



European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF)

Call for proposals

Flagship projects promoting a sustainable blue
economy through regional maritime cooperation in
the Atlantic, the Black Sea and the Western
Mediterranean

EMFAF-2021-PIA-FLAGSHIP

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EUROPEAN CLIMATE, INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENVIRONMENT EXECUTIVE AGENCY (CINEA)

CINEA.D – Natural Resources, Climate, Sustainable Blue Economy and Clean Energy
CINEA.D.3 – Sustainable Blue Economy

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

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0. Introduction

This is a call for proposals for EU **action grants** in the field of maritime affairs under the **European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF)**.

The regulatory framework for this EU Funding Programme is set out in:

- Regulation 2018/1046 ([EU Financial Regulation](#))
- the basic act ([2021/1139](#)¹).

The call is launched in accordance with the 2021 Work Programme² and will be managed by the **European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency (CINEA)** ('Agency').

The call covers the following **topics**:

1. **EMFAF-2021-PIA-FLAGSHIP-ATLANTIC — Innovative multi-use projects combining offshore renewable energy with other activities and/or with nature protection in the Atlantic (Topic 1)**

¹ Regulation (EU) 2020/1139 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 July 2021 establishing the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (OJ L 247, 13.7.2021, p. 1).

² Commission Implementing Decision C(2021)3870 final of 4 June 2021 concerning the adoption of the work programme for 2021 and the financing decision for the implementation of the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund.

- 2. EMFAF-2021-PIA-FLAGSHIP-BLACK — Black Sea blue economy investment and innovation capacity building pilot (Topic 2)**
- 3. EMFAF-2021-PIA-FLAGSHIP-WESTMED — Recovery of coastal and maritime tourism in the Western Mediterranean (Topic 3)**

We expect to fund at least one project per topic.

Each project application under the call must address only one of these topics. Applicants wishing to apply for more than one topic must submit a separate proposal under each topic.

We invite you to read the **call documentation** carefully, and in particular this Call Document, the Model Grant Agreement, the [EU Funding & Tenders Portal Online Manual](#) and the [EU Grants AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement](#).

These documents provide clarifications and answers to questions you may have when preparing your application:

- the [Call Document](#) outlines the:
 - background, objectives, scope, activities that can be funded and the expected results (sections 1 and 2)
 - timetable and available budget (sections 3 and 4)
 - admissibility and eligibility conditions (including mandatory documents; sections 5 and 6)
 - criteria for financial and operational capacity and exclusion (section 7)
 - evaluation and award procedure (section 8)
 - award criteria (section 9)
 - legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements (section 10)
 - how to submit an application (section 11)
- the [Online Manual](#) outlines the:
 - procedures to register and submit proposals online via the EU Funding & Tenders Portal ('Portal')
 - recommendations for the preparation of the application
- the [AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement](#) contains:
 - detailed annotations on all the provisions in the Grant Agreement you will have to sign in order to obtain the grant (*including cost eligibility, payment schedule, accessory obligations, etc.*)

You are also encouraged to visit [EMFF Projects & Results](#) to consult the list of projects funded previously.

1. Background

In May 2021, the European Commission adopted a new approach for a sustainable blue economy in the EU³ that sets out a detailed and realistic agenda for the blue economy to play a major role in achieving the European Green Deal⁴ objectives.

The optimal development of all sea-related activities in a sustainable manner calls for a coherent policy framework based on proper involvement of all stakeholders. Seas are shared among different countries so regional cooperation, including with non-EU countries, is important. Moreover, each sea basin is different. There are specific conditions, opportunities and challenges for each sea basin, which require a targeted approach.

To that end, the European Commission has developed three sea basin strategies in the Atlantic, the Black Sea and the Western Mediterranean.

Projects under this call for proposals will pilot strategic initiatives ("Flagship projects") that strengthen sea basin-level collaboration between key stakeholders in order to achieve one or more goals of the relevant sea basin strategy. The Flagship projects will contribute to the implementation of sea basin strategies and to the development of a sustainable blue economy in the EU, in line with the European Green Deal objectives.

The Atlantic Maritime Strategy

The Atlantic Maritime Strategy⁵ dates back to 2011. In July 2020, the European Commission adopted a revised action plan – the Atlantic Action plan 2.0⁶. It identifies the following four priority areas for cooperation between the four participating Member States (France, Ireland, Portugal and Spain):

- Atlantic ports as gateways and hubs for the blue economy
- Blue skills of the future and ocean literacy
- Marine renewable energy
- Healthy ocean and resilient coasts

The European Green Deal emphasises the essential role of marine renewable energy for the transition to a climate-neutral economy and for meeting the reduction by 55% of carbon emissions by 2030⁷. In November 2020, the Commission adopted a strategy for the development of offshore renewable energy in the Union⁸. The EU Atlantic area has a high natural potential for offshore wind energy, both fixed and floating, and a good natural potential for wave and tidal energy, and has developed a world-leading network of test sites especially for ocean energy. Regional cooperation under the revised Atlantic Action plan 2.0 should further contribute to unlocking the full potential of marine renewable energy.

While the developments of offshore wind in the North Sea and Baltic Sea brought up conflicting situations, notably with fishers, the situation might be different in the Atlantic (where there is more space available, and the possibility to go further offshore). However, the climate and biodiversity ambitions set out in the European Green Deal, the offshore renewable energy strategy and 2030 biodiversity strategy⁹ may mean that in the future certain maritime spaces need to be shared more than

³ [COM\(2021\)2024 final](#)

⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en

⁵ [Com\(2011\) 782 final](#)

⁶ [COM\(2020\) 329 final](#)

⁷ [COM\(2021\) 550 final](#)

⁸ [COM\(2020\) 741 final](#)

⁹ [COM/2020/380 final](#)

they are currently. Several sectors and projects have indicated the need to plan and start with a multi-use perspective as early as possible when developing offshore renewables. Such approaches can help to ensure that the development of marine renewables to supply clean energy is carried out in a way that minimises environmental impact and optimises the spatial and ecological footprint of the sector.

The Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea

In 2019, the Common Maritime Agenda (CMA) for the Black Sea¹⁰ was adopted by Romania, Bulgaria, Moldova, Ukraine, Russia, Georgia and Turkey to support the transition towards a sustainable blue economy. The CMA sets a number of priority areas for regional cooperation to achieve the following three goals:

- Healthy marine and coastal ecosystems
- A competitive, innovative and sustainable blue economy for the Black sea
- Fostering investment in the Black Sea blue economy

The implementation of the CMA will contribute to green recovery in the Black Sea by supporting emerging sectors and greening traditional ones. Innovation and digitalisation are key enablers of the green transition and the Black Sea blue economy, as recognised in the scientific pillar of the CMA, the Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda for the Black Sea¹¹ (SRIA).

SMEs are at the forefront of this agenda but face significant difficulties to access financing and get their innovative solutions to market.

To foster investment in innovative Black Sea blue economy SMEs and start-ups, and to create a supportive and entrepreneurial environment, the CMA aims to tackle specific shortcomings that are common to the participating countries, including:

- Limited knowledge and capacity of blue economy SMEs and start-ups to identify and access investment opportunities, especially for innovation and digitalisation.
- Limited regional coordination and networking between the maritime economic sectors, the research and education communities, maritime clusters and financing bodies, including private investors.
- Limited capacity of blue economy SMEs/start-ups, clusters and R&D organisations to participate in regional partnerships.
- Limited exchange of best practices among maritime economic sectors and stakeholders on access to funding and investment opportunities.

The Initiative for the sustainable development of the blue economy in the Western Mediterranean

The Initiative for the sustainable development of the blue economy in the Western Mediterranean (WestMed)¹² was launched in 2017 to support cooperation between five EU Member States (Portugal, Spain, France, Italy and Malta) and five non-EU countries (Mauritania, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya). This initiative sets the following three goals:

- A safer and more secure maritime space

¹⁰ https://ec.europa.eu/oceans-and-fisheries/ocean/sea-basins/black-sea_en

¹¹ https://ec.europa.eu/info/news/launch-european-black-sea-strategic-research-and-innovation-agenda-2019-may-08_en

¹² [COM/2017/0183 final](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/COM20170183_final)

- A smart and resilient blue economy
- A better governance of the sea

The marine and coastal tourism sector is the most important blue economy sector in the Mediterranean both in terms of GVA and jobs¹³. The COVID-19 crisis severely impacted this sector and brought indirect negative effects on other blue economy sectors. This underlined the need to strengthen resilience of the tourism sector, as protected coastal and marine ecosystems enhance the attractiveness of coastal and insular areas. The Union for the Mediterranean Ministerial Declaration on the Sustainable Blue Economy¹⁴ adopted in February 2021, calls for joint initiatives for a green recovery in the tourism sector.

