

LIFE OASIS

aFAD Design Contest Rules



Co-funded by the European Union

Contents

1) Organiser and project framework.....	3
2) Purpose and objectives.....	3
3) Definitions.....	3
4) Contest categories (Strategic Lines).....	3
5) Geographic scope.....	4
6) Eligibility and participation requirements.....	4
7) Registration.....	4
8) How to participate, minimum obligations and final submission package.....	4
9) Timeline.....	6
10) Evaluation criteria and scoring system.....	6
11) Jury and decision-making.....	7
12) Prizes.....	7
13) Grounds for exclusion.....	8
14) Nature, transparency and payment conditions of financial support.....	8
15) Intellectual property, confidentiality and licence to use materials.....	8
16) Image rights, filming and participant consent.....	9
17) Personal data protection (GDPR).....	9
18) EU visibility, communication and disclaimer requirements.....	10
19) Ethics, values and conflicts of interest.....	10
20) Acceptance of the Rules, liability and safety.....	10
21) Complaints procedure.....	11
22) Support and contact.....	11





Co-funded by the European Union

1) Organiser and project framework

The LIFE OASIS – aFAD Smart Gear Contest is organised within the EU-funded project LIFE23-NAT-ES-LIFE OASIS (Project 101148343). The prize funding is provided under the corresponding LIFE OASIS Budget Category D.1 allocations by Asociación Cultural Alnitak (G79803540A), contributing EUR 10,000, and the Spanish Fisheries Confederation (CEPESCA) (V85109445), contributing EUR 7,500, for a total prize budget of EUR 17,500.

The Contest aims to actively involve Mediterranean artisanal fishers in improving the sustainability, safety and efficiency of the anchored fish aggregating device (aFAD) fishery targeting *Coryphaena* (dolphinfish/mahi-mahi).

2) Purpose and objectives

General objective: To identify, test and recognise practical innovations (“smart gear”) proposed and implemented by fishers to improve the Mediterranean *Coryphaena* aFAD fishery, with particular emphasis on reducing fishing-gear loss and enhancing sustainability.

Specific objectives:

1. Engage artisanal fishers from Spain (Balearic Islands), Italy (Sicily) and Malta in the joint development of improvements to the fishery.
2. Move away from single-use anchoring practices by promoting the recovery, reuse and/or recycling of anchoring systems and lines.
3. Improve the “oasis” fish-aggregation effect in order to increase cost-effectiveness and reduce risks such as bycatch and fishing-gear loss.

3) Definitions

“aFAD” means an anchored fish aggregating device used in the *Coryphaena* fishery, including its float, attractor components, anchoring line and anchor (weight, stone or equivalent).

“ALDFG” means abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear, the internationally recognised term for fishing gear that is lost or abandoned at sea. Reducing ALDFG is a core objective of the LIFE OASIS project and the central focus of this gear-design Contest, which seeks to prevent gear from being abandoned or lost through breakage and subsequently drifting at sea, causing ghost fishing and entanglement-related mortality.

“Smart gear” means a fisher-designed modification, choice of materials, configuration, construction method or deployment/retrieval strategy intended to improve sustainability, reduce losses, enhance safety and/or improve aggregation efficiency.

“LIFE OASIS prototype” means the standard aFAD prototype, or relevant component, provided or assigned by the Project for comparative sea trials.

“Sea trial” means the minimum four-week deployment period during the 2026 fishing season for both (i) the participant’s smart-gear aFAD and (ii) the LIFE OASIS prototype, as specified in these Rules.

“Prize”: The term “Prize” is used in these Rules for promotional, communication and engagement purposes within the LIFE OASIS co-creation process. For administrative and financial purposes, each award constitutes Financial Support to Third Parties in the form of a prize, in accordance with the LIFE Programme rules (Budget Category D.1). The financial support of EUR 2,916.66 is intended to reward the successful co-creation, deployment and testing of sustainable aFAD designs. Payment is conditional upon winning the Contest and the satisfactory verification of the sea trials and supporting evidence. No commercial invoice is required.



