

LIFE Concept Note writers workshop

Practical development of logical LIFE Concept Notes

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Can a Spanish professor grasp your concept in 60 minutes?



Environmental problem	Single-use plastics are based on non-recycable, fossil-based materials
Project topic	<p>Resource Efficiency, green and circular economy (Application Guide; p 27). Implementation of the circular economy concept targeting (...) priority sectors of the EU Action Plan for the Circular Economy and <i>ensuring the use of high quality secondary resources (...)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - support transformation in SMEs and/or - integrate the social dimension in the value chain(s).
Objective	Provide alternatives to fossil-based, single-use products by introducing a bio-based material with similar preferences that enable a circular value chains
Actions and means	<p>B1: Pilot for manufacture (by SME) B2: After-use recycling activity C1: User preferences (involving social dimension?) C2: Measurement of production and recycling</p>
Results and impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1 million units produced - 90% of material recycled (as compared to 10% in conventional)

What does the Spanish professor looking for in assigning points?

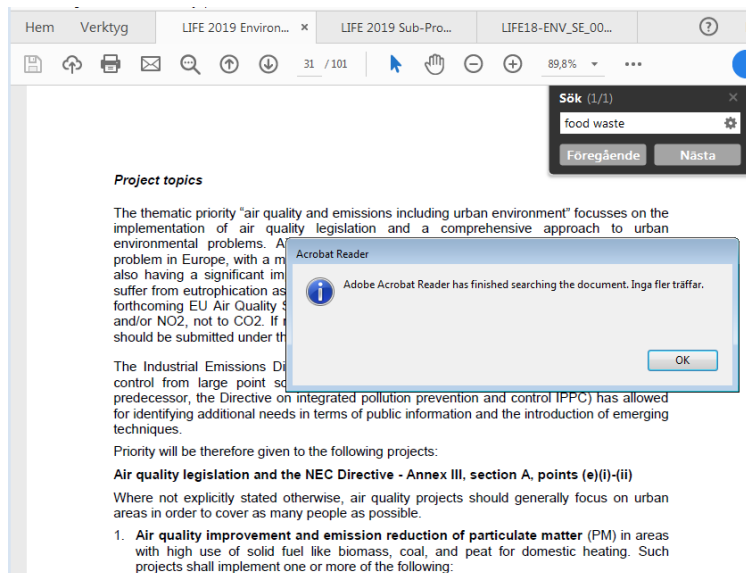
- His/her bible is the **Evaluation criteria** – so keep it next to you all the time:
 - Pre-operational context, environmental problem and feasibility – B1
 - Logical link between problems, objectives, actions and their expected results – B1
 - How, where, when and by whom – B1
 - Partnership construction – technical means, competencies and expertise – B1
 - Risk identification and mitigation – B1
 - EU added value – project activities contribution to
 - LIFE programme and Regulation – B1
 - EU environmental policy and legislation – B2, B3
 - Capacity to maintain results – B1
- The Evaluation guide provides concentrated information on expected, whereas Application guide is less focused. Application guide pages 20-32 are important to read;
- Estimated time of preparing a thorough *Concept Note* is 120-240 hours (=3-6 weeks full-time) – this will save time later;
- Use the formatting functions and do not underestimate bold, underlined, cursive writing and rows;
- Illustrations and links cannot be attached, but it seems like evaluators can refer to links to webpages

Invest some time to breaking down the environmental problem to its core

Usually, the project description includes:

- Primary direct problem - ***this is the basis for choice of project topic!***
- Secondary direct problem
- Underlying reasons
- Impacts of problem

Is food waste considered an environmental problem for LIFE?



The screenshot shows a web browser window with several tabs. A search box in the top right corner contains the text 'Sök (1/1)' and 'food waste'. Below the search box, there are two buttons: 'Föregående' and 'Nästa'. The main content area of the browser displays text under the heading 'Project topics'. The text discusses air quality and emissions, mentioning the NEC Directive and the IPPC. A small dialog box from Adobe Acrobat Reader is overlaid on the text, displaying an information icon and the message: 'Adobe Acrobat Reader has finished searching the document. Inga fler träffar.' with an 'OK' button.



No!