The shutdown of tourism-related activities due to the pandemic has significant socio-economic consequences and resulted in limited or no income, in particular for many coastal and insular communities that are traditionally more dependent on tourism as a source of livelihood. Investment needs of the tourism ecosystem are the highest among all European industrial ecosystems.

The post-crisis period is a turning point for all tourism stakeholders. It requires a reshaping of tourism practices to mitigate the socioeconomic impacts of the pandemic, while prioritising sustainability and reducing the climate and environmental impacts of tourism. The “new tourism normality” may require possible longer-term changes in terms of physical distancing and social habits, as well as different practices in travel and mobility. The travel industry and touristic destinations should build their resilience and drive the green and digital transformations. This will require further private and public investments.

In this context, this call for proposals seeks to contribute to the implementation of the new approach to the sustainable blue economy and the framework set by the European Commission for safe tourism¹⁵. It recognises the dual challenge faced by the tourism sector for a transformation towards a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy, in line with the European Green Deal, and a digital transition as set out in the Recovery Plan for Europe¹⁶. Through a sea basin regional approach, cooperation with non-EU Mediterranean countries will boost added value by addressing common needs in a coordinated way for seamless and safe coastal and maritime tourism.

2. Objectives — Themes and priorities — Activities that can be funded — Expected impact

EMFAF-2021-PIA-FLAGSHIP-ATLANTIC: Innovative multi-use projects combining offshore renewable energy with other activities and/or with nature protection in the Atlantic (Topic 1)

Objectives

This call topic supports the Atlantic Maritime Strategy priority to develop marine renewable energy. The specific objective is to support the development and uptake of multi-use between marine renewable energies (especially emerging ones such as wave, tidal and floating wind) and other blue economy activities and/or with nature protection (e.g. marine protected areas).

Themes and priorities (scope)

¹³ [EU Blue economy report 2021](#)

¹⁴ <https://ufmsecretariat.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Declaration-UfM-Blue-Economy-EN.pdf>

¹⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_854

¹⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/recovery-plan-europe_en

Under this call Topic 1, we seek to fund projects that will develop multi-use integrated solutions to offshore renewable energy developments. Multi-use can be understood in the sense of two or more activities operating at the same place and/or one or more activities operating within a nature protection area (e.g. Natura 2000¹⁷). Ideally, projects will integrate both of these two types of multi-use.

The projects should bring a radical change from the concept of exclusive resource rights to the inclusive sharing of resources by one or more uses. The possible activities to consider for co-existence with marine renewable energy include, amongst others: sustainable aquaculture, ocean observation, fisheries, maritime transport and tourism. A nature protection area can be understood as any form of protection or restoration applied to a specific area with the necessary monitoring and control that it requires.

Projects must focus on a specific multi-use, integrated solution that is clearly explained in the proposal, including justification of the choice in terms of the expected economic, environmental and social benefits. Only activities that make a substantive contribution to environmentally sustainable objectives and that do no significant harm to any other environmental objectives will be considered in the scope of this call for proposals.

Projects and their activities must focus on the Atlantic and include at least two EU Member States in the Atlantic Maritime Strategy (France, Ireland, Portugal and Spain).

Activities that can be funded

Projects will advance multi-use, integrated offshore renewable energy solutions towards the commercial phase. Activities will vary depending on the maturity of the multi-use concept targeted in the proposal. In their proposals, applicants will describe clearly the chosen concept and its maturity level and the relevant activities they will implement to develop the solutions.

Applicants should explain in their proposal how the proposed solutions build on the results of, or will exploit synergies with, relevant EU and other projects and initiatives in the area of multi-use solutions including offshore renewable energy. Those projects include the ones reviewed in a recent technical background study published by the Commission¹⁸: MULTIFRAME, UNITED, MUSICA, MARIBE, MERMAID, TROPOS, MUSES, Space@Sea, Edulis, Wier&Wind, ORECCA, H2OCEAN and CO-EXIST.

Proposals focusing on early stage concepts will include activities to develop the concept and business case. These will include:

- Cost-benefit analysis, market study, business planning, identifying investors.
- Forming partnerships between business, investors, authorities, environmental organisations and other stakeholders, e.g. through matchmaking activities.
- Identification of sites and preparatory activities for licensing/consenting applications.

Proposals focusing on more mature concepts will include activities to demonstrate the benefits of the solution and bring it closer to market-readiness. These will include:

- Preparing a business case, highlighting the funding needed, with a view to ensuring sustainability and continuity of the pilot initiative.

¹⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/index_en.htm

¹⁸ https://cinea.ec.europa.eu/publications/best-practice-guidance-multi-use-issues-and-licensing-procedures_en

- Trials, validation, demonstration and testing of offshore technologies/devices for multi-use integrated solutions.

All proposals will include activities to monitor and improve the environmental performance of the proposed multi-use, offshore renewable energy solutions. These will include:

- Design of a multi-stakeholder and circular approach to ensure stakeholder acceptance and optimal resource use.
- Development of models to monitor the impact of the multi-use offshore renewable solutions on the surrounding marine habitats and species, in line with relevant legislation on data (e.g. INSPIRE¹⁹) and using relevant tools (e.g. EMODnet²⁰.)
- Preparation of methods to track and measure the carbon budget of the whole project.

All proposals should include additional, complementary activities (at least one) that support the main activities and the call topic objectives. Examples include:

- Stakeholder engagement, networking, awareness raising and dissemination activities.
- Pitching or other events to engage corporates and investors, such as the BlueInvest events²¹.

Proposals may include other activities, provided they are justified and in line with the call topic objectives.

Networking with other EU projects

During the lifetime of the project, a number of meetings may be organised at EU level to facilitate the exchange of experience and good practices across sea basins, to foster synergies with relevant projects from other EU programmes. Project beneficiaries are expected to participate in these meetings, which will be held in Brussels or other locations.

In particular, projects are expected to contribute to the implementation of the Atlantic Action Plan 2.0, and to participate in the task force on marine renewable energy established under Pillar III of the plan²².

Expected impact

Applicants will describe in their proposals the concrete and measurable results within the duration of the project and their expected impact, including indicators for the monitoring and measurement of progress.

Projects are expected to achieve the following impacts:

- New concepts for multi-use, offshore renewable energy solutions in the sustainable blue economy.
- A framework for integrated planning and multi-use.

¹⁹ [DIRECTIVE 2007/2/EC](#)

²⁰ <https://emodnet.eu/en>

²¹ <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/maritimeforum/en/frontpage/1451>

²² [COM\(2020\) 329 final](#)

- Increased co-location of blue economy activities for more sustainable use of marine space.
- New business and job prospects in the sustainable blue economy.
- New partnerships between the renewable energy industry and corporates/investors from other maritime sectors.
- Increased understanding of, and evidence on, the environmental and social impacts (positive and negative) of multi-use, offshore renewable energy solutions.
- Increased capacity to match renewable energy industry players with other sectors and with investors in the Atlantic area for collaboration on pilot projects.
- Sustainable new business opportunities with a clear case and strategy for continuation beyond the pilot stage.

The list of impacts is non-exhaustive and applicants are expected to include others, as appropriate for their proposal.

EMFAF-2021-PIA-FLAGSHIP-BLACK: Black Sea blue economy investment and innovation capacity building pilot (Topic 2)

Objectives

In support of the implementation of the Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea – endorsed by Bulgaria, Georgia, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Turkey and Ukraine – this call topic aims to boost innovation and digitalisation in blue economy sectors. The selected pilot project(s) will contribute to the implementation of the European Green Deal objectives, the Digital Agenda²³ and the EU Communication on Sustainable Blue Economy²⁴.

Specific objectives are:

- Strengthening the capacity of blue economy SMEs and start-ups to identify and tap into potential public/private investors.
- Improving the visibility of investment opportunities in the Black Sea blue economy and capacity of public/private investors to identify SMEs and start-ups.
- Develop stakeholder capacity to establish/enhance concrete cooperation and networking approaches and methods to improve the business environment and strengthen value chains.
- Contributing to the development of a networked, multi-stakeholder blue investment and innovation ecosystem in the Black Sea.