Co-funded by the European Union

4) Contest categories (Strategic Lines)

Applicants may submit proposals for anchored fish aggregating device (aFAD) designs addressing one or both of the two Strategic Lines of the LIFE OASIS Smart Gear Contest:

- Strategic Line 1: Recovery, reuse and recycling of the anchoring system. Solutions focused on recovering the anchor (for example, a stone or counterweight), the anchoring line and associated components, thereby enabling reuse and/or recycling and reducing the annual loss or disposal of anchoring lines.
- Strategic Line 2: Optimisation of the aFAD (“oasis”) aggregation effect. Solutions that improve the aggregation effect and operational efficiency through materials, design, construction and/or deployment strategy, including non-entangling design, maritime safety and the creative integration of electronic monitoring components.

5) Geographic scope

The Contest targets the Mediterranean *Coryphaena* aFAD fishery in:

1. Balearic Islands (Spain)
2. Sicily (Italy)
3. Malta and Gozo (Malta)

6) Eligibility and participation requirements

Who may participate?

- Licensed fishers operating in the *Coryphaena* aFAD fishery in the eligible regions.
- Participants must not be subject to any administrative sanctions.
- For the purposes of the Contest, participants will be identified by the name of their vessel.

General conditions

- Participants must operate in compliance with applicable legislation and relevant best-practice recommendations, including safety and non-entangling principles where applicable.
- Participants must accept these Rules and comply with the Project requirements concerning ethics, values, confidentiality and responsible conduct.
- The organiser may request evidence of licensing and/or registration and may carry out eligibility checks at any time.

7) Registration

Registration will be available at www.lifeoasis.eu from 15 July 2026. The opening of registration will be announced on www.lifeoasis.eu and through the LIFE OASIS social-media channels.

Applicants must provide the vessel identification details (name and registration number) and the contact details of the responsible person or crew member.

Optional registration in the “LIFE OASIS – Fishers, Guardians of the Seas” group.

8) How to participate, minimum obligations and final submission package

To be eligible for evaluation, participants must complete the following steps:

1. Complete the registration form

The registration form is available on the LIFE OASIS project website (www.lifeoasis.eu) and must be completed in order to register correctly for the Contest. The form identifies the participant and includes the declarations accepting these Contest Rules.

2. Submit the proposed design



Co-funded by the European Union

The participant must submit at least one A4-format sketch of the proposed design for improving the anchored fish aggregating device (aFAD) fishery, clearly identifying the features intended to address one or both of the Strategic Lines set out in Section 4.

3. Provide a brief technical description

Together with the sketch, the participant must provide a brief written description of the proposed design, containing sufficient information for the Jury to assess the criteria set out in Section 10.

The description must include, where applicable:

- Main materials and components;
- Characteristics of the anchoring system and anchoring line;
- Marking, signalling and safety features;
- Non-entangling or risk-reduction design features;
- Proposed recovery, reuse and/or recycling options;
- Measures intended to reduce the risk of microplastic pollution;
- Operational characteristics relevant to deployment, use and retrieval;
- Capacity to integrate an electronic monitoring system, where applicable;
- A brief explanation of how the proposal aligns with relevant recommendations concerning Mediterranean aFAD fisheries.

4. Conduct the sea trials

The participant must deploy and use:

- At least one aFAD based on the design proposed by the participant; and
- One LIFE OASIS prototype, provided or assigned by the Project.

Both systems must be deployed during the 2026 fishing season and remain at sea for a minimum trial period of four (4) weeks, unless this is made impossible by force majeure, safety considerations or other duly justified circumstances accepted by LIFE OASIS.

5. Provide photographic evidence

The participant must provide clear photographs of their aFAD and anchoring system and, where requested, of the LIFE OASIS prototype. The photographs must include, as a minimum:

- The day of deployment;
- The system in operation at sea during the trial period; and
- The day of recovery or retrieval following the minimum trial period.

The photographs must be of sufficient quality to document the design, anchoring system, signalling and recovery-related features relevant to the evaluation criteria in Section 10.

