



European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF)

Call for proposals

Women in the blue economy
(EMFAF-2022-PIA-WBE)

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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

TABLE OF CONTENTS

0. Introduction	4
1. Background.....	5
2. Objectives — Themes and priorities — Activities that can be funded — Expected impact	7
Objectives	7
Themes and priorities (scope)	7
Activities that can be funded (scope).....	8
Expected impact.....	9
3. Available budget.....	9
4. Timetable and deadlines	9
5. Admissibility and documents	10
6. Eligibility.....	11
Eligible participants (eligible countries).....	11
Consortium composition	12
Eligible activities.....	12
Duration	12
Project budget.....	12
Ethics.....	12
7. Financial and operational capacity and exclusion.....	13
Financial capacity	13
Operational capacity	13
Exclusion	14
8. Evaluation and award procedure	15
9. Award criteria.....	16
10. Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements.....	17
Starting date and project duration	17
Milestones and deliverables.....	17
Form of grant, funding rate and maximum grant amount.....	17
Budget categories and cost eligibility rules.....	18

Reporting and payment arrangements.....	19
Prefinancing guarantees	19
Certificates	20
Liability regime for recoveries	20
Provisions concerning the project implementation	20
Other specificities	20
Non-compliance and breach of contract	20
11. How to submit an application.....	20
12. Help	21
13. Important	23

0. Introduction

This is a call for proposals for EU **action grants** in the field of sustainable blue economy 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 (EMFAF Regulation [2021/1139](#)¹).

The call is launched in accordance with the 2022-2023 EMFAF Work Programme², [section 2.4.1](#) and will be managed by the **European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency (CINEA)** ('Agency').

The call covers the following **topic**:

- **EMFAF-2022-PIA-WBE — Women in the Blue Economy**

We expect to fund up to 2 projects.

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)

¹ Regulation (EU) 2021/1139 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(2022) 371 final of 26.01.2022 concerning the adoption of the work programme for 2022-2023 and the financing decision for the implementation of the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund.

- 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*).

1. Background

Equality is a core value of the European Union as set out in Article 2 of the Treaty on the EU³: *"The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail"*. The Treaty on the Functioning of the EU⁴ also states in its Article 8 that *"In all its activities, the Union shall aim to eliminate inequalities, and to promote equality, between men and women"*. Moreover, equality is a right enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union⁵ (Articles 20 to 26 of the Charter).

In March 2020, the European Commission adopted a Communication entitled "A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy for 2020-2025"⁶. The Communication presents policy objectives and actions to make significant progress by 2025 towards a gender-equal Europe and commits to further gender mainstreaming in all EU policies and EU funding programmes.

The Gender Equality Strategy refers to gender equality in the blue economy and the need to further empower women in the maritime sectors through the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF) for 2021-2027, with a dedicated call for proposals on "Women in the Blue Economy".

A call for proposals on "Women in the Blue Economy" was also announced in the recent Communication from the Commission on a new approach for a sustainable blue

³ https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:2bf140bf-a3f8-4ab2-b506-fd71826e6da6.0023.02/DOC_1&format=PDF

⁴ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:12012E/TXT:en:PDF>

⁵ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:12012P/TXT&from=EN>

⁶ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52020DC0152>

economy in the EU⁷, setting out a detailed agenda for the maritime sectors to drive the twin green and digital transitions.

Blue economy sectors and particularly fishing and aquaculture are predominantly male dominated activities in Europe. Men provide the main labour on board fishing vessels, and men own the majority of fishing boats and aquaculture farms. Only 3.7% of those employed in the EU fishing fleet are women⁸. On gender distribution in the aquaculture sector, a report prepared by the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries⁹ states that *"76% of the persons employed in the sector are male, and thus European aquaculture is clearly gender biased"*.

For other sectors of the blue economy, data on the gender distribution is still very limited. Particularly, in offshore renewable energies, blue bioeconomy, shipbuilding, etc., the share of female workers is not specifically documented.