Themes and priorities (scope)

Proposals will bring together blue economy stakeholders in EU and eligible non-EU Black Sea countries to identify and tackle local capacity building needs to boost innovation, digitalisation and investment in the Black Sea blue economy. Proposals will seek to create a bridge between local stakeholders and activities developed at the

²³ <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en>

²⁴ [COM/2021/240 final](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/COM_2021_240_final)

level of the Black Sea CMA²⁵. In their proposals, applicants will clearly identify the local areas of the Black Sea on which the project will focus.

The scope of the call encompasses traditional and emerging blue economy sectors with high potential for the development of the sustainable blue economy in the Black Sea. Proposals should primarily focus on the following sectors identified as priorities by the CMA Steering Group: coastal and maritime tourism, fisheries and aquaculture and maritime transport. However, proposals may also consider other blue economy traditional sectors, such as ship building, as well as emerging ones such as blue biotechnology, marine renewable energies, etc. Proposals may also explore the potential for SMEs/start-ups in the development of ports as blue economy accelerators²⁶.

In their proposals, applicants should describe target sectors and justify their choice, including in terms of their contribution to sustainability and decarbonisation. Only activities that make a substantive contribution to environmentally sustainable objectives and do no significant harm to any other environmental objectives will be considered in the scope of this call for proposals.

In order to ensure the EU added value of the funded activities and to capitalise the efforts invested so far in enhancing a competitive blue economy in the Black Sea, the submitted proposals must take into due consideration the activities of those projects that already support the implementation of the CMA and that specifically focus on facilitating access to investments for Blue economy SMEs and start-ups.

Applicants will describe clearly in their proposals how they will seek to ensure complementarity and avoid unnecessary duplication with the following projects and initiatives:

- **The Black Sea Assistance Mechanism**²⁷ and notably the CMA national hubs that support local actors in implementing CMA priorities, identifying and financing relevant projects, organise ad hoc awareness raising and capacity building national events. Coordination with CMA national hubs is important to connect to the network of blue economy stakeholders they have already established.
- **The Black Sea Virtual Knowledge Centre**²⁸ and its Blue economy stakeholder community that offers a virtual meeting place to exchange information on project ideas, potential partnerships and other topics of common interest. This virtual community is in the early stage of development and may develop further services that could be complementary to the activities envisaged by this call.
- **The Black Sea CONNECT project**²⁹ which aims to involve blue economy actors in developing a shared vision and coordinated approach to implementation of the Black Sea SRIA.
- **BlueInvest**³⁰, which includes activities to facilitate investment in blue economy SMEs and start-ups across all EU sea basins, such as investment readiness coaching and matchmaking. Projects under this call will work in synergy with BlueInvest to support Black Sea SMEs/start-ups and investors in

²⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/info/news/launch-european-black-sea-strategic-research-and-innovation-agenda-2019-may-08_en

²⁶ The EMFF project “[Atlantic Smart Ports Blue Acceleration Network’ \(AspBAN\)](#)” can be taken as an example.

²⁷ <https://blackseablueeconomy.eu>

²⁸ <http://www.bsec-bsvkc.org>

²⁹ <https://connect2blacksea.org>

³⁰ <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/maritimeforum/en/frontpage/1451>

ways that are complementary to the support already available under BlueInvest for EU Black Sea countries and will seek to avoid duplication, including activities to help local stakeholders in the Black Sea to participate in BlueInvest services.

- **The Enterprise Europe Network**, which has local contact points in the Black Sea countries and offers advice and support to businesses to help them innovate, grow, internationalise, form partnerships and access finance³¹.

In addition, proposals should describe how they build on and complement other completed or ongoing relevant projects or initiatives, at international, EU, national or regional level, including those supported by EU funds and those funded/financed from other sources. Particular attention should be given to EU-funded Blue Economy cluster initiatives of relevance and relevant HORIZON 2020 projects, such as SEAS-ERA³², Black Sea HORIZON³³, B-SEENOVA³⁴, DOORS and BRIDGE-BS³⁵ as well as the Black Sea CBC Programme³⁶ and horizontal clustering actions such as DIGICIRC³⁷.

Activities that can be funded (scope)

Applicants must explain in their proposal how they will implement the targeted activities below, resulting in concrete and measurable deliverables and results within the project duration:

- Carrying out a gap assessment (e.g. SWOT analysis) to define specific needs in the local areas targeted by the proposal. The gap assessment must be conducted with relevant maritime stakeholders including business and research organisations, chambers of commerce, clusters, business hubs/accelerators and financing bodies (i.e. National Promotional Banks).
- Designing pilot capacity building activities and services that can address the identified gaps and contribute to an effective and networked blue investment and innovation ecosystem in the Black Sea. The design will also take into account best practices from other regions and sea basins. Activities should contribute to awareness raising, stakeholder engagement and community building. They may include coaching³⁸, mentoring, training, advisory services, matchmaking activities or other forms of support for cooperation among blue economy SMEs/start-ups and other stakeholders such as those mentioned above³⁹. The design will include a clear methodology and criteria to identify and select the stakeholders that will participate in the pilot activities and services.
- Testing of the identified capacity building activities and services for SMEs, start-ups, funding and finance bodies and other stakeholders in the maritime economy.
- Assessing the lessons learned, best practices and further opportunities that result from the pilot test and development of recommendations.

³¹ <https://een.ec.europa.eu/>

³² <https://www.seas-era.eu>

³³ <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/645785>

³⁴ <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/879429>

³⁵ <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101000240>

³⁶ <https://blacksea-cbc.net/projects/our-projects-2014-2020/>

³⁷ <https://digicirc.eu/>

³⁸ For any investment-readiness coaching of Bulgarian and Romanian blue economy companies, cooperation and close coordination with BlueInvest is required.

³⁹ Projects must seek complementarity with activities already provided by pan-Black Sea or EU projects and initiatives, such as those mentioned under 'Themes and priorities' for this call topic, and avoid any unnecessary duplication.

All proposals should include additional, complementary activities (at least one) that support the main activities and the call topic objectives. Examples include:

- Exploring opportunities for smart specialisation approaches in the Black Sea areas targeted by the proposal⁴⁰ as ways to support interregional partnerships and value chains in blue economy sectors;
- Increasing complementarity and synergies with relevant projects funded under other EU programmes (e.g. Horizon Europe⁴¹, INTERREG NEXT Black Sea⁴², Interregional Innovation Investment Initiative (I3)⁴³, Digital Europe⁴⁴, LIFE programme⁴⁵, European Structural and Investment Funds⁴⁶, etc.)

Proposals may include other activities, provided they are justified and in line with the call topic objectives.

Networking with other EU projects

During the lifetime of the projects financed under this topic, a number of meetings may be organised at EU level for the grant beneficiaries, in order to facilitate the exchange of experience and good practices in the Black Sea and across sea basins, to foster synergies with relevant projects from other EU programmes and to enhance the European dimension of the blue economy focus. Project beneficiaries are expected to participate in these meetings, which will be held in Brussels or other locations, or online.

Expected impact

Applicants will describe in their proposals the concrete and measurable results within the duration of the project and their expected impact, including indicators for the monitoring and measurement of progress.

Projects are expected to achieve the following impacts:

- Development of a supportive regional ecosystem with durable partnerships/network of Blue economy SMEs and start-ups, research organisations, maritime clusters, financing bodies, public/ private investors and other relevant members.
- New, applicable and replicable methods/approaches to concretely support innovation in the blue economy in the Black sea.
- Improved visibility of the role of, and funding opportunities offered by, various public/private institutions.
- Increased number of blue economy SMEs/start-ups actively seeking and applying for financial investment opportunities (e.g. BlueInvest).
- Increased capacity of SMEs and start-ups, research organisations, maritime

⁴⁰ The smart specialisation approach has progressively evolved from an ex-ante conditionality for using the European Regional and Development Funds in the 2014-2020 EU budget period to recognition as an effective place-based, bottom up process that permanently involves local public/private stakeholders in the identification of regional and national sectors with a competitive advantage, in order to prioritise research and innovation investments accordingly and to increase their impact through national and interregional initiatives and partnerships.

⁴¹ https://ec.europa.eu/info/research-and-innovation/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe_en

⁴² <https://blacksea-cbc.net/>

⁴³ https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/themes/research-innovation/i3/

⁴⁴ <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/activities/digital-programme>

⁴⁵ https://cinea.ec.europa.eu/life_en

⁴⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/funding/

clusters to bring research and innovation results to the market.