6. Provide an operational note

The participant must provide a brief sea-trial record including:

- Deployment and recovery dates;
- Confirmation of the minimum deployment period;
- A brief description of operational performance; and
- Any relevant observations concerning safety, feasibility, durability, recoverability or practical use at sea.

7. Interview, filming and commitment

The participant must invite at least one LIFE OASIS team member or Advisory Board member to join a fishing trip and must agree to an interview and/or filming in connection with the LIFE OASIS audiovisual production and publication.

The participant must also submit the corresponding letter of commitment in the format requested by LIFE OASIS.

8. Provide basic cost information

The participant must provide a basic cost estimate for the proposed system, including, where reasonably possible:

- Material costs;
- Assembly and preparation costs;
- Deployment and recovery considerations; and



Co-funded by the European Union

- Any relevant maintenance or replacement considerations.

The level of detail may be limited, but it must be sufficient for the Jury to assess cost and performance in accordance with Section 10.

Final submission package

In summary, the final submission package must include, as a minimum:

1. A completed online registration form submitted through www.lifeoasis.eu;
2. The A4-format sketch or sketches of the proposed design;
3. The brief technical description referred to above;
4. Photographic evidence of deployment, operation at sea and recovery;
5. The sea-trial operational note;
6. The basic cost information;
7. Documentation required to demonstrate vessel registration or eligibility; and
8. Participation in the fishing trip and filmed interview coordinated with LIFE OASIS.

9) Timeline

The organiser will publish the final Contest timetable at www.lifeoasis.eu. The indicative timetable is as follows:

Spain

- **Registration opens:** 15 July 2026 (23:59 CET)
- **Deadline for registration and submission of designs and supporting evidence:** 15 October 2026 (23:59 CET). **NOTE:** Sea trials must start before 15 September in order to complete the four-week trial period before the application deadline.
- **Verification period** (during which the organiser may request clarification of any documentation submitted to the Contest): from 16 October 2026 to 1 November 2026 (23:59 CET).
- **Announcement of winners:** 9 November 2026

IMPORTANT: The organiser may amend the dates for operational reasons, including weather conditions, safety or logistics, provided that equal treatment of all participants is ensured and any change is published promptly at www.lifeoasis.eu.

10) Evaluation criteria and scoring system

As a general rule, each criterion will be scored from 1 to 5 as follows:

- 1: insufficient or unsupported by evidence;
- 2: weak;
- 3: adequate;
- 4: good;
- 5: excellent and fully demonstrated.

Compliance and completeness (eligibility requirement – no points awarded)

1. Licensed and registered vessel and completed registration.
2. Completed interview and letter of commitment.
3. Complete documentation submitted (sketches, photographs and filming/interview).

Strategic Line 1: recovery, reuse and recycling of the anchoring system (each criterion scored from 1 to 5):

1. Appropriate anchoring system: low ALDFG risk
2. Recovery of the anchor (stone/weight) and anchoring line
3. Appropriate signalling and safety
4. Sustainability of the proposed system (durability, reuse and recycling potential)
5. Cost
6. Operational feasibility and production costs



Co-funded by the European Union

Strategic Line 2: optimisation of the “oasis effect” (each criterion scored from 1 to 5):

1. Alignment with the recommendations of the FAO General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) specialist group on Mediterranean fish aggregating device fisheries
2. Non-entangling design and reduced risk profile
3. Reduced risk of microplastic pollution
4. Maritime traffic safety and mitigation of collision risk
5. Cultural and aesthetic design that promotes the fishery
6. Capacity to integrate an electronic monitoring system
7. Reuse and recycling options
8. Cost
9. Operational feasibility and realism of costs

Tie-break rules

- The Jury will have access to the interviews and images associated with each participant.
- In the event of a tie in the total score, the Jury will decide by majority vote and record the reasons for its decision in the decision minutes.