On the system-level, however, the actual problem is resource inefficiencies

Waste and Resource efficiency – Annex III, section A point (b)(iii)

1. Implementation of **new business and/or consumption models and/or approaches to support resource efficiency**, in the priority industrial sectors as set out in the Roadmap for a Resource Efficient Europe²⁹ and the EU Action Plan for the Circular Economy³⁰, focusing on product durability, reuse, repair and recycling and alternative processes to the sale of products. Already during the project duration, the implementation of the new business models and approaches should:
 - result in a reduction in resource use (i.e. material use, energy and/or water use, depending on the main effects) and
 - support transformation in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)³¹ and/or
 - integrate the social dimension in the business model.

Primary direct problem: Low resource efficiency of critical raw materials (P) due to losses of unconsumed food

Secondary direct problem: Hunger among underprivileged citizens (not environmental, but crucial)

Underlying reasons:

- Legal obstacles
- Conventional linear business models; lack of operators supporting the re-distribution of food

Impacts of problem:

- Excessive unsustainable phosphorous mining outside the EU
- Large share of food waste in residual waste impacting recyclability of other materials
- Maintenance of societal inequalities

Next step is to quantify the environmental problem description

General environmental problem description	Specific problem in context (e.g. geographic in Lithuania, sectoral in EU), examples:
Low resource efficiency of critical raw materials (P) due to losses of unconsumed food	Food losses account for 20% of food waste in EU
Hunger among underprivileged citizens	75 people go to bed hungry every night in Klaipeda
Legal obstacles	The Legislation of Waste Management of Lithuania
Conventional linear business models; lack of operators supporting the re-distribution of food	Only 1 out of 8 major food retailers in the Lithuania have introduced a re-distribution scheme
Excessive phosphorous mining under environmentally and socially negative conditions	60 billion tonnes of phosphorous for food production is imported from outside the EU, mainly Marocco and Syria
Large share of food waste in residual waste impacting recycability of other materials	In average, 45% of residual waste is food waste in EU
Maintenance of societal inequalities	<i>...up to creativity! Or leave some of the impacts out</i>

Include an introduction to the conventional solution to the to the environmental problem and how it fails to solve the problem

First exercise (15 minutes) – formulate your project's environmental problem!

Take 5 minutes and think about your environmental problem:

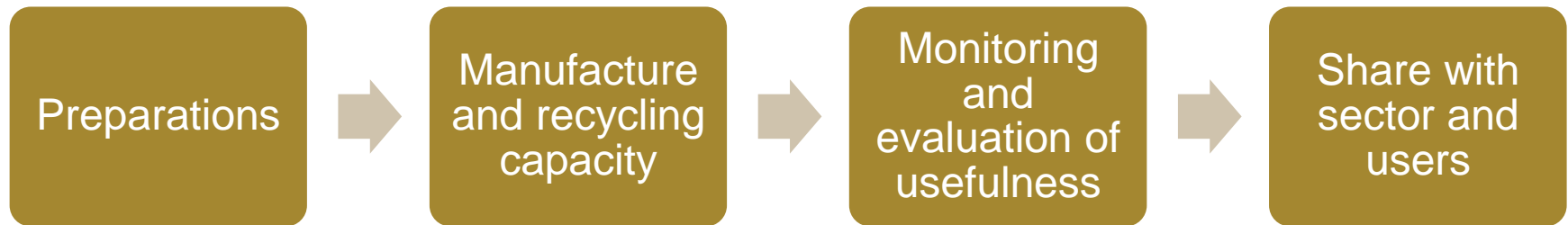
1. **What is the primary direct problem?**
2. **What are the possible secondary direct problems?**
3. **What is the main impact of the problem?**

Environmental problem			
Project topic			
Objective			
Actions and means Preparatory actions:		Partner:	Related risks:
Implementation actions:			
Monitoring of the impact of the project actions:			
Public awareness and dissemination of results:			
Expected results			
Pilot/demonstration character State-of-art vs beyond State-of-Art			

Consequent terminology from application guide will help motivate why the project falls under a specific project topic