The list of impacts is non-exhaustive and applicants are expected to include others, as appropriate for their proposal.

EMFAF-2021-PIA-FLAGSHIP-WESTMED: Recovery of coastal and maritime tourism in the Western Mediterranean (Topic 3)

Objectives

In line with the priorities of the European Commission, this call topic aims to strengthen the competitiveness and sustainability of the coastal and maritime tourism ecosystem in the Western Mediterranean, as part of a smart and resilient blue economy. This call topic aims at preserving the marine and coastal environment and marine cultural heritage, and contributing to the attractiveness of coastal areas as a unique asset for competitiveness in the Mediterranean.

The action particularly aims at:

- Supporting tourism stakeholders to tap into the growing ecotourism niche tourism market.
- Boosting innovation and digitalisation in the tourism sector, thus increasing its contribution to economic growth and jobs in the Mediterranean.
- Improving the business environment for tourism SMEs, mobilising private-public investments, enhancing socio-economic and market intelligence, diversifying and increasing the visibility of the tourism offer and products.

Themes & priorities (scope)

This call topic seeks to support projects that will develop a multidimensional and integrated approach to re-building coastal and maritime tourism (including cruise tourism) in the Western Mediterranean. Proposals will include non-EU countries participating in the initiative for the sustainable development of the blue economy in the Western Mediterranean to ensure a coordinated approach at sea basin level.

Proposals must address at least one of the following themes:

1. Innovation in destination management

Proposals will address the following priorities to the maximum extent possible:

- Strategic management of the destination with a long-term orientation and better addressing environmental and social sustainability at the destination level.
- Creating value and making the destinations competitive and profitable, adjusted to the 'new normality' of the COVID era.
- Conservation of cultural heritage and natural values.
- Monitoring the competitiveness and sustainability of the destination.
- Promoting synergies between tourism and other productive activities, notably through participation of governmental and other public bodies, trade associations, local government, businesses, citizen representatives, local communities, cultural associations, promotion agencies.

- Effective marketing, including promoting cultural authenticity and natural assets.
- Accelerating the digital transformation processes including tourism data management and digital skills.

2. Design of smart eco-tourism packages

Proposals will address the following priorities to the maximum extent possible:

- Stimulating new business opportunities which directly or indirectly support ecotourism product experiences in and around protected areas.
- Reducing the ecological footprint and strengthening the circular economy approach – notably in coastal cities and on islands.
- Strengthening destinations through the collaboration of local clusters.
- Promoting less known areas and prolonging the tourist season.
- Providing visitors with a high-quality experience.
- Integrating different product components (e.g. accommodation, meals, activities, transport) and suppliers (tour operators, lodging, restaurants, canteens, etc.)

For all of the above themes, applicants should clearly demonstrate how the proposal will:

- Contribute to the overall resilience in the tourism sector.
- Contribute to the objectives of the sea basin approach in the Western Mediterranean.
- Build on, complement and valorise the results of relevant projects, overarching initiatives, networks and cooperation frameworks at European and Mediterranean level.

Activities that can be funded

Applicants will explain clearly in their proposal how they will implement, to the maximum extent possible, the following activities within the project duration (NB: this list is non-exhaustive):

- Establishment of multi-stakeholder partnerships/hubs/networks/clusters to tackle the chosen theme(s) and priorities, as outlined above, in a coordinated and collaborative way. Participating stakeholders should include entities from at least four Western Mediterranean countries, and include both EU and non-EU Western Mediterranean countries. Stakeholders from other EU Mediterranean Member States may additionally participate.
- Development of guidelines, business models and action plans for various stakeholders in the maritime and coastal tourism communities (e.g. regions, cities, businesses across the whole value chain, etc.) focusing on the chosen theme(s) and priorities as outlined above.
- Design and testing of tools to assess and measure environmental impacts and monitor the implementation of sustainable and circular approaches and indicators/standards for sustainable tourism practices.

- Design and testing of new tourism products corresponding to the chosen theme(s) and priorities above.
- Awareness raising and capacity building activities for stakeholders in the coastal and maritime tourism sectors to support uptake of new models and approaches.
- Development of policy recommendations for the chosen theme(s), based on lessons learned during project implementation and recommendations of mechanisms to ensure future sustainability and updating of activities beyond the project duration.
- Forecasting and monitoring management plans and their targets, including upgrading skills and training public and private operators.
- Engaging tourism destination observatories.
- Aligning resource management among national, regional and local planning frameworks.

All proposals should include additional, complementary activities (at least one) that support the main activities and the call topic objectives. Examples include:

- Activities to facilitate exchange and liaison with tourism organisations and networks at Mediterranean and European level, regional tourism observatories, fora, clusters, task forces and other ongoing projects.
- Activities to support regional and national sustainable tourism policies, including stakeholder and community involvement.
- Awareness raising and educational workshops, conferences, seminars, webinars, etc. for tourism stakeholders.
- B2B meetings and matchmaking activities for private sector and relevant stakeholders to support innovative solutions.
- Activities to boost customer demand for innovative tourism products (e.g. ecotourism or digital services).

Networking with other EU projects

During the lifetime of the projects financed under this topic, a number of meetings may be organised at EU level for the grant beneficiaries to facilitate the exchange of experience and good practices across sea basins, to foster synergies with relevant projects from other EU programmes and to enhance the European dimension of the blue economy focus. Project beneficiaries are expected to participate in these meetings, which will be held in Brussels or other locations.

Expected impact

Applicants will describe in their proposals the concrete and measurable results within the duration of the project and their expected impact beyond the duration of the project, including indicators for the monitoring and measurement of progress.

Projects are expected to achieve the following impacts to the maximum extent possible in line with the proposed activities:

- Durable partnerships/networks focusing on the chosen theme(s) involving EU and non-EU Western Mediterranean countries, and potentially including other EU Mediterranean Member States.

- New and applicable policy pathways and recommendations or action plans to support public authorities (national and regional) and services.
- Resumption of tourism services in coastal and insular territories incorporating new, innovative services for the whole value chain and for destinations.
- Reshaped and strengthened management practices, in line with EU policy priorities including a green, digital and circular economy approach.
- New public/private partnerships, start-ups, investments and job creation.
- New eco-tourism packages promoting cross border and interregional cooperation, with replication potential across the Mediterranean.
- Increased touristic activities that involve local enterprises and coastal communities.
- Increased digitalisation of the maritime and coastal tourism sector in the Western Mediterranean.
- Increased awareness of the Western Mediterranean as a sustainable, high quality and safe destination.
- Diversification of, and less seasonally dependent, maritime and coastal tourism products offered in the Western Mediterranean with a green, digital and circular economy approach.

The list of impacts is non-exhaustive and applicants are expected to include others, as appropriate for their proposal.

3. Available budget

The available call budget is **EUR 5 441 293**. This budget might be increased by maximum 20%.

Specific budget information per topic can be found in the table below.

Topic	Topic budget
1 — Innovative multi-use projects combining offshore renewable energy with other activities and/or with nature protection in the Atlantic	EUR 2 150 000
2 — Black Sea blue economy investment and innovation capacity building pilot	EUR 1 575 000
3 – Recovery of coastal and maritime tourism in the Western Mediterranean	EUR 1 716 293

We expect to fund at least one project per topic, provided that for each topic at least one proposal reaches a sufficient quality score following the evaluation of the award criteria.

We reserve the right not to award all available funds or to redistribute them between the call priorities, depending on the proposals received and the results of the evaluation.

4. Timetable and deadlines

Timetable and deadlines (indicative)	
Call opening:	28 September 2021
<u>Deadline for submission:</u>	<u>12 January 2022 – 17:00:00 CET</u> (Brussels)
Evaluation:	January – March 2022
Information on evaluation results:	May – July 2022
GA signature:	September – October 2022

5. Admissibility and documents

Proposals must be submitted before the **call deadline** (see *timetable section 4*).

Proposals must be submitted **electronically** via the Funding & Tenders Portal Electronic Submission System (accessible via the Topic page in the [Search Funding & Tenders](#) section). Paper submissions are NOT possible.

Proposals (including annexes and supporting documents) must be submitted using the forms provided *inside* the Submission System (⚠ NOT the documents available on the Topic page — they are only for information).

