



European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF)

Call for proposals

Regional flagship projects supporting a sustainable blue economy in EU
sea basins – submerged munitions in the Baltic Sea
(EMFAF-2023-PIA-FLAGSHIP-MUNITION)

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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 (EMFAF Regulation [2021/1139](#)¹)

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

The call covers the following **topic**:

- **EMFAF-2023-PIA-FLAGSHIP-MUNITION — Regional flagship projects supporting a sustainable blue economy in EU sea basins – submerged munitions in the Baltic Sea**

We expect to fund one project under this 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)

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.

- 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](#) and [EMFAF Projects & Results](#) to consult the list of projects funded previously.

1. Background

Overview

A large quantity of chemical and explosive munitions is currently dumped in EU sea basins. However, the position, precise quantity, and identity of such munitions has been poorly documented. In addition, the positions of such munitions are not fixed. Some munitions are buried by silting or change position due to natural underwater movements (e.g., currents) or human activities (e.g., trawling or dredging), resulting in the spread of explosives and contaminants.

This situation raises environmental concerns as, with the passage of time, the corrosion of munition casings due to mechanical and chemical processes results in the release of chemicals contained in the munitions. Additionally, chemical munitions have remained on the seabed far longer than originally intended. The variations associated with different mechanical and chemical processes (such as water depth, temperature and the depth of buried objects) that contribute to the release of chemical agents from their casings, results in difficult and inexact modelling of risk of release into seawater.

Several studies point to the significant environmental damage that is expected to manifest itself over the next five to ten years with long lasting consequences, due to chemical leakage from these munitions. The tipping point has already been reached, since many of the munitions, after nearly a century underwater, are already significantly corroded.

In addition to the evident environmental implications this may have, from a blue economy perspective, submerged munitions also impede the development and the construction of offshore renewable energy sites. While posing physical danger, for example to fishing vessels, such as trawlers and their crew, underwater munitions also pose significant danger of contamination, for example of aquaculture sites, due to the accidental release of chemicals. The increasing need for the use of the seafloor (e.g., for offshore wind farms, undersea cables, pipelines, fisheries trawling operations), heightens such risks, due to the increased probability of encountering sea-dumped munitions.

In January 2021, the European Commission launched an external study³, under the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund, to gather knowledge on the mapping of underwater unexploded munitions, streamline best practices for accidental encounters with dumped munitions, and to address relevant environmental concerns. The study pointed out that the problem is particularly acute in the Baltic Sea, which was heavily mined during World War I (WWI) and World War II (WWII). The Baltic Sea was also the dumping site for aborted and accomplished missions, after these Wars. In terms of number, while there are at least 1.6 million tonnes of munitions from the World Wars in the North and Baltic Sea, 300 000 tonnes of these are in the Baltic Sea alone. Submerged munitions are, therefore, drawing increasing public and political attention in this area.

State of play and policy context

At the level of Member States, governmental organisations are conducting regular and ad-hoc operations dedicated to identifying, removing and/or neutralising submerged munitions.

Substantial work remains to be done, particularly for assessing the risks linked to these munitions, their removal and impact on marine species and on the environment. Furthermore, some private companies have also started mapping submerged munitions for economic purposes (e.g., installation of pipelines, offshore renewable energy infrastructures).

In recent years, scientific bodies and regional organisations have also addressed this important issue either through mapping, studies, collection of information for national maritime spatial plans or by conducting dedicated research activities⁴. Given the different competences and mandates in addressing this issue, cooperation and coordination between national bodies, internally and across borders, is necessary.

The Helsinki Commission (HELCOM) created a dedicated [Expert Group on Environmental Risks of Submerged Objects](#) (EG Submerged) to evaluate, and contribute to tackling, the issue. The overall aim of the Expert Group is to *contribute to regionally coordinated actions on submerged munitions and explosives of concern as well as other submerged hazardous objects, aiming, in the long-term, at addressing potential adverse effects of such objects and their constituents on the marine environment of the Baltic Sea*. However, there is still no mechanism to ensure that the data collected by companies or organisations in the Baltic Sea are shared and streamlined within a single database.

In December 2022, the Council of The Baltic Sea States and the HELCOM organised an expert roundtable on dumped munitions. This event gathered key experts from policy, environmental protection, civil protection, as well as large-scale project management and financing actors. The aim was to hold a multi-stakeholder dialogue, by providing a forum to address the various key environmental, technical, political, and financial aspects. One of the main conclusions was that before taking concrete actions there is a need to fill knowledge gaps to ensure that the most suitable action can be taken.