Environmental problems to solve is central	But should be closely in line with one of the project topics (application guide, p 25)	And voilà, an adjacent project objective setup
<p>Primary problem: Low resource efficiency of critical raw materials (P) due to losses of unconsumed food</p>	<p>Implementation of new business (...) models (...) to support resource efficiency, in the priority industrial sectors as set out in (...) the EU Action Plan for the Circular Economy, focusing on product (...) reuse, (...)</p>	<p>Main objective: Implement a business model to support resource efficiency in the food sector through re-distribution of unconsumed food</p>
<p>Secondary problem: Hunger among underprivileged citizens</p>	<p>The implementation of the new business models should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - result in a reduction in resource use and - support transformation in SMEs and/or - integrate the social dimension in the business model. 	<p>Minor objective: Increase the availability of low-cost food</p>
<p>Underlying reasons: Legal obstacles</p>		<p>Minor objective: Promote the integration of a social dimension in the business model for food retail sector by supporting SMEs to enter the segment.</p>
<p>Underlying reasons: Conventional linear business models; lack of operators supporting the re-distribution of food</p>		

The actions and means prove the feasibility of the intervention logic – present it in a structured way



Always keep why, when, where, by whom and how in mind for activity descriptions:

1. **Preparatory actions:** List of preparations needed; permits, procurements, detailed design
2. **Implementation actions:** Description of the manufacturing pilot, activities to test the product and measures to ensure recycleability, description of equipment and infrastructure needed
3. **Monitoring of the impact of the project actions:** Outlining of measurable production outputs, quality and recycling indicators, monitoring methodology, (research) experimental monitoring activities
4. **Public awareness and dissemination of results:** Activities “beyond simple dissemination” to support transformation in SMEs, social dimension of activities, dissemination of information to the (food retail, agricultural) sectors, general public awareness of plastic vs hemp single-use articles
5. **Project Management:** Management, coordination, internal communication and overall implementation is handled by coordination beneficiary (more is not needed)

Focus on the expected results of the project

- Ensure that the results are as specific and realistic as possible
 - Put ambitious quantifications of the results – you project will deliver in 5 years
 - Refer explicitly to feasibility study results or former pilots/demonstrations, if available
 - The estimated results do not need to be scientifically calculated or reviewed – be realistic and optimistic
- Impacts are much more complex to estimate and review, and can be based on less sophisticated calculations
- Focus on the logical link between environmental problem and results, but do not forget local result indicators linked to communication and dissemination of results.

General environmental problem description	Specific problem in context :	Quantified expected results and impact:
Low resource efficiency of critical raw materials (P) due to losses of unconsumed food	Food losses account for 20% of food waste in EU	Result: Reduce food losses from targeted supermarkets from 87 to 57 tonnes per year (i.e. a 34% reduction)
Hunger among underprivileged citizens	75 people go to bed hungry every night in Klaipeda	Result: Sell 15 tonnes per year of unconsumed food as low-cost food in Klaipeda
Legal obstacles	The Legislation of Waste Management of Lithuania	Results: Involve 4 major food retailers in an SME-driven business model for re-distribution of unconsumed food Create 5 new jobs in the new food re-distribution business
Conventional linear business models; lack of operators supporting the re-distribution of food	Only 1 out of 8 major food retailers in the Lithuania have introduced a re-distribution scheme	
Excessive phosphorous mining under environmentally and socially negative conditions	60 billion tonnes of phosphorous for food production is imported from outside the EU, mainly Marocco and Syria	Impact on EU-level: Reduction of phosphorous production by 0.4 billion tonnes if implemented on an EU-scale (provided that food losses account for 2% of food consumption in EU)
Large share of food waste in residual waste impacting recycability of other materials	On average, 45% of residual waste is food waste in EU	Impact on EU-level: Reduction of share of food waste in residual waste from 45 to 40% (provided that 10% of food losses are re-used)

Second exercise (30 minutes) – objectives versus expected results

Take 10 minutes and think about your objectives, results and activities and keep the environmental problem in your mind:

1. **What is your project's key objective?**
2. **What is the main expected result?**
3. **What are you main activities under**
 - a) B Implementation Actions and
 - b) C Monitoring of the impact of the project actions?
 - c) (if you have time) Public awareness and dissemination of results

Objective focuses on the new solution (in context)

- Describe expected preferences of new technology, approach, tool
- Describe social dimension of the new solution

Result focuses on the measureable, specific outcome:

- Realistic but ambitious quantitative goals for direct solution performance
- Realistic expectations for social dimension, i.e. employment, circular resource flows, new offset of end-life waste product

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How solution supports organisations in all of the EU to meet Union-wide legislation and policy – this is LIFE-sustainability

1. What are the guarantees that your organisation will continue using the solution after the end of the project? Strategy or business plan
 - Commercial conditions? Provide a simplified business plan
 - Legislation? Expected legislation?
 - Secured public funding? Subsidy schemes?