However, some initiatives have emerged in the last decade. Recent national studies and gender gap analyses show that women represent about 25.2% of the sea sectors in Portugal¹⁰ and that the feminisation rate across blue economy sectors reaches about 21% in France¹¹.

The willingness to give attention and priority to gender equality in the blue economy has become even more visible under the Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the EU, which organised a dedicated event in June 2021¹², as well as more recently under the French Presidency, with another specific session during the One Ocean Summit in Brest in February 2022¹³.

At international level, it is worth citing the work done¹⁴ by the Women's International Shipping & Trading Association (WISTA)¹⁵, as well as the recent resolutions from the International Maritime Organisation (IMO)¹⁶. For instance, in 2021, IMO and WISTA launched the first international survey to obtain baseline data on number of women and their positions in maritime sectors. The key role of women in the blue economy has been the subject of studies, reports and events (FAO¹⁷, OECD¹⁸, UNCTAD¹⁹, the World

⁷ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52021DC0240&from=EN>

⁸ <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/policy-areas/maritime-affairs-and-fisheries>

⁹ "The EU Aquaculture Sector – Economic report 2020": <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/1939335e-a893-11eb-9585-01aa75ed71a1>

¹⁰ Data extracted from the Conference of the Portugal EU Presidency "A Sea of Equality", under the Portuguese Presidency" <https://www.2021portugal.eu/en/events/conference-a-sea-of-equality/>

¹¹ <https://www.cluster-maritime.fr/egalite-professionnelle-hommes-femmes/>

¹² Conference of the Portugal EU Presidency "A Sea of Equality", under the Portuguese Presidency" <https://www.2021portugal.eu/en/events/conference-a-sea-of-equality/>

¹³ <https://www.cluster-maritime.fr/egalite-professionnelle-hommes-femmes/>

¹⁴ One Planet Summit, forum 10th February 2022 "Women voices for the ocean" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ijBz_MAmrc

¹⁵ See "the SheEO leadership programme" launched on 8 March 2022: <https://wistainternational.com/news/imo-and-wista-international-launch-the-maritime-sheeo-leadership-accelerator-programme-2022/> or awareness campaigns "SHE of change" campaign: <https://wistainternational.com/diversity-resources/>

¹⁶ <https://www.imo.org/en/OurWork/TechnicalCooperation/Pages/WomenInMaritime.aspx>

¹⁷ Promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in fisheries and aquaculture (2016) <https://www.fao.org/3/i6623e/i6623e.pdf>

¹⁸ Gender and the Environment: Building Evidence and Policies to Achieve the SDGs, Chapter 13 on Women and SDG14 – Life under water: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources For sustainable development: https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/environment/gender-and-the-environment_78785e4d-en#page1

¹⁹ The blue economy is an ocean of opportunity to advance gender equality (2021) <https://unctad.org/fr/node/32493>

Economic forum²⁰, IUCN or WWF), and it has been highlighted as necessary to progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)²¹.

Under the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) for the period 2014-2020, an estimated 1 851 projects focused specifically on the support of women in fisheries and aquaculture. A true success story in this respect is represented by the work of FARNET, a community-led local development network²², which has been instrumental in supporting women in fisheries and coastal communities. Through FARNET, Fisheries Local Action Groups (FLAGs), managing authorities, people and experts from across the EU, work together on highlighting the contribution of women to the sustainable development of fisheries and coastal areas.

However, as effective as the measures adopted so far have been, they are neither spread across all sectors, industries, and activities of the maritime economy nor sufficient to ensure a gender-equal sustainable blue economy across the EU. Hence the launch of the “Women in the Blue Economy” call for proposals.

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

Objectives

This call for proposals has the following main objectives:

1. to increase the participation and representation of women in the different sectors of the sustainable blue economy;
2. to increase knowledge and collect data on women’s contribution to the sustainable blue economy so as to efficiently foster and mainstream gender equality;
3. to promote and advance gender equality in the sustainable blue economy (e.g., countering gender stereotypes, conscious and unconscious bias, promoting equal pay, addressing poor working conditions, etc.) including through promoting blue career opportunities to girls from early education;
4. to promote women’s leadership, entrepreneurship and participation in governance structures and decision-making mechanisms of public and/or private organisations of the sustainable blue economy.

