

Nature has no borders

Projects aimed at creating and restoring connectivity between natural terrestrial and river ecosystems.

European Call

Scope

Fondazione Capellino is launching this call to support projects aimed at restoring and strengthening connectivity between natural land and river surface areas. A more connected nature means greater biodiversity, greater ecosystem resilience, and a better ability to reduce negative human impacts. A thriving natural environment also produces greater economic value than a static one.

The call represents the practical application of the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI), 'Nature has no borders: a unified European framework for ecological connectivity'. Running in parallel, the ECI is also promoted by Fondazione Capellino and gives the call its name.

While the ECI urges the European Union to adopt unified regulations for ecological connectivity, this call for proposals takes immediate action by funding practical interventions to make that vision a reality. The application and voting portal will be located on the Reintegration Economy Community (REcommunity) page. Voting to select the best projects across the call's three categories will take place in three separate rounds. From this page, users can also access the European Union portal to vote for the ECI.

Objectives, projects and eligible subjects

The call **supports biodiversity** through concrete solutions, represented by small- and large- scale **projects**, whether **new or ongoing**.

At the same time, the voting mechanism is designed to **increase public awareness** of issues.

To be eligible, projects must meet one or more of the following objectives, and all applications must include monitoring and data collection activities.

- Reduce habitat barriers and fragmentation, restoring continuity;
- Create road and rail crossings that allow animals to cross safely;
- Enable fish to migrate upstream;
- Restore ecological connectivity with the night sky by reducing light pollution through the creation of Dark Sky Ways;

- Reduce the barrier created by pesticides used in intensive agriculture and areas with strong human impact by creating corridors of dense vegetation to support the natural spread of biodiversity;
- Create new protected wildlife areas where hunting is prohibited;
- Conduct multi-year scientific monitoring projects of existing ecological corridors.

Projects that do not have a significant positive environmental impact are not eligible, including, but not limited to:

- Ordinary management or periodic maintenance activities of urban or agricultural green spaces;
- Interventions already foreseen as mandatory by law or deriving from environmental compensation measures due to infrastructure works (for example, urbanisation charges);
- Simple tree planting- projects for ornamental purposes or for productive/commercial forestry.

Fondazione Capellino will decide which projects will be eligible for public voting at its discretion, evaluating their relevance and consistency with the application category.

The Foundation reserves the right to select fewer projects for public voting than the maximum number set out in the call for proposals, if it deems it appropriate.

Eligible applicants

- Non-profit organisations;
- Local authorities;
- Management bodies of protected areas and parks;
- Universities and research centres;
- Non-profit public-private partnerships.

Geographical scope

The call is open to projects located in the following nine (9) European countries: Italy, France, Germany, Spain, Austria, the Netherlands, Belgium, Malta, and Finland.

A single call for proposals for three categories of projects and conditionalities

To support high-impact projects while also engaging with smaller projects undertaken by citizen volunteers, the call for proposals is divided into three categories based on the project's scope.

There is no restriction on participating in the call based on the size of the project budget, only a dual contribution limit from Fondazione Capellino:

A) Category A projects: maximum contribution of 50% of the project cost, up to a maximum of €50,000, paid in three installments based on project progress. Twenty candidates will be selected for public voting, with five winning;

B) Category B projects: maximum contribution of 50% of the project's value, up to a maximum of €150,000, disbursed in five installments based on project progress. Ten projects will be selected for public voting, with four winning;

C) Category C projects: maximum contribution of 50% of the project's value, up to a maximum of €450,000, disbursed in 10 installments based on project progress. Ten projects will be selected for public voting, with three winning.

Any funds not disbursed for any reason will be returned to Fondazione Capellino.

Geographical share

To ensure that larger countries (Italy, France, Germany, Spain) do not monopolise resources, a geographical quota is applied during the selection process: no single country can represent more than 25% of the eligible voters in each category. Any cross-border projects will be allocated equally to each of the participating countries.

- **Financial Conditionality:** The application requires the applicant to provide full transparency regarding the project budget, including the expected financial contribution from participation in the call, together with any financial resources already demonstrably available, plus in-kind contributions.

The Foundation reserves the right to revoke the contribution if the necessary financial coverage is lacking during the project's implementation.

Application Procedure

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Applications must be submitted using the appropriate online form on the Reintegration Economy Community pages of Fondazione Capellino and Almo Nature for all three categories starting July 1, 2026. Incomplete applications, applications submitted using methods other than those provided, or applications received after the deadline established for each category will not be considered.

Category A Projects

Application submission: July 15th to September 30th 2026

Selection of 20 eligible candidates: 1st to 14th October 2026

Citizens' vote: October 15th to December 15th, 2026

Announcement of the 5 winners: December 23rd, 2026

Winners' Event: January 15th, 2027

Category B Projects

Application submission: July 15th to November 30th 2026

Selection of the 10 eligible candidates: 1st to 15th December 2027

Citizens' vote: December 16th to March 31st, 2027

Announcement of the 4 winners: April 19th, 2027

Winners' Event: April 30th, 2027

Category C Projects

Application submission: July 15th, 2026, to January 31th, 2027

Selection of the 10 eligible candidates: 1st to 28th February 2027

Citizens' vote: April 1st to June 30th, 2027

Announcement of the 3 winners: July 14th, 2027

Winners' Event: September 15th, 2027

Once submitted, applications can be modified until the closing date of the submission window for each category.