Verification, clarifications and data quality

- The organiser and/or Jury may request additional evidence or clarification to validate the documentation, trial conditions and results.
- If the requested clarification is not provided within the specified deadline, the submission may be considered incomplete and excluded from the evaluation.
- **Decision record and transparency:** The organiser will maintain a written record of the evaluation process, including scores, reasons and conflict-of-interest management measures, for transparency, monitoring and audit purposes relating to the EU-funded action.
- Alnitak and CEPESCA will make the prize payments in accordance with their respective Budget Category D.1 allocations under the LIFE OASIS project. The other consortium members may contribute to dissemination, technical coordination, operational support, evaluation, verification and communication activities, without prejudice to the allocation of responsibilities established in the Grant Agreement.
- All entities involved in organising, supporting, evaluating, verifying or paying the prizes must act in accordance with the principles of transparency, equal treatment, sound financial management, data protection and prevention of conflicts of interest.

11) Jury and decision-making

Composition: The Jury will comprise representatives of the LIFE OASIS consortium and independent experts offering a range of relevant perspectives. The Jury will be appointed by the organiser and will apply measures to ensure objectivity and prevent conflicts of interest.

- Member of the FAO GFCM Working Group on Mediterranean fish aggregating device fisheries (J.C. Baez, IEO)
- Member of the ICCAT Subcommittee on Ecosystems (Y. Swimmer, NOAA NMFS)
- Member of the ISSF (G. Moreno)
- IMO environmental policy expert (M. Palomares)
- EU environmental policy expert (A. Tejedor)
- Member of the ICES Working Group on Bycatch (L. Kindt)
- GGGI representative (I. Sykes)
- STRA representative (C. Petros)

Conflict of interest: Any Jury member who has a potential conflict of interest in relation to a participant must declare it and refrain from taking part in the evaluation of that participant’s submission.

12) Prizes

The maximum total budget allocated to prizes under the LIFE OASIS Smart Gear Contest is EUR 17,500. This amount will be divided into up to six prizes of EUR 2,916.66 each. The prizes will be



Co-funded by the European Union

distributed across the two Strategic Lines and the three eligible territories: the Balearic Islands (Spain), Sicily (Italy), and Malta and Gozo (Malta).

In each of the three territories, the highest-scoring design in each of the two Strategic Lines will receive a prize:

1. Best prototype – Strategic Line 1 (Recovery, reuse and recycling of the anchoring system): EUR 2,916.66 per territory.
2. Best prototype – Strategic Line 2 (Optimisation of the aFAD aggregation effect and safety): EUR 2,916.66 per territory.

Payment conditions: The prizes will be paid in a single instalment by bank transfer following verification of the complete documentation, successful completion of the minimum four-week sea trial and validation of the evidence by the Jury. No commercial invoice is required. The following will be required for payment:

1. Formal acceptance of the prize;
2. Tax information;
3. Evidence of bank-account ownership; and
4. Receipt or acknowledgement of payment.

13) Grounds for exclusion

A participant may be excluded if they fail to meet the eligibility requirements, do not submit the mandatory documentation, fail to comply with applicable regulations or minimum safety and non-entangling requirements, provide false or unverifiable information, or refuse reasonable verification requests.

14) Nature, transparency and payment conditions of financial support

Nature of the prizes: The prizes described in Section 12 are awarded under this Contest. The organiser will manage the Contest in accordance with the principles of transparency, equal treatment and sound financial management.

No entitlement: Submission of an application does not create any entitlement to receive a prize. The organiser reserves the right to verify all information and evidence submitted and to refuse payment where verification is unsuccessful or the minimum requirements are not met.

Document retention and audit trail: As the organising entity and custodian of the Contest's central records, Alnitak will retain, in a secure electronic format, all documentation relating to applications, evaluation, award decisions and prize payments. This documentation will include, among other items, registration forms, sketches, technical descriptions, photographs, sea-trial records, correspondence, clarifications, evaluation sheets, Jury minutes, tax and banking documentation, and proof of payment. Participants must provide complete, authentic and verifiable documentation and cooperate with any clarification requests made during or after the evaluation. Once the documentation has been duly received and archived by Alnitak, participants will not be required to retain additional copies, without prejudice to their obligation to provide reasonable cooperation if subsequent clarification or checks are required.