³ <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/cd376452-c69c-11ec-b6f4-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-256653837>

⁴ See the work of the [OPCW](#), [HELCOM](#) and [OSPAR](#), [Barcelona Convention](#) and [London Convention](#) in this field. The Joint Programming Initiative Healthy and Productive Seas and Oceans ([JPI Oceans](#)) is also a leading scientific organisation in dealing with this topic.

Considering the various discussions held with Member States and regional organisations on this topic, the European Commission and the High Representative adopted a Joint Communication on 10 March 2023 on the update of the EU Maritime Security Strategy and its Action Plan⁵, which among other things, recognised that the large quantities of unexploded ordnances (UXOs) and chemical weapons lying in sea basins around the EU constitute a significant maritime security and environmental threat. The updated EU Maritime Security Strategy Action Plan (EUMSS AP) contains various actions that Member States, the Commission and relevant entities may implement to address the issue, including in key areas such as the Baltic and North Seas.

Purpose of the call for proposals

Taking into account the extent and gravity of the problem, there is a need to establish priority geographical areas where appropriate action should be taken as soon as possible. These priority areas should be established according to various factors – to be determined by the project – including the state of corrosion of the munitions, leakage of chemical substances and risks posed to the environment, the risks posed to mariners, the intention for the future use of the seabed (e.g., installation of data cables or development of windfarms).

Building on existing successful projects⁶, proposals responding to this call are expected to address the issue, by identifying and filling the remaining gaps on knowledge and data, which are necessary for the establishment of priority geographical areas and for the conduct of appropriate risk assessments.

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

Objectives

This call for proposals aims at preparing the ground for concrete actions to mitigate the threat to human health and safety, the environment and to the development of a sustainable blue economy posed by the presence of submerged munitions in the Baltic Sea.

It seeks to foster cooperation among the Baltic Sea Member States, as well as neighbouring countries cooperating with the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, between the public and private sectors, including investors, as well as civil and military entities, to identify and gather the data necessary to establish a list of priorities and conduct relevant risk assessments. This work will facilitate the exchange of best practices across different stakeholders and sea-basins and contribute to awareness raising.

⁵ Joint Communication on an enhanced EU Maritime Security Strategy and Action Plan 'An enhanced EU Maritime Security Strategy for evolving maritime threats': https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/publications/joint-communication-update-eu-maritime-security-strategy-and-its-action-plan-enhanced-eu-maritime_en

⁶ Projects to clean the Baltic Sea from chemical warfare and conventional munitions supported by the Interreg programme financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) - 10 years of Interreg cooperation to free the Baltic Sea from dumped munitions - Interreg Baltic Sea Region (interreg-baltic.eu)
Projects supported by the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) – BASTA (<https://www.basta-munition.eu/>) and Explotect (<https://www.explotect.eu/>)

Themes and priorities (scope)

This topic focuses on:

- Gathering and analysing existing, available data from all relevant sources and databases on submerged munitions⁷ including identification of gaps in the data. This should cover, for example, data on possible impacts on nature, the environment, maritime activities, and the public to inform the establishment of priorities in tackling submerged munitions and for the conduct of risk assessments.
- Filling gaps, including by deploying systems at sea to collect and gather additional data that are needed for the establishment of priorities, including the use of cutting-edge technologies.⁸
- Identifying and proposing a list of relevant factors for the establishment of priority sites where submerged munitions should be addressed (e.g., the state of corrosion of the munitions, the intention to install new wind farms, the risks linked to the marine environment).
- Encouraging data sharing and best practice sharing among relevant entities in the Baltic Sea region dealing with the issue of submerged munitions.
- Awareness raising on the risks and impacts of submerged munitions dumped at sea.

Proposals should cover all the above themes.

Activities that can be funded (scope)

Projects should carry out as many as possible of the following activities (NB: this list is non-exhaustive):

Gap analysis

- Identifying the relevant sources of data (e.g. maps and databases) on submerged munitions in the Baltic Sea to create an inventory of data sources and types, including the national maritime spatial plans.
- Perform analysis of the main existing maps and databases, including to identify gaps in the existing information.
- Identify conflicting/contradictory information in existing databases and maps and attempt to reconcile any such contradictions.

Data collection

- Plan and carry out activities to collect missing data, as identified in the gap analysis.
- Compile new and existing data in a streamlined way that avoids duplication or proliferation, e.g., by building on and updating a relevant existing database.
- Share the database on the Baltic Sea with the EMODnet network, if and as appropriate, taking into consideration the level of sensitivity of the data.

Criteria and recommendations

⁷ For example, including data from HELCOM and national military organisations.

⁸ E.g. the technologies developed in the context of EU funded projects (European Maritime Fisheries Fund, Horizon 2020, Horizon Europe, European Defence Fund, Horizon Europe, Interreg