2. Refer to environmental problem description and explain how the solution will solve it in the medium/long-term (5-20 years)
 - EU-wide
 - Nationally
 - Locally

3. How will you ensure that the solution is further spread and developed?
 - Dissemination and replication – EU-wide – concrete actions "beyond local level"
 - Engagement of policy-makers (policy recommendations, reference group etc)
 - Citizen engagement – schools, engineering education

Budget estimation is used to evaluate whether the project is cost-effective

- Normal total budget for ENV is 4-6 million EUR;
- Budget can change up to 10 percent up from Concept Note to Full application;
- A realistic budget estimation from the beginning will save you trouble later;
- The project management budget is usually 8-12 percent of total project cost and split of own staff, travel and consultants;
- Remember that only depreciation costs for infrastructure (up to 25% of actual purchase cost) and equipment (up to 50%) are eligible;
- The overhead is always 7% of total eligible costs

- F1 – Direct personnel costs
- F2 – Travel and subsistence costs
- F3 – External assistance costs
- F4.a – Infrastructure costs
- F4.b – Equipment costs
- F4.c – Prototype costs
- F6 – Costs for consumables
- F7 – Other costs
- F8 – Overheads

Let's have a look at the simplified budget sheet

Third exercise (20 minutes) – the simplified budget sheet

Take 10 minutes and fill out your main activities in the budget sheet:

1. What are your main costs per activity?

(Example) Actions	1. Personnel			2. Travel and subsistence	3. External assistance	4. Durable goods			6. Consumables	7. Other costs	8. Overheads	Total cost per Action
	Rate	Days	Eligible costs	Eligible costs	Eligible costs	Actual Cost	Depreciation	Eligible costs	Eligible costs	Eligible costs		
B. Implementation actions (obligatory)												330 808
B1. Procurement and construction												-
B2. Test operations												
(...)												
C. Monitoring of the impact of the project actions (obligatory)												-
C1. Regular monitoring												
C2. Experimental monitoring												
(...)												

Let the Brief Description of the Coordinating Beneficiary be a summary focused around relevant activities and experience

Only the coordinating beneficiary needs to provide information:

- Location and geographic/demographic/technical specification in first sentence
- Objectives and reasons to initiate project – geographic, policy, environmental context
- Capacity of implementing the project – experience from other projects (with project ID)
- Key activities in the project – explain how technical means, competencies and expertise are in use
- Ability/necessity to keep the results

Each activity needs to be carried out by a credible partner or otherwise sub-contracted

[PROJECT] is led by [COORDINATING BENEFICIARY] but dependent on the partners to reach its full potential in terms of environment and climate performance, technological competence, social and socio-economic synergies. The following organisations have already agreed to join the consortium:

Describe each partner with a short description of operations and experience relevant to project objective


Recommended partners (no formal confirmation is needed and you can add “TBC”):

- Academic organisation – monitoring, dissemination and technical support purposes;
- Organisation in involved sectors – hemp farmer, hemp organisation
- Foreign organisation – exchange of experiences, specific networking etc.
- Public-private partnerships – public-private organisations, e.g. incubator, for SME or user interaction

Suppliers are usually not in the partnership but sub-consulted on procurement basis.

Suppliers can be a part of partnership although it risks to create difficulties with ownership and revenues. Beneficiaries are not allowed to sub-contract each other

Each partner needs to add some own financing – this is an extreme hypothetical case of grant transfer

Partner	Eligible costs	Grant (55%)	Own funding	Transfer
City A	1,000,000	550,000	450,000	
University B	500,000	275,000	55,000	175,000 from City A
Supplier C	500,000	275,000	10,000	205,000 from City A

Regulation in Partnership Agreement between partners:

Partner	Eligible costs	Actual grant	Actual own funding
City A	1,000,000	170,000 (17%)	450,000
University B	500,000	450,000 (90%)	55,000
Supplier C	500,000	480,000 (96%)	10,000

The risks and constraints are directly linked to the foreseen and difficulties in implementing the activities

Explain prior activities to mitigate risks (stakeholder, authorities dialogue)

- Try to remember what “obvious” risks you have already manage – and list them
- Also, make an honest outlining of the foreseen difficulties in the project