Alnitak will retain the Contest file for the period specified in the LIFE OASIS Grant Agreement and for any extension required because of ongoing audits, checks, investigations, litigation or claims. Alnitak will provide CINEA and any other authorised bodies with access to the Contest documentation. Where necessary, participants must cooperate by providing clarification regarding the documentation or activities undertaken; this does not impose a general obligation on participants to retain the complete file after it has been submitted to Alnitak.

Taxes and charges: The amounts stated are gross amounts. The paying entity will apply any legally required tax withholdings and comply with the applicable reporting obligations. Any other tax, duty or charge applicable to a prize in the participant's jurisdiction will be the participant's responsibility. The organiser may request any information required to comply with legal or administrative payment requirements.



Co-funded by the European Union

Payment method and timing: Prizes will be paid by bank transfer to the vessel owner or legal representative, or to a duly authorised payee, only after: (a) verification of all documentation and eligibility; (b) completion of the minimum sea-trial period; and (c) validation of the evidence and data quality.

Publication of results: The organiser may publish the name of the winning vessel or vessels, their home port or territory, and a brief description of the winning solution or solutions for transparency and dissemination purposes, subject to data-protection requirements.

15) Intellectual property, confidentiality and licence to use materials

Ownership of results: Participants retain ownership of their pre-existing know-how and of the results they develop. Nothing in these Rules transfers ownership of a participant's intellectual property to the organiser.

Confidential information: If a participant marks specific technical details as CONFIDENTIAL at the time of submission, the organiser will treat them as confidential and will not disclose them publicly, except where disclosure is required for verification, monitoring, reporting or audit obligations relating to the Project, including disclosure to the granting authority, contractors or auditors subject to confidentiality obligations.

Licence for Project purposes (non-exclusive): Participants grant the organiser and the LIFE OASIS consortium partners a worldwide, non-exclusive, royalty-free licence to use, reproduce and disseminate the submitted materials, including sketches, photographs and non-confidential descriptions, strictly for: (a) Contest evaluation and verification; (b) Project reporting and audits; and (c) Project communication and dissemination activities, including websites, social media, publications and events.

Respect for third-party rights: Participants must ensure that the materials they submit do not infringe any third-party rights and that they hold the permissions required for any third-party content included in their submission.

16) Image rights, filming and participant consent

Filming and interviews. As part of the minimum obligations set out in Section 8, participants agree to invite a LIFE OASIS team member or Advisory Board member to join a fishing trip and to take part in an interview and/or filming session for the LIFE OASIS film and publication.

Rights to use images and recordings. Participants authorise the organiser and the LIFE OASIS consortium partners to use photographs, video and audio recordings captured or provided within the framework of the Contest for Project communication materials, including the website, social media, press, presentations and publications, subject to the applicable authorisations and data-protection requirements.

Practical information notice. When filming on board, the organiser will provide basic information on the intended uses and apply practical measures, such as prior notice and avoiding unnecessary filming of persons who are not participating, in order to respect privacy expectations.

Withdrawal or objection. Where filming or the use of images is based on consent, participants may withdraw their consent for future use, without affecting the lawfulness of any previous use. Where the processing is based on legitimate interests, participants may object, and the organiser will assess the request in accordance with applicable data-protection law.

17) Personal data protection (GDPR)

Data controller and contact: For the purposes of this Contest, the personal data controller is Alnitak, acting as the Contest organiser within LIFE23-NAT-ES-LIFE OASIS (Project 101148343). Contact: coordination@lifeoasis.eu, Calle Nalón 16, 28240 Madrid, Spain.



Co-funded by the European Union

Categories of personal data processed: The organiser may process identification and contact details of the vessel owner or crew contact person, vessel registration details, interview notes, photographs, video and audio recordings in which individuals may be identifiable, and data relating to Contest deployments.