Proposals must be **complete** and contain all the requested information and all required annexes and supporting documents:

- Application Form Part A — contains administrative information about the participants (future coordinator, beneficiaries and affiliated entities) and the summarised budget for the project (*to be filled in directly online*)
- Application Form Part B — contains the technical description of the project (*to be downloaded from the Portal Submission System, completed and then assembled and re-uploaded*)
- **mandatory annexes and supporting documents** (*to be uploaded*):
 - detailed budget table: not applicable
 - CVs of core project team: not applicable
 - activity reports of last year: not applicable
 - list of previous projects (key projects for the last 4 years) (*template available in Part B*)

A detailed budget table is available for information on [Portal Reference Documents](#). You are NOT obliged to use it to prepare your project budget, nor upload it with your application, but you will be requested to provide it later on, if you are selected for funding.

Please note that the amounts entered into the summarised budget table (filled in directly online) must correspond to the amounts calculated in the detailed budget table. In case of discrepancies, the amounts in the online summarised budget table will prevail.

At proposal submission, you will have to confirm that you have the **mandate to act** for all applicants. Moreover you will have to confirm that the information in the application is correct and complete and that the participants comply with the conditions for receiving EU funding (especially eligibility, financial and operational capacity, exclusion, etc). Before signing the grant, each beneficiary and affiliated entity will have to confirm this again by signing a declaration of honour (DoH). Proposals without full support will be rejected.

Your application must be **readable, accessible and printable**.

Proposals are limited to maximum **60 pages** (Part B). Evaluators will not consider any additional pages.

You may be asked at a later stage for further documents (*for legal entity validation, financial capacity check, bank account validation, etc*).

 For more information about the submission process (including IT aspects), consult the [Online Manual](#).

6. Eligibility

Eligible participants (eligible countries)

In order to be eligible, the applicants (beneficiaries and affiliated entities) must:

- be legal entities (public or private bodies)
- be established in one of the eligible countries, i.e.:
 - EU Member States (including overseas countries and territories (OCTs))
 - non-EU countries that are part of the sea basin strategies targeted in this call for proposals:
 - Moldova, Ukraine, Russia, Georgia and Turkey **in Topic 2 “Black Sea blue economy investment and innovation capacity building pilot”**
 - Mauritania, Morocco, and Algeria, Tunisia and Libya **in Topic 3 “Recovery of coastal and maritime tourism in the Western Mediterranean”**

Beneficiaries and affiliated entities must register in the [Participant Register](#) — before submitting the proposal — and will have to be validated by the Central Validation Service (REA Validation). For the validation, they will be requested to upload documents showing legal status and origin.

Other entities may participate in other consortium roles, such as associated partners, subcontractors, third parties giving in-kind contributions, etc. (*see section 13*).

Specific cases


Exceptional funding — Entities from countries mentioned in the work programme (if any) are only exceptionally eligible, if the granting authority considers their participation essential for the implementation of the action.

Natural persons — Natural persons are NOT eligible (with the exception of self-employed persons, i.e. sole traders, where the company does not have legal personality separate from that of the natural person).

International organisations — International organisations are eligible. The rules on eligible countries do not apply to them.

Entities without legal personality — Entities which do not have legal personality under their national law may exceptionally participate, provided that their representatives have the capacity to undertake legal obligations on their behalf, and offer guarantees for the protection of the EU financial interests equivalent to that offered by legal persons⁴⁷.

EU bodies — EU bodies (with the exception of the European Commission Joint Research Centre) can NOT be part of the consortium.

Associations and interest groupings — Entities composed of members may participate as 'sole beneficiaries' or 'beneficiaries without legal personality'⁴⁸.  Please note that if the action will be implemented by the members, they should also participate (either as beneficiaries or as affiliated entities, otherwise their costs will NOT be eligible).

EU restrictive measures — Special rules apply for certain entities (e.g. *entities subject to [EU restrictive measures](#) under Article 29 of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU) and Article 215 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU)*⁴⁹ and entities covered by Commission Guidelines No [2013/C 205/05](#)⁵⁰). Such entities are not eligible to participate in any capacity, including as beneficiaries, affiliated entities, associated partners, subcontractors or recipients of financial support to third parties (if any).

 For more information, see [Rules for Legal Entity Validation, LEAR Appointment and Financial Capacity Assessment](#).

Consortium composition

1. EMFAF-2021-PIA-FLAGSHIP-ATLANTIC (Topic 1): Innovative multi-use projects combining offshore renewable energy with other activities and/or with nature protection in the Atlantic

Proposals must be submitted by a consortium of at least two applicants (beneficiaries; not affiliated entities), which complies with the following conditions:

- Minimum two entities from two different eligible EU Member States participating in the Atlantic Maritime Strategy; and
- At least one for-profit, private-sector business entity in the offshore renewable energy sector.

The coordinator must be established in an EU Member State participating in the Atlantic Maritime Strategy (France, Ireland, Portugal and Spain).

2. EMFAF-2021-PIA-BLACK: Black Sea blue economy investment and innovation capacity building pilot (Topic 2)

Proposals must be submitted by a consortium of at least three applicants (beneficiaries; not affiliated entities), which complies with the following condition:

- Minimum three entities, including at least two eligible non-EU countries participating in the CMA for the Black Sea.

The coordinator must be established in an EU Member State participating in the

⁴⁷ See Article 197(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

⁴⁸ For the definitions, see Articles 187(2) and 197(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

⁴⁹ Please note that the EU Official Journal contains the official list and, in case of conflict, its content prevails over that of the [EU Sanctions Map](#).

⁵⁰ Commission guidelines No [2013/C 205/05](#) on the eligibility of Israeli entities and their activities in the territories occupied by Israel since June 1967 for grants, prizes and financial instruments funded by the EU from 2014 onwards (OJEU C 205 of 19.07.2013, pp. 9-11).

Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea (Bulgaria and Romania).

3. EMFAF-2021-PIA-WESTMED: Recovery of coastal and maritime tourism in the Western Mediterranean (Topic 3)

Proposals must be submitted by a consortium of at least four applicants (beneficiaries; not affiliated entities), which complies with the following conditions:

- Minimum four entities from four different eligible countries, including at least two EU Member States and one eligible non-EU country participating in the Initiative for the sustainable development of the blue economy in the Western Mediterranean;
- At least one private-sector business entity or association in the coastal and maritime tourism sector; and
- At least one local/regional/city level public authority with competence relating to coastal and maritime tourism sector activities.

The coordinator must be established in an EU Member State participating in the Initiative for the sustainable development of the blue economy in the Western Mediterranean (Portugal, Spain, France, Italy and Malta).

Eligible activities

Eligible activities are the ones set out in section two above.

Projects should take into account the results of projects supported by other EU funding programmes. The complementarities must be described in the project proposals (Part B of the Application Form).

Projects must comply with EU policy interests and priorities (*such as environment, social, security, industrial and trade policy, etc.*)

Financial support to third parties is not allowed.

Geographic location (target countries)

Proposed activities must relate to the sea basin targeted by the call topic:

- **EMFAF-2021-PIA-FLAGSHIP-ATLANTIC (Topic 1)**: the Atlantic
- **EMFAF-2021-PIA-FLAGSHIP-BLACK (Topic 2)**: the Black Sea
- **EMFAF-2021-PIA- FLAGSHIP-WESTMED (Topic 3)**: the Western Mediterranean

Proposals can focus on a part/sub-region of these sea basins.

Activities should normally relate to the EU waters, but may extend into neighbouring waters, if this is necessary for the implementation of the projects (in view of their nature and their objectives).

Duration

For Topic 1, Topic 2, and Topic 3, projects should normally range between 24 and 36 months (extensions are possible, if duly justified and through an amendment).

Project budget

Project budgets (maximum grant amount) are expected to range between:

- EMFAF-2021-PIA-FLAGSHIP-ATLANTIC (Topic 1) – EUR 700 000 and EUR 1 000 000 per project
- EMFAF-2021-PIA-FLAGSHIP-BLACK (Topic 2) – EUR 300 000 and EUR 500 000 per project
- EMFAF-2021-PIA-FLAGSHIP-WESTMED (Topic 3) – EUR 700 000 and EUR 1 000 000 per project

This does not preclude the submission/selection of proposals requesting other amounts.

Ethics

Projects must comply with:

- highest ethical standards and
- applicable EU, international and national law (including Directive 98/58⁵¹, Regulation 1099/2009⁵², and Regulation (889/2008⁵³).

