [t](#) [in](#) [e](#)

Eleven European national funders have joined up for a €7 million forestry call

Top tips

- Contact and check requirements with your relevant national funder.
- Think carefully about building the right disciplinary expertise for your project to succeed.
- Incorporate wider social issues and understanding of the EU Forest Strategy into your bid.
- Industry partners are encouraged but not essential.

As the climate and biodiversity crises continue to gather pace, Europe's forests offer a vital resource in the fightback. Better management of forests can help provide the right habitats for wildlife to thrive, while timber from trees can be used as a sustainable building material in efforts to decarbonise cities.

But for these solutions to be most effective, they need to be organised across the continent rather than left to individual countries. This is where ForestValue2 comes in. The European network of funders is dedicated to boosting alignment in national and regional funding for research and innovation related to forests.

With its latest call, the network is looking for research ideas across two themes: resilient sustainable forest systems and management, and sustainable timber building systems. A total of €7 million is available and the deadline for proposals is 1 September.

The call is for consortia-led projects, with researchers applying via 11 national funders (detailed below). Researchers from outside those 11 countries can join consortia, but would have to self-finance their wing of the proposed project.

Related links

[ForestValue2 on Research Professional](#)

Related news

POLICY 27 MAY 2022

[Climate change research 'is siloed at national level'](#)

Advertisement



Do you work in a research office?

We want to hear from you

Research Professional News needs your help to understand and define the problems and challenges facing research offices across the world, and those who work in them.

[Click here to take the short survey](#)

Advertisement



Royal Academy of Engineering

RESEARCH CHAIRS & SENIOR RESEARCH FELLOWSHIPS – NOW OPEN

The scheme supports exceptional academics at UK higher education institutions/universities to undertake use-inspired research that meets the needs of the

Tony Quinn, forestry inspector at Ireland's Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, explains what the funders want to see from researchers.

What's the aim of ForestValue2?

It's all about capacity, trying to build and maintain knowledge capacity and human capacity in the European forestry sector. Forests can help to tackle a lot of the large problems we're facing. They can support climate change mitigation, help stop biodiversity loss, supply wood-based materials to decarbonise the economy. But all of these problems need to be embraced at a European level in addition to nationally.

Coming together for this call benefits the national funders involved, but researchers also benefit as they get a much greater idea of what's happening throughout Europe and even outside of Europe.

How many national funders are there in the call?

We have 11 funders participating in the joint call. We have the core secretariat, which is Finland, Ireland and Germany, and then Spain, Italy, and Norway, and Central and Eastern Europe nations of Estonia, Romania, Slovenia, Latvia and Poland.

We're trying to broaden the scope of our portfolio, particularly in the EU 13 countries and also reaching out to countries like Ukraine and Moldova, so we're looking to have them incorporated into the call in some way. It's not just the research call itself; there's other activities around dissemination and outreach that we'll try to encourage in those areas as well.

How is the call funded?

As funders we commit Euro values to the potential research projects, and we also commit our time as well. The European Commission sees this work as important, and it essentially pays for our time through the co-funding element as it helps the national funders come together and produce that research. But for the most part it's the national funding and the commitment from all the member states that are involved to fund the projects that come out at the end of the call.

Talk me through the two themes of the call.

We broke the call into two different strands. There's the 'resilient sustainable forest systems and management' theme, which is all about ecosystem services and sustainable management of those forests too.

Then there's the 'sustainable timber building systems' theme. Throughout Europe we have a large requirement to build houses, but decarbonising the built environment is difficult. It's hard to replace concrete, steel and aluminium, but there's a huge opportunity to do that with timber. There's a race to build the highest timber buildings—Finland has been quite good at this, as has Austria.

A big part of the call is resilience. Climate mitigation is well researched in a European setting, and adaptation could do with more of a focus. We were also influenced by the EU Forest Strategy, which is focused on the ecosystem services of forests. Other influences include the Commission's Sustainable Carbon Cycles, which has more of a bioeconomy focus, and the Commission's proposal for a Natural Restoration Law, which has more of a bioeconomy focus.

Can bids cross over the two themes?

We are encouraging crossover, but quite often you'll find disciplines will solely focus on timber construction or silviculture, which is the art of growing trees. One thing we're looking at is digitalisation, which does cross over both themes. Digitalisation is going to play a large role for example when it comes to monitoring for pests and diseases and the resilience of our forests.