The actions funded under this call will help sustainable blue economy sectors, e.g., fisheries, aquaculture, shipbuilding, maritime transport, offshore renewable energy, blue bioeconomy, inland and offshore aquaculture, etc., to embrace a deep and structural change to facilitate and promote the inclusion of women in the wider maritime economy.

Themes and priorities (scope)

The call for proposals is open to all sustainable blue economy sectors.²³ Each project

²⁰ https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_FOA_2pp_Gender_JAN2020.pdf

²¹ A Union of Equality <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legalcontent/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0152&from=EN>

²² https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/cms/farnet2/about/at-a-glance/farnet_en

²³ Blue economy sectors are listed in the recently adopted Communication on a Sustainable Blue Economy: COM(2021) 240 final <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52021DC0240&from=EN> “It encompasses all industries and sectors related to oceans, seas and coasts, whether they are based in the marine environment (e.g. shipping, fisheries, energy generation) or on land (e.g. ports, shipyards, land-based aquaculture and algae production, coastal tourism)”

should however focus on at least three sectors so as to mainstream and expand good practices and activities, from sectors where data is already available and actions have already been taken in terms of gender equality (e.g., shipping, fishing etc.) to sectors where data availability and actions are still limited (e.g., offshore renewable energies, blue bioeconomy, robotics, etc.).

Proposals should ensure the widest possible geographical scope and involve partners across different sea basins²⁴.

Activities that can be funded (scope)

Applicants must explain in their proposal how they will implement the activities listed below with concrete and measurable deliverables and results by the end of the project.

1. **Collect data and analyse data gaps:** collect quantitative and qualitative data and evidence about participation and representation of women in the maritime sectors. This will improve the understanding and estimate of women's role in the various sectors of the sustainable blue economy and highlight areas where more or better data collection is needed.
2. **Develop networking activities:** bring together female representatives of several sectors of the blue economy with a view to increase their networking opportunities, knowledge sharing, visibility, possibility to inspire and mentor other women and promote working environment offering equal opportunities. It can be achieved by making role models more visible, and other related activities (e.g., creating or supporting women's sectoral networks). It should be accompanied by communication, promotion and awareness raising on the added value of women's participation in the blue economy sectors.
3. **Support women's leadership and entrepreneurship in the sustainable blue economy** through targeted actions: e.g., training, mentoring, coaching, etc. Such activity should also identify ways to improve women's participation in governance structures of public and/or private organisations, also by engaging men in support of further gender diversity, equality and inclusion in the workplace (e.g. "male allyship").
4. **Identify existing good practices and assess their scalability and transferability to spread them across blue economy sectors:** mainstream successful gender equality approaches and make them widely available. It can include for example good practices on HR matters (e.g., targeting recruitment processes and awareness raising campaigns, addressing bias in recruitment and promotion procedures, etc.) and good practices from other EU initiatives on gender equality (e.g., 'Women in Transport – Platform for Change'²⁵, EIC accelerator, Women TechEU Initiative²⁶, European Network for Women in Digital²⁷, EIT initiatives²⁸ etc.).
5. **Ensure the sustainability of the project's activities:** each project must include a legacy plan in their deliverables proposing options to carry on their activities once the EU funding is over

²⁴ For sea basins strategies and other relevant sea basin information for the Atlantic, Baltic Sea, Black Sea, Mediterranean or North Sea, please see: https://ec.europa.eu/oceans-and-fisheries/ocean/sea-basins/eu-sea-basins_fr

²⁵ https://transport.ec.europa.eu/transport-themes/social-issues/women-transport/women-transport-eu-platform-change_en

²⁶ https://eic.ec.europa.eu/eic-funding-opportunities/european-innovation-ecosystems/women-techeu_en

²⁷ <https://eurogender.eige.europa.eu/thematic-network-workspaces/european-network-women-digital-ewid#info>

²⁸ <https://eit.europa.eu/>

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

In addition, funded projects under this call for proposals will be required to organise minimum two joint meetings during the project lifetime. Consortia are also expected to participate in few meetings organised at EU level (e.g., European Maritime Day, events under Presidencies of the Council of the EU, etc.).