Projects must pay particular attention to the principle of proportionality, the need to ensure protection of the environment and high levels of animal welfare and human health protection.

Applicants must show in their application that they respect ethical principles and applicable regulatory framework.

Projects involving ethics issues may be made subject to specific ethics rules.

7. Financial and operational capacity and exclusion

Financial capacity

Applicants must have **stable and sufficient resources** to successfully implement the projects and contribute their share. Organisations participating in several projects must have sufficient capacity to implement all these projects.

The financial capacity check will be carried out on the basis of the documents you will be requested to upload in the [Participant Register](#) during grant preparation (*e.g. profit and loss account and balance sheet, business plan, audit report produced by an approved external auditor, certifying the accounts for the last closed financial year, etc*). The analysis will be based on neutral financial indicators, but will also take into account other aspects, such as dependency on EU funding and deficit and revenue in previous years.

The check will normally be done for all beneficiaries, except:

- public bodies (entities established as public body under national law, including local, regional or national authorities) or international organisations
- if the individual requested grant amount is not more than EUR 60 000.

If needed, it may also be done for affiliated entities.

⁵¹ Council Directive 98/58/EC of 20 July 1998 concerning the protection of animals kept for farming purposes (OJ L 221, 8.8.1998, p. 23).

⁵² Council Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009 of 24 September 2009 on the protection of animals at the time of killing (OJ L 303, 18.11.2009, p. 1).

⁵³ Commission Regulation (EC) No 889/2008 of 5 September 2008 laying down detailed rules for the implementation of Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007 on organic production and labelling of organic products with regard to organic production, labelling and control (OJ L 250, 18.9.2008, p. 1).

If we consider that your financial capacity is not satisfactory, we may require:

- further information
- an enhanced financial responsibility regime, i.e. joint and several responsibility for all beneficiaries or joint and several liability of affiliated entities (*see below, section 10*)
- prefinancing paid in instalments
- (one or more) prefinancing guarantees (*see below, section 10*)

or

- propose no prefinancing
- request that you are replaced or, if needed, reject the entire proposal.



For more information, see [Rules for Legal Entity Validation, LEAR Appointment and Financial Capacity Assessment](#).

Operational capacity

Applicants must have the **know-how, qualifications** and **resources** to successfully implement the projects and contribute their share (including sufficient experience in projects of comparable size and nature).

This capacity will be assessed together with the 'Quality' award criterion, on the basis of the competence and experience of the applicants and their project teams, including operational resources (human, technical and other) or, exceptionally, the measures proposed to obtain it by the time the task implementation starts.

If the evaluation of the award criterion is positive, the applicants are considered to have sufficient operational capacity.

Applicants will have to show their capacity via the following information:

- general profiles (qualifications and experiences) of the staff responsible for managing and implementing the project
- description of the consortium participants
- list of previous projects (key projects for the last 4 years).

Additional supporting documents may be requested, if needed to confirm the operational capacity of any applicant.

Public bodies, Member State organisations and international organisations are exempted from the operational capacity check.

Exclusion

Applicants which are subject to an **EU exclusion decision** or in one of the following **exclusion situations** that bar them from receiving EU funding can NOT participate⁵⁴:

- bankruptcy, winding up, affairs administered by the courts, arrangement with creditors, suspended business activities or other similar procedures (including procedures for persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts)
- in breach of social security or tax obligations (including if done by persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts)

⁵⁴ See Articles 136 and 141 of EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

- guilty of grave professional misconduct⁵⁵ (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- committed fraud, corruption, links to a criminal organisation, money laundering, terrorism-related crimes (including terrorism financing), child labour or human trafficking (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- shown significant deficiencies in complying with main obligations under an EU procurement contract, grant agreement, prize, expert contract, or similar (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- guilty of irregularities within the meaning of Article 1(2) of Regulation No [2988/95](#) (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- created under a different jurisdiction with the intent to circumvent fiscal, social or other legal obligations in the country of origin or created another entity with this purpose (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant).

Applicants will also be refused if it turns out that⁵⁶:

- during the award procedure they misrepresented information required as a condition for participating or failed to supply that information
- they were previously involved in the preparation of the call and this entails a distortion of competition that cannot be remedied otherwise (conflict of interest).

8. Evaluation and award procedure

The proposals will have to follow the **standard submission and evaluation procedure** (one-stage submission + one-step evaluation.)

An **evaluation committee** will assess all applications. Proposals will first be checked for formal requirements (admissibility, and eligibility, *see sections 5 and 6*). Proposals found admissible and eligible will be evaluated (for each topic) against the operational capacity and award criteria (*see sections 7 and 9*) and then ranked according to their score.

For proposals with the same score (within a topic or budget envelope) a **priority order** will be determined according to the following approach:


Successively for every group of *ex aequo* proposals, starting with the highest scored group, and continuing in descending order:

⁵⁵ Professional misconduct includes: violation of ethical standards of the profession, wrongful conduct with impact on professional credibility, false declarations/misrepresentation of information, participation in a cartel or other agreement distorting competition, violation of IPR, attempting to influence decision-making processes or obtain confidential information from public authorities to gain advantage.

⁵⁶ See Article 141 EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

- 1) Projects focusing on a theme and/or priority (as indicated in section 2) that is not otherwise covered by higher ranked projects will be considered to have the highest priority.
- 2) The ex aequo proposals within the same topic will be prioritised according to the scores they have been awarded for the award criterion 'Relevance'. When these scores are equal, priority will be based on their scores for the criterion 'Impact'. When these scores are equal, priority will be based on their scores for the criterion 'Quality'.
- 3) If this does not allow to determine the priority, a further prioritisation can be done by considering the overall project portfolio and the creation of positive synergies between projects, or other factors related to the objectives of the call. These factors will be documented in the panel report.
- 4) After that, the remainder of the available call budget will be used to fund projects across the different topics in order to ensure a balanced spread of the geographical and thematic coverage and while respecting to the maximum possible extent the order of merit based on the evaluation of the award criteria.

All proposals will be informed about the evaluation result (**evaluation result letter**). Successful proposals will be invited for grant preparation; the other ones will be put on the reserve list or rejected.

 No commitment for funding — Invitation to grant preparation does NOT constitute a formal commitment for funding. We will still need to make various legal checks before grant award: *legal entity validation, financial capacity, exclusion check, etc.*

Grant preparation will involve a dialogue in order to fine-tune technical or financial aspects of the project and may require extra information from your side. It may also include adjustments to the proposal to address recommendations of the evaluation committee or other concerns. Compliance will be a pre-condition for signing the grant.

If you believe that the evaluation procedure was flawed, you can submit a **complaint** (following the deadlines and procedures set out in the evaluation result letter). Please note that notifications which have not been opened within 10 days after sending are considered to have been accessed and that deadlines will be counted from opening/access (*see also [Funding & Tenders Portal Terms and Conditions](#)*). Please also be aware that for complaints submitted electronically, there may be character limitations.

9. Award criteria

The **award criteria** for this call are as follows:

- **Relevance:**
 - clarity and consistency of project, objectives and planning; extent to which they match the themes and priorities, and objectives of the call topic; contribution to the EU strategic and legislative context, including to the objectives of sustainable blue economy and the sea basin strategies or initiatives in the sea basin targeted by the call topic⁵⁷
 - identification of specific needs/challenges of the policy domains/sea basins/areas targeted in the call; European/trans-national dimension

⁵⁷ The [Atlantic Maritime Strategy](#), the [Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea](#), the [Initiative for the sustainable blue economy in the Western Mediterranean](#).

- extent to which the proposal differentiates from and complements other initiatives in the field and provides added value; quality of proposed coordination and support measures; potential to develop mutual trust/cross-border cooperation

(10 points)

- **Quality:** quality and effectiveness of the methodology for implementing the project (concept and methodology, management, procedures, timetable, risks and risk management, monitoring and evaluation); feasibility of the project within the proposed time frame; cost effectiveness (sufficient/appropriate budget for proper implementation; best value for money); quality of the consortium (if applicable) and project teams; appropriate procedures and problem-solving mechanisms for cooperating within the project teams and consortium

(10 points)

- **Impact:**
 - extent to which the outputs of the project contribute to each of the expected impacts of the call topic; suitability and quality of the measures to maximise expected outcomes and impacts
 - possibility to use/transfer the outcomes to other countries/regions; appropriateness of the dissemination and exploitation plan, including communication activities and, if applicable, measures linked to intellectual property and knowledge protection and regulatory issues; sustainability of results after EU funding ends
 - ambition and expected long-term impact of results on target groups/general public

(10 points).

