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From: General Secretariat of the Council  
To: Delegations

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Subject: AOB for the meeting of the Council (Environment) on 25 June 2026  
Results of 34 years of implementation of the LIFE Regulation and outlook  
- Information from Austria, Italy, Luxembourg and Spain

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The European Union is facing a triple environmental crisis (biodiversity loss, climate change and pollution) that directly affects the well-being of its citizens and the sustainability of its economic model. In response, the EU has significantly raised its ambition through the European Green Deal and other strategic frameworks, which require not only regulation but also financial instruments capable of translating objectives into concrete results.

In this context, the LIFE Programme has, for over 34 years, proven to be a key instrument for the effective implementation of the Union's environmental and climate policy. Since its creation in 1992, it has co-financed over 6,000 projects and mobilised more than €12 billion, generating tangible solutions on the ground and contributing to the effective implementation of European legislation.

Its added value is clear. LIFE is the only EU financial instrument dedicated exclusively to the environment and climate action. Its structure, based on sub-programmes covering biodiversity, the circular economy, climate change and the energy transition, enables it to tackle complex and interrelated challenges in an integrated manner. Furthermore, it combines funding, regulatory implementation, capacity building and cooperation between stakeholders, making it a genuine driver of European policy implementation on the ground.

The programme has also been a pillar of multilevel governance, facilitating the participation of regional and local authorities, strengthening technical capacities and promoting the exchange of best practices between Member States. This approach has made it possible to validate innovative solutions at real-world scale and ensure their replicability, helping to bridge the gap between political ambition and the reality of implementation.

In the current debate on the future Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for 2028–2034, which is aimed at simplifying and integrating the EU budget, there is a clear risk that specialised instruments and environmental ambition will be watered down. The proposal to integrate the LIFE programme into broader financial frameworks, such as the European Competitiveness Fund, could, , lead to a loss of visibility, specific funding and the capacity for effective implementation on the ground, subordinating environmental objectives to other priorities.

In this context, various institutions, such as the European Parliament, and a range of regional and local stakeholders have emphasised the importance of the LIFE Programme and the need to ensure its continued presence within the framework of the future MFF.

For all these reasons, Austria, Italy, Luxembourg and Spain, together with the regional governments of its autonomous communities, calls for a discussion on how to ensure the continuity of the LIFE Programme within the framework of the future MFF, as well as on how the Union’s financial instruments should be structured to guarantee the effective implementation of environmental policy, including in the areas of biodiversity and nature restoration, where the allocations initially envisaged in the 2028–2034 Multiannual Financial Framework are lower than those currently in force, and taking into account the diversity of perspectives regarding its design, funding and coordination with other programmes.

The future of the LIFE programme goes beyond the strictly budgetary sphere and is part of the broader debate on the coherence between the Union’s environmental ambition and the instruments intended for its implementation. In this regard, the exchange of views between Member States and European institutions can help to identify balanced solutions that strengthen the effectiveness, visibility and impact of European environmental action in the next financial framework.