Purposes of processing: Personal data will be processed for Contest registration and administration; eligibility checks; evaluation and verification; Project monitoring, reporting and audit; and, where applicable, Project communication and dissemination activities.

Legal bases: Personal data will be processed on the basis of the appropriate legal grounds under the GDPR. These will normally include the performance of activities relating to the administration and selection process, compliance with legal obligations connected with the management of an EU-funded project, including reporting and audit obligations, and consent where required, for example for certain uses of identifiable images.

Recipients and transfers: Access to personal data may be granted to authorised consortium staff, evaluators and experts subject to confidentiality obligations and, where necessary for monitoring, checks, audits or controls, to the relevant EU bodies, the granting authority and their auditors or contractors.

Retention: Personal data will be retained only for as long as necessary for the purposes of the Contest and the Project, including any applicable EU project record-keeping requirements. The data will subsequently be securely deleted or anonymised where possible.

Data-subject rights: Participants may exercise their rights under the GDPR, including access, rectification, erasure, restriction of processing, portability and objection, by contacting coordination@lifeoasis.eu. They also have the right to lodge a complaint with the competent supervisory authority.

18) EU visibility, communication and disclaimer requirements

Acknowledgement of EU funding: All communication activities relating to the Project and its funded results must acknowledge EU support by displaying the EU emblem together with the funding statement “Co-funded by the European Union”, translated where appropriate, and by including the required disclaimer.

Correct use of the EU emblem: The EU emblem must be displayed correctly and prominently, must not be modified or merged with any other graphic element and, when displayed alongside other logos, must be at least the same size as the largest of those logos.

Mandatory disclaimer: Whenever the EU emblem or funding statement is used in communication materials, the following disclaimer, or an equivalent wording required by the granting authority, must be included: “Co-funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or CINEA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.”

Materials provided by participants: By submitting photographs, sketches, interviews or other Contest materials, participants acknowledge that those materials may be used in Project communication outputs that comply with EU visibility requirements, including use of the emblem, funding statement and disclaimer, subject to confidentiality and data-protection requirements.

19) Ethics, values and conflicts of interest

The organising entity will take measures to prevent and manage conflicts of interest and to ensure an impartial evaluation.

Participants must comply with the Project’s ethics and values obligations and with applicable law.

Any fraud, misrepresentation or deliberate falsification of evidence will result in exclusion and may lead to further measures, as appropriate.



Co-funded by the European Union

20) Acceptance of the Rules, liability and safety

Acceptance of the Rules: Participation in the Contest constitutes full acceptance of these Rules.

Liability at sea: All activities at sea must be carried out under the participant's responsibility and in compliance with applicable legal and safety requirements. The organiser accepts no responsibility for vessel operations, crew safety or regulatory compliance during fishing activities.

Safety expectations for organised trips: When LIFE OASIS staff or Advisory Board members are hosted on board, participants must follow standard maritime safety practices and ensure reasonable safety conditions, including the availability of life jackets, safe boarding arrangements and compliance with the master's instructions.

21) Complaints procedure

Participants may submit a procedural complaint, for example concerning an alleged arithmetic error in scoring, omitted evidence or failure to follow the published procedure, within 10 calendar days of receiving notification of the results.

Complaints must be submitted in writing to coordination@lifeoasis.eu with the subject line: "LIFE OASIS Contest – Procedural Complaint – [Vessel name]".

The complaint must specify: (i) the matter or matters disputed; (ii) the supporting evidence and arguments; and (iii) the remedy sought.

The organiser will acknowledge receipt within five working days and issue a reasoned response within 20 working days.

Complaints will not result in a technical re-evaluation unless a clear procedural error is demonstrated. The purpose of the procedure is to ensure transparency and equal treatment.

22) Support and contact

Main information and registration: www.lifeoasis.eu.

Contest contact email: coordination@lifeoasis.eu

Version	Date	Author	Changes
v3.0	09/07/2026	Lluís Ballell Valls	Update of the prize amounts (total EUR 17,500). Project contact details.