Expected impact

The projects are expected to contribute to:

- Increased understanding, quantitative and qualitative evidence about gender data across sustainable blue economy in the EU including, if possible, data on education and training (e.g., enrolment data by gender in relevant education and training profiles/levels);
- Dissemination of good practices across sectors of the sustainable blue economy and across European regions to advance gender equality in maritime sectors;
- Increased visibility, awareness and recognition of women's role and participation across sustainable blue economy sectors and enhanced gender diversity in society as a whole;
- Increased awareness of work and career opportunities for women in the sustainable blue economy;
- Availability of networking opportunities, to support women in the sustainable blue economy;
- Increased women's participation and representation in governance structures of public and/or private organisations across the sustainable blue economy.

The list of impacts is non-exhaustive and applicants can include others if appropriate for their proposal.

3. Available budget

The available call budget is **EUR 2 500 000**. This budget might be increased by maximum 20%.

We expect to fund up to 2 projects.

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:	17 May 2022
<u>Deadline for submission:</u>	<u>22 September 2022 – 17:00:00 CET</u> (Brussels)

Evaluation:	September-November 2022
Information on evaluation results:	December-January 2023
GA signature:	February/April 2023

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 (short outlines) 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)]

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

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 persons²⁹.

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'³⁰.  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)*³¹ and entities covered

²⁹ See Article 197(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

³⁰ For the definitions, see Articles 187(2) and 197(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

³¹ 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](#).

by Commission Guidelines No [2013/C 205/05](#)³²). 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

Proposals must be submitted by a consortium of at least 3 applicants (beneficiaries; not affiliated entities), which complies with the following conditions:

- minimum 3 independent entities from 3 different EU Member States

In the consortium, applicants are encouraged to include representatives from different sectors of the blue economy (e.g. consultative, professional, representative bodies or associations, etc.) and relevant organizations (e.g. NGOs, maritime clusters, universities etc.) active in promoting gender equality.

Eligible activities

Eligible activities are the ones set out in section 2 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.

Duration

Projects should normally range between 24 and 36 months (extensions are possible, if duly justified and through an amendment).

Project budget

The project budget (maximum grant amount) are expected to range between EUR 1 000 000 and EUR 1 250 000 per project, but 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 98/58³³, Regulation 1099/2009³⁴, and Regulation (889/2008³⁵).

³² 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).

³³ 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).

³⁴ 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).

³⁵ 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).

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.

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 participate³⁶:

- 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)
- guilty of grave professional misconduct³⁷ (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,

³⁶ See Articles 136 and 141 of EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

³⁷ 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.

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 that³⁸:

- 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:

- 1) Projects focusing on a theme and/or priority (sectors and sea basins 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 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

³⁸ See Article 141 EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

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, where relevant, to the objectives of sustainable blue economy and sea basin strategies or initiatives³⁹
 - identification of specific needs/challenges of the policy domains/sea basins/areas targeted in the call; European/trans-national dimension
 - extent to which the proposal differentiates from 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 (if applicable) (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).

³⁹ For sea basins strategies and other relevant sea basin information for the Atlantic, Baltic Sea, Black Sea, Mediterranean or North Sea, see [Europa website](#).

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: 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 to be updated after each reporting period

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 (**90%**).

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 cost⁴⁰: Yes
- travel and subsistence unit cost⁴¹: Yes
- equipment costs: depreciation
- other cost categories:
 - costs for financial support to third parties: not allowed

⁴⁰ 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).

⁴¹ 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).

- 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


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 if applicable** (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 EU Login 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 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](#).