Identify major risks and divide into ”risk categories”, e.g.:

- **LEGAL/POLITICAL** – e.g. permit issues and elections:

E.g. biomethane is not promoted by politicians due to the high explosion risk

- **TECHNICAL/ENVIRONMENTAL** – e.g. prototype does not work

E.g. the hemp cups cannot be produced at the industrial pace foreseen

- **FINANCIAL/PROCESS** – e.g. financial contributor pulls out

E.g. the underprivileged are not willing to pay for old food even if it is cheap

The mitigation strategies to minimise risks is equally evaluated

Fourth exercise (15 minutes) – partners and risks

Take 5 minutes and have a new look on the main activities listed earlier:

1. **Can you assign a specific or type of organisation for each and every of the activities?**
2. **Can you mention one risk with each activity? What will you do to limit the risk?**

- **LEGAL/POLITICAL** – e.g. permit issues and elections
- **TECHNICAL/ENVIRONMENTAL** – e.g. prototype does not work
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Most projects develop a good solution into a slightly better one by linking sectors or combining technologies to find synergies

Environmental problem	Conventional solution	State-of-Art (Current best practice)	Beyond State-of-Art (Pilot/demonstration solution)
Single-use plastics are based on non-recyclable, fossil-based materials	Plastic single-use cups – fossil-based and not renewable <i>can be described under "Environmental Problem"</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Plastic multiple-use cups – still fossil-based and non-recyclable 2. Paper cups – recyclable but cannot hold liquid well enough 	Bio-based cups that are both recyclable and hold liquid

Be very clear about the disadvantages of State-of-Art solution:

- Research and explain what has been done in the EU briefly
- What is the conventional technical or (single-sector) organisational solutions?
- What is best practice in EU?
- Are there any international aspect of the solution?

Describe the advantages of your solution in a **quantitative and clear manner**. Innovation is measured as expected improvement compared to State-of-Art technology:

- relative to the technologies applied by the project and,
- regarding the way technologies/methods/processes are implemented in project

Motivate extent and quality of contribution to the implementation, updating and development of EU environmental policy

Express the contribution in an applied way, for instance...

Contribution to:

EU Action Plan for Circular Economy in the prioritised sector of bio-based products by ensuring use of fossil-free, recyclable materials in single-use products by piloting a new hemp cut production technology

Since you have already motivated how the project suits the LIFE programme project topics, focus on the overall priority area topics:

LIFE Regulation, Article 10 includes specific objectives for the priority area Environment and Resource Efficiency. In direct support of the regulation, the project will demonstrate management approaches to environmental challenges and will improve the knowledge base for the development and implementation of Union environmental policy and legislation

2. LIFE Environment and Resource Efficiency

2.1 What is LIFE Environment and Resource Efficiency?

These guidelines concern uniquely *LIFE Environment and Resource Efficiency*.

LIFE Environment and Resource Efficiency aims specifically at contributing to the implementation, updating and development of European Union environmental policy and legislation, including the integration of the environment into other policies, thereby contributing to sustainable development. Furthermore, actions financed must have a European added value and be complementary to those actions that can be financed under other European Union funds during the period 2014-20.

The priority area *Environment and Resource Efficiency* focuses on:

- developing, testing and demonstrating policy or management approaches, best practices and solutions to environmental challenges, and in support of resource efficiency-related policy and legislation, including the Roadmap to a Resource Efficient Europe.
- improving the knowledge base for the development, implementation, assessment, monitoring and evaluation of Union environmental policy and legislation, and for the assessment and monitoring of the factors, pressures and responses that impact on the environment within and outside the Union.