Award criteria	Minimum pass score	Maximum score
Relevance	6	10
Quality	6	10
Impact	6	10
Overall (pass) scores	21	30

Maximum points: 30 points.

Individual thresholds per criterion: 6/10, 6/10 and 6/10 points.

Overall threshold: 21 points.

Proposals that pass the individual thresholds AND the overall threshold will be considered for funding — within the limits of the available call budget. Other proposals will be rejected.

10. Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements

If you pass evaluation, your project will be invited for grant preparation, where you will be asked to prepare the Grant Agreement together with the EU Project Officer.

This Grant Agreement will set the framework for your grant and its terms and conditions, in particular concerning deliverables, reporting and payments.

The Model Grant Agreement that will be used (and all other relevant templates and guidance documents) can be found on [Portal Reference Documents](#).

Starting date and project duration

The project starting date and duration will be fixed in the Grant Agreement (*Data Sheet, point 1*). Normally the starting date will be after grant signature. Retroactive application can be granted exceptionally for duly justified reasons — but never earlier than the proposal submission date.

Project duration: depending on the topic (see section 6), between 24 and 36 months (extensions are possible, if duly justified and through an amendment).

Milestones and deliverables

The milestones and deliverables for each project will be managed through the Portal Grant Management System and will be reflected in Annex 1 of the Grant Agreement.

The following deliverables will be mandatory for all projects:

- a policy brief at the end of each reporting period
- a project factsheet at the beginning of the project

Form of grant, funding rate and maximum grant amount

The grant parameters (*maximum grant amount, funding rate, total eligible costs, etc.*) will be fixed in the Grant Agreement (*Data Sheet, point 3 and art 5*).

Project budget (maximum grant amount): *see section 6 above*. The grant awarded may be lower than the amount requested.

The grant will be a budget-based mixed actual cost grant (actual costs, with unit cost and flat-rate elements). This means that it will reimburse ONLY certain types of costs (eligible costs) and costs that were *actually* incurred for your project (NOT the *budgeted* costs). For unit costs and flat-rates, you can charge the amounts calculated as explained in the Grant Agreement (*see art 6 and Annex 2 and 2a*).

The costs will be reimbursed at the funding rate fixed in the Grant Agreement (**80%**).

Grants may NOT produce a profit (i.e. surplus of revenues + EU grant over costs). For-profit organisations must declare their revenues and, if there is a profit, we will deduct it from the final grant amount (*see art 22.3*).

Moreover, please be aware that the final grant amount may be reduced in case of non-compliance with the Grant Agreement (*e.g. improper implementation, breach of obligations, etc.*)

Budget categories and cost eligibility rules

The budget categories and cost eligibility rules are fixed in the Grant Agreement (*Data Sheet, point 3 and art 6*).

Budget categories for this call:

- A. Personnel costs
 - A.1 Employees, A.2 Natural persons under direct contract, A.3 Seconded persons
 - A.4 SME owners and natural person beneficiaries
- B. Subcontracting costs
- C. Purchase costs
 - C.1 Travel and subsistence
 - C.2 Equipment
 - C.3 Other goods, works and services
- E. Indirect costs

Specific cost eligibility conditions for this call:

- personnel costs:
 - SME owner/natural person unit cost⁵⁸: Yes
- travel and subsistence unit cost⁵⁹: Yes
- equipment costs: depreciation
- other cost categories:
 - costs for financial support to third parties: not allowed
- indirect cost flat-rate: 7% of the eligible direct costs (categories A-D, except volunteers costs and exempted specific cost categories, if any)
- VAT: non-deductible VAT is eligible (but please note that since 2013 VAT paid by beneficiaries that are public bodies acting as public authority is NOT eligible)
- other:
 - in-kind contributions for free are allowed, but cost-neutral, i.e. they cannot be declared as cost
 - kick off meeting: costs for kick off meeting organised by the granting authority are eligible (travel costs for maximum 2 persons, return ticket to Brussels and accommodation for one night) only if the meeting takes place after the project starting date set out in the Grant Agreement; the starting date can be changed through an amendment, if needed
 - project websites: communication costs for presenting the project on the participants' websites or social media accounts are eligible; costs for *separate* project websites are not eligible
- other ineligible costs: the GA specifies other non-eligible costs under article 6.3

Reporting and payment arrangements

⁵⁸ Commission [Decision](#) of 20 October 2020 authorising the use of unit costs for the personnel costs of the owners of small and medium-sized enterprises and beneficiaries that are natural persons not receiving a salary for the work carried out by themselves under an action or work programme (C(2020)7715).

⁵⁹ Commission [Decision](#) of 12 January 2021 authorising the use of unit costs for travel, accommodation and subsistence costs under an action or work programme under the 2021-2027 multi-annual financial framework (C(2021)35).


The reporting and payment arrangements are fixed in the Grant Agreement (*Data Sheet, point 4 and art 21 and 22*).

After grant signature, you will normally receive a **prefinancing** to start working on the project (float of normally **40%** of the maximum grant amount; exceptionally less or no prefinancing). The prefinancing will be paid 30 days from entry into force/financial guarantee (if required) — whichever is the latest.

There will be one or more **interim payments** (with detailed cost reporting).

Payment of the balance: At the end of the project, we will calculate your final grant amount. If the total of earlier payments is higher than the final grant amount, we will ask you (your coordinator) to pay back the difference (recovery).

All payments will be made to the coordinator.

 Please be aware that payments will be automatically lowered if one of your consortium members has outstanding debts towards the EU (granting authority or other EU bodies). Such debts will be offset by us — in line with the conditions set out in the Grant Agreement (*see art 22*).

Please also note that you are responsible for keeping records on all the work done and the costs declared.

Prefinancing guarantees

If a prefinancing guarantee is required, it will be fixed in the Grant Agreement (*Data Sheet, point 4*). The amount will be set during grant preparation and it will normally be equal or lower than the prefinancing for your grant.

The guarantee should be in euro and issued by an approved bank/financial institution established in an EU Member State. If you are established in a non-EU country and would like to provide a guarantee from a bank/financial institution in your country, please contact us (this may be exceptionally accepted, if it offers equivalent security).

Amounts blocked in bank accounts will NOT be accepted as financial guarantees.

Prefinancing guarantees are formally NOT linked to individual consortium members, which means that you are free to organise how to provide the guarantee amount (*by one or several beneficiaries, for the overall amount or several guarantees for partial amounts, by the beneficiary concerned or by another beneficiary, etc*). It is however important that the requested amount is covered and that the guarantee(s) are sent to us in time to make the prefinancing (scanned copy via Portal AND original by post).

If agreed with us, the bank guarantee may be replaced by a guarantee from a third party.

The guarantee will be released at the end of the grant, in accordance with the conditions laid down in the Grant Agreement.

Certificates

Depending on the type of action, size of grant amount and type of beneficiaries, you may be requested to submit different certificates. The types, schedules and thresholds for each certificate are fixed in the Grant Agreement (*Data Sheet, point 4 and art 24*).

Liability regime for recoveries

The liability regime for recoveries will be fixed in the Grant Agreement (*Data Sheet*

point 4.4 and art 22).

For beneficiaries, it is one of the following:

- limited joint and several liability with individual ceilings — *each beneficiary up to their maximum grant amount*
 - unconditional joint and several liability — *each beneficiary up to the maximum grant amount for the action*
- or
- individual financial responsibility — *each beneficiary only for their own debts.*

In addition, the granting authority may require joint and several liability of affiliated entities (with their beneficiary).

Provisions concerning the project implementation

Security rules: *see Model Grant Agreement (art 13 and Annex 5)*

Ethics rules: *see Model Grant Agreement (art 14 and Annex 5)*

IPR rules: *see Model Grant Agreement (art 16 and Annex 5):*

- rights of use on results: Yes

Communication, dissemination and visibility of funding: *see Model Grant Agreement (art 17 and Annex 5):*

- communication and dissemination plan: Yes
- additional communication and dissemination activities: Yes

Specific rules for carrying out the action: *see Model Grant Agreement (art 18 and Annex 5):*

- specific rules for blending operations: No

Other specificities

n/a

Non-compliance and breach of contract

The Grant Agreement (chapter 5) provides for the measures we may take in case of breach of contract (and other non-compliance issues).