The finalist projects will be submitted to a vote by **citizens of all participating countries**.

Voters are encouraged to choose the best project rather than prioritising projects from their own country.

Voting: European citizens vote on the Reintegration Economy Community platform for the project they consider best for each category in three separate rounds. Citizens are permitted one vote per category across the three separate voting rounds.

Other obligations

- Candidates commit to supporting, alongside their communities, the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) "Nature has no borders: a unified European framework for ecological connectivity";
- Open data principles to facilitate the replicability required by the Foundation's mission;
- Applicants are required to produce and deliver high-quality audiovisual material to document the project. This material must be licensed to Fondazione Capellino free of Charge on a non-exclusive, perpetual, and unrestricted basis for all ECI institutional, reporting, and promotional purposes. Failure to produce or deliver the required multimedia documentation will constitute a material breach of contract and will result in suspension or revocation of funding.

Exclusion criteria and honor requirements

In order to safeguard the integrity of the initiative and ensure the correct use of the Foundation's resources, the following entities are **strictly excluded from participating in the call (both as individual candidates and as partners)**:

- **Criminal convictions and organised crime:** Natural persons or legal entities convicted by final judgment of serious crimes or any other illegal activity, as well as individuals who, despite not having a criminal record, are widely recognised as supporters or affiliates of organised crime;
- **Environmental crimes:** individuals who have been definitively sanctioned for ecocide offences, environmental crimes, systemic pollution, illegal trafficking of protected flora or fauna, or serious and repeated violations of national and European regulations on biodiversity protection;
- **Financial insolvency:** entities or natural persons in a state of bankruptcy, liquidation, receivership, arrangements with creditors or any equivalent situation under applicable national laws;
- **Conflict of interest:** individuals who find themselves in a situation of conflict of interest with Fondazione Capellino and Almo Nature, their governing bodies or the technical evaluators responsible for selecting projects;
- **Ethical incompatibility:** individuals whose activities and conduct are in clear contradiction with the values of Fondazione Capellino.

Self-certification: When submitting the application, the applicant must sign a declaration of honor (self-certification) attesting that the exclusion criteria listed above are not met.

Value of the initiative

With this call, Fondazione Capellino aims to demonstrate that ecological connectivity is not just a European regulatory objective, but a concrete practice that can be implemented immediately. The Foundation aims to support projects that demonstrate, in the field, how a more connected nature also means greater biodiversity, greater ecosystem resilience, and a better ability to measure, prevent, and reduce negative human impacts, favoring positive environmental usability. A still nature produces less economic value than a thriving one.

Nature has no borders: one nature, one Europe.

Half of the Planet to the Wild.

**Nature has no borders. One Nature, One Europe
European Citizens' Initiative (ECI)**

1. Title of the initiative

'Nature has no borders: a unified European framework for ecological connectivity'

2. Objectives of the initiative

European citizens call on the European Commission to submit a proposal for a Union legal act establishing a common European framework for ecological connectivity between terrestrial and inland water ecosystems. This framework should support common technical criteria, mapping, cross-border coordination, monitoring, and interoperable data sharing on ecological corridors and other connectivity features. This includes strengthening ecological coherence between Natura 2000 sites and other areas of biodiversity importance, while fully respecting the competences of the Member States and without harmonising spatial planning, land use, or quantitative water management. The initiative aims to reduce habitat fragmentation and support biodiversity and ecosystem resilience in Europe.

**3. Treaty provisions considered relevant by the group of organisers for the proposed action
Articles 11, 191, and 192 (1) TFEU**

4. Optional Annex

Existing Union legislation already contributes to biodiversity protection, ecological coherence, water management, and nature restoration. However, the current regulatory framework remains fragmented and largely sectoral. Existing instruments address individual objectives or procedures but do not yet provide a single horizontal framework specifically dedicated to ecological connectivity between terrestrial and inland water ecosystems.

Ecological processes, species movements, river systems, and landscape functions extend beyond national borders. Habitat fragmentation caused by infrastructure, river barriers, land- use changes, and other pressures cannot be effectively addressed through uncoordinated national actions alone. A common EU framework could therefore provide clear added value by improving coherence, comparability, cross- border cooperation, monitoring, and interoperable data sharing.

The initiative aims to establish a European Union legislative act that supports common technical criteria for the identification, mapping, and monitoring of ecological corridors and other connectivity features, strengthens ecological coherence between Natura 2000 sites and other areas of biodiversity importance, and supports common methodologies to assess, prevent, reduce, and monitor, in a measurable manner, the impact of human activities on biodiversity and ecological connectivity.

The initiative does not aim to harmonise spatial and urban planning, land use, or quantitative water management, nor to require the Union to directly designate local corridors. Local planning and implementation should remain the responsibility of Member States. The European Union framework should instead support common principles, coordination, methodological guidelines, and more effective cross-border action.