Identify relevant policy-makers locally, nationally and on EU level

Fifth exercise (20 minutes) – pilot or demonstration character

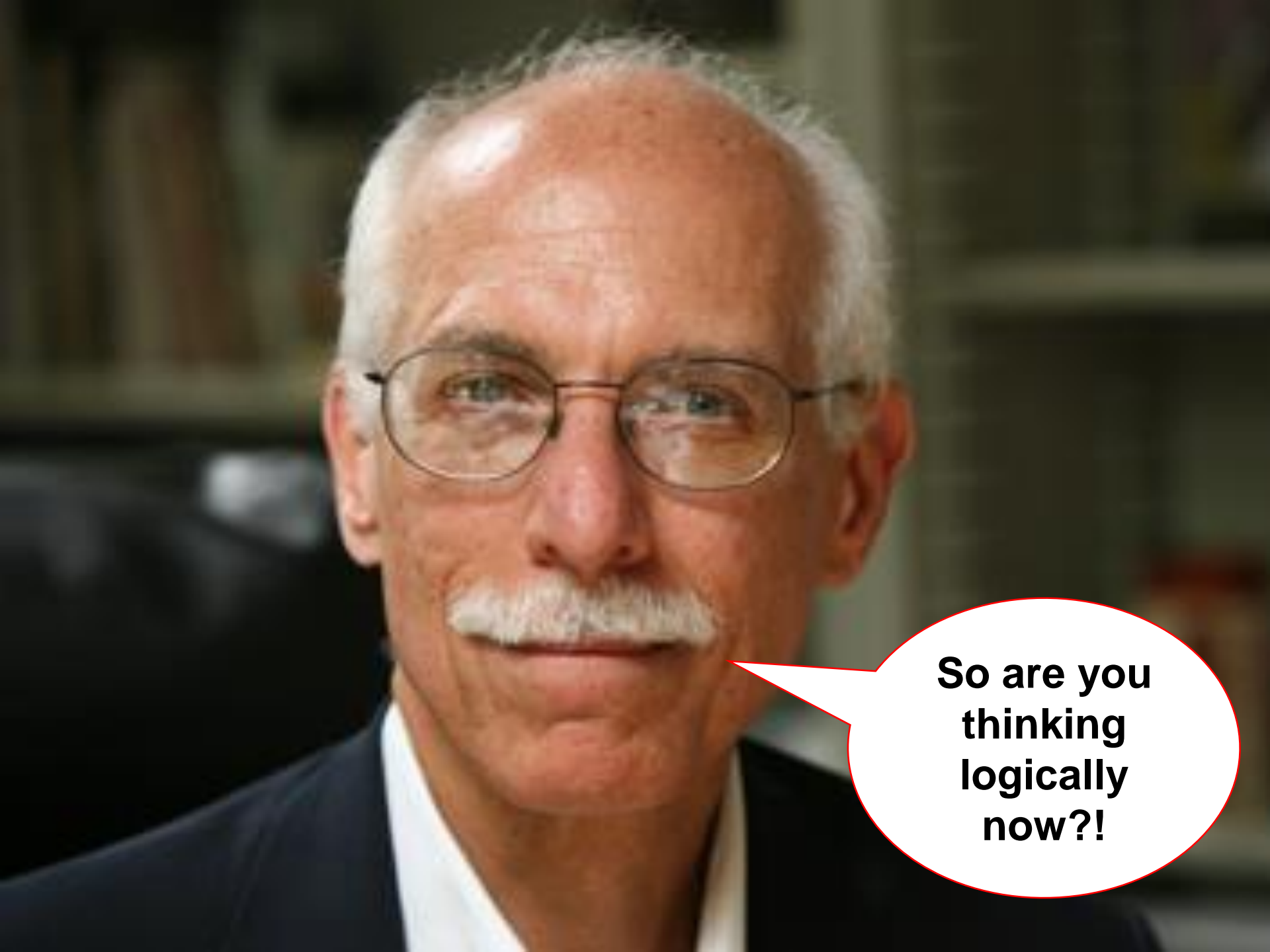
Take 10 minutes and have a new look on your technological or process focus in the project:

1. **What is the conventional solutions to the environmental problem?**
2. **What is the state-of-art solution?**
3. **How is your proposed project solution superior to the state-of-art solution?**

"pilot projects" means projects that apply a technique or method that has not been applied or tested before, or elsewhere, and that offer *potential environmental or climate advantages compared to current best practice* and that can subsequently be applied on a larger scale to similar situations;

"demonstration projects" means projects that put into practice, test, evaluate and disseminate actions, methodologies or approaches that are new or *unknown in the specific context of the project, such as the geographical, ecological, socio-economic context*, and that could be applied elsewhere in similar circumstances

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**So are you
thinking
logically
now?!**

Environmental problem			
Project topic			
Objective			
Actions and means Preparatory actions:		Partner:	Related risks:
Implementation actions:			
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Pilot/demonstration character State-of-art vs beyond State-of-Art			

SWECO