For more information, see [AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement](#).

11. How to submit an application

All proposals must be submitted directly online via the Funding & Tenders Portal Electronic Submission System. Paper applications are NOT accepted.

Submission is a **2-step process**:

a) create a user account and register your organisation

To use the Submission System (the only way to apply), all participants need to [create an EU Login user account](#).

Once you have an EULogin account, you can [register your organisation](#) in the Participant Register. When your registration is finalised, you will receive a 9-digit participant identification code (PIC).

b) **submit the proposal**

Access the Electronic Submission System via the Topic page in the [Search Funding & Tenders](#) section (or, for calls sent by invitation to submit a proposal, through the link provided in the invitation letter).

Submit your proposal in 3 parts, as follows:

- Part A includes administrative information about the applicant organisations (future coordinator, beneficiaries, affiliated entities and associated partners) and the summarised budget for the proposal. Fill it in directly online
- Part B (description of the action) covers the technical content of the proposal. Download the mandatory word template from the Submission System, fill it in and upload it as a PDF file
- Annexes (*see section 5*). Upload them as PDF file (single or multiple depending on the slots). Excel upload is sometimes possible, depending on the file type.

The proposal must keep to the **page limits** (*see section 5*); excess pages will be disregarded.

Documents must be uploaded to the **right category** in the Submission System otherwise the proposal might be considered incomplete and thus inadmissible.

The proposal must be submitted **before the call deadline** (*see section 4*). After this deadline, the system is closed and proposals can no longer be submitted.

Once the proposal is submitted, you will receive a **confirmation e-mail** (with date and time of your application). If you do not receive this confirmation e-mail, it means your proposal has NOT been submitted. If you believe this is due to a fault in the Submission System, you should immediately file a complaint via the [IT Helpdesk webform](#), explaining the circumstances and attaching a copy of the proposal (and, if possible, screenshots to show what happened).

Details on processes and procedures are described in the [Online Manual](#). The Online Manual also contains the links to FAQs and detailed instructions regarding the Portal Electronic Exchange System.

12. Help

As far as possible, ***please try to find the answers you need yourself***, in this and the other documentation (we have limited resources for handling direct enquiries):

- [Online Manual](#)
- FAQs on the Topic page (for call-specific questions in open calls; not applicable for actions by invitation)
- [Portal FAQ](#) (for general questions).

Please also consult the Topic page regularly, since we will use it to publish call updates. (For invitations, we will contact you directly in case of a call update).

Contact

For individual questions on the Portal Submission System, please contact the [IT Helpdesk](#).

Non-IT related questions should be sent to the following email address: cinea-emfaf-calls@ec.europa.eu.

Please indicate clearly the reference of the call and topic to which your question relates (*see cover page*).

13. Important



IMPORTANT

- **Don't wait until the end** — Complete your application sufficiently in advance of the deadline to avoid any last minute **technical problems**. Problems due to last minute submissions (*e.g. congestion, etc.*) will be entirely at your risk. Call deadlines can NOT be extended.
- **Consult** the Portal Topic page regularly. We will use it to publish updates and additional information on the call (call and topic updates).
- **Funding & Tenders Portal Electronic Exchange System** — By submitting the application, all participants **accept** to use the electronic exchange system in accordance with the [Portal Terms & Conditions](#).
- **Registration** — Before submitting the application, all beneficiaries, affiliated entities and associated partners must be registered in the [Participant Register](#). The participant identification code (PIC) (one per participant) is mandatory for the Application Form.
- **Consortium roles** — When setting up your consortium, you should think of organisations that help you reach objectives and solve problems.

The roles should be attributed according to the level of participation in the project. Main participants should participate as **beneficiaries** or **affiliated entities**; other entities can participate as associated partners, subcontractors, third parties giving in-kind contributions. **Associated partners** and third parties giving in-kind contributions should bear their own costs (they will not become formal recipients of EU funding). **Subcontracting** should normally constitute a limited part and must be performed by third parties (not by one of the beneficiaries/affiliated entities). Subcontracting going beyond 30% of the total eligible costs must be justified in the application.

- **Coordinator** — In multi-beneficiary grants, the beneficiaries participate as consortium (group of beneficiaries). They will have to choose a coordinator, who will take care of the project management and coordination and will represent the consortium towards the granting authority. In mono-beneficiary grants, the single beneficiary will automatically be coordinator.
- **Affiliated entities** — Applicants may participate with affiliated entities (i.e. entities linked to a beneficiary which participate in the action with similar rights and obligations as the beneficiaries, but do not sign the grant and therefore do not become beneficiaries themselves). They will get a part of the grant money and must therefore comply with all the call conditions and be validated (just like beneficiaries); but they do not count towards the minimum eligibility criteria for consortium composition (if any).
- **Associated partners** — Applicants may participate with associated partners (i.e. partner organisations which participate in the action but without the right to get grant money). They participate without funding and therefore do not need to be validated.
- **Consortium agreement** — For practical and legal reasons it is recommended to set up internal arrangements that allow you to deal with exceptional or unforeseen circumstances (in all cases, even if not mandatory under the Grant Agreement). The consortium agreement also gives you the possibility to redistribute the grant money according to your own consortium-internal principles and parameters (for instance, one beneficiary can reattribute its grant money to another beneficiary). The consortium agreement thus allows you to customise the EU grant to the needs inside your consortium and can also help to protect you in case of disputes.

- **Balanced project budget** — Grant applications must ensure a balanced project budget and sufficient other resources to implement the project successfully (*e.g. own contributions, income generated by the action, financial contributions from third parties, etc*). You may be requested to lower your estimated costs, if they are ineligible (including excessive).
- **No-profit rule** — Grants may NOT give a profit (i.e. surplus of revenues + EU grant over costs). This will be checked by us at the end of the project.
- **No double funding** — There is a strict prohibition of double funding from the EU budget (except under EU Synergies actions). Outside such Synergies actions, any given action may receive only ONE grant from the EU budget and cost items may under NO circumstances declared to two different EU actions.
- **Completed/ongoing projects** — Proposals for projects that have already been completed will be rejected; proposals for projects that have already started will be assessed on a case-by-case basis (in this case, no costs can be reimbursed for activities that took place before the project starting date/proposal submission).
- **Combination with EU operating grants** — Combination with EU operating grants is possible, if the project remains outside the operating grant work programme and you make sure that cost items are clearly separated in your accounting and NOT declared twice (see [AGA — Annotated Model Grant Agreement, art 6.2.E](#)).
- **Multiple proposals** — Applicants may submit more than one proposal for *different* projects under the same call (and be awarded a funding for them).
Organisations may participate in several proposals.
BUT: if there are several proposals for *very similar* projects, only one application will be accepted and evaluated; the applicants will be asked to withdraw one of them (or it will be rejected).
- **Resubmission** — Proposals may be changed and re-submitted until the deadline for submission.
- **Rejection** — By submitting the application, all applicants accept the call conditions set out in this Call Document (and the documents it refers to). Proposals that do not comply with all the call conditions will be **rejected**. This applies also to applicants: All applicants need to fulfil the criteria; if any one of them doesn't, they must be replaced or the entire proposal will be rejected.
- **Cancellation** — There may be circumstances which may require the cancellation of the call. In this case, you will be informed via a call or topic update. Please note that cancellations are without entitlement to compensation.
- **Language** — You can submit your proposal in any official EU language (project abstract/summary should however always be in English). For reasons of efficiency, we strongly advise you to use English for the entire application. If you need the call documentation in another official EU language, please submit a request within 10 days after call publication (for the contact information, see *section 12*).

- **Transparency** — In accordance with Article 38 of the [EU Financial Regulation](#), information about EU grants awarded is published each year on the [Europa website](#).

This includes:

- beneficiary names
- beneficiary addresses
- the purpose for which the grant was awarded
- the maximum amount awarded.

The publication can exceptionally be waived (on reasoned and duly substantiated request), if there is a risk that the disclosure could jeopardise your rights and freedoms under the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights or harm your commercial interests.

- **Data protection** — The submission of a proposal under this call involves the collection, use and processing of personal data. This data will be processed in accordance with the applicable legal framework. It will be processed solely for the purpose of evaluating your proposal, subsequent management of your grant and, if needed, programme monitoring, evaluation and communication. Details are explained in the [Funding & Tenders Portal Privacy Statement](#).