Do applicants need to contact their national funder before they apply?

Yes. We have what's called our national annex, which is a section within our call document that specifies whether you have to contact your national funder. For the most part, there is a requirement to contact the national funders, and from our perspective it should be done.

From the point of view of a national funder, it's useful to gauge and understand where people are going. We try to help and build relationships without stepping over the competitive line. For example, we can say to applicants: make sure you look at that document, have you spoken to someone in Slovenia or Spain?

Is there a minimum number of people who can form bids?

There's a minimum requirement of three participants, and they must be spread out over several funders. In other words, consortia must include at least three independent legal entities applying for funding from three different countries with funding agencies participating in the joint call.

There is no maximum number of participants, but the manageability of the consortium must be

industrial sponsors.

CLOSING DATE:
Thursday 7 September 2023

[Click here for more information](#)

there is no maximum number of participants, but the manageability of the consortium must be demonstrated—efficient consortia of typically 5-8 partners for medium-sized projects. Failure of any one partner to meet any of the eligibility criteria, including the funder's specific eligibility criteria, will result in the rejection of the entire proposal.

The call is open to participants outside the official group of funders as well—for instance, if someone from the UK was interested, they could participate on a self-financing basis. They would have to go through one of the countries like Germany or Ireland and be a part of that application. They could also contact their own national funding agencies, they may be able to get funding or their universities may provide it.

Do teams need to have an industry partner?

It's encouraged, but it's not essential. Some of the funders are not able to fund industry partners, so their participation would be on a self-funding basis. But obviously, there are big benefits for industry in this. There may be intellectual property and they could get preferential treatment for that. It's also a public good question as they're powerful stakeholders.

Do researchers in the groups need to belong to specific disciplines?

It depends on the bid and what they want to do, but we are encouraging a systems approach. Foresters and ecologists will need to speak together to solve the difficult problems that we have and provide the solutions that we need. We will need data analysts, we will need hydrologists. Where there is a cross-discipline approach to solving a problem, that will come through in the evaluation process. So it's something we'd encourage.

Can early career researchers apply?

Yes. A fundamental idea behind the call is this idea of capacity building in research across European countries. Early career researchers are encouraged to join, but they should make sure they're part of a team that's able to help and bring people along with less experience.

What will reviewers look for in applications?

The three criteria that spring to mind would be the relevance of the research proposal to the call and its impact, the scientific excellence, and then how many of the broad issues that we're facing as a European society are you addressing? With the EU Forest Strategy and the other strategies that have shaped this call, are you incorporating those into your application?

We're also looking for good representation across the consortium, and that it's built on an inclusive and evenly distributed allocation of tasks and associated costs.

How much funding is available overall?

We have an indicative budget of €7 million, but that's likely to go up. The national annex document will stipulate funding limits for how much each funder can contribute. For example, Germany has €2m but the maximum any team can apply for is €500,000. In Estonia, the application limit is €150,000.

How many projects do you expect to fund?

How long is a piece of string? We hope to get as many as possible. It will boil down to the applicants and how they structure their bids. If you had one with members from all the countries involved, it could use up a lot of the budget quickly and we might only get five or six projects funded. But if there's lots of smaller projects hitting the minimum requirements, we might be able to fund a lot more.


How long should projects last?

Projects funded through this initiative are expected to have a duration of 36 months. The start and end date should be the same for all partners in a consortium.

Any final advice for applicants?

Look at the national annex document to find out what you need to do in relation to your national funder. Try to do as much outreach work as possible—on the ForestValue2 call page we have a section on finding partners, there's a networking survey, we've hosted webinars.

Try to incorporate that into your call and make sure you're reaching out to your colleagues. And look at those big picture problems that need a European focus like climate change and biodiversity.

[Visit *Research Professional website](#) 

[Contact Us](#) 

[Advertise](#) 

[Privacy Policy](#) 

[Terms & Conditions](#)

[Copyright](#)

[Manage cookie preferences](#)

[Jobs](#) 

[in LinkedIn](#)

[Research Professional News](#)

[Research Fortnight](#)

[Research Europe](#)

[Research Africa](#)

[Cookie list](#)



25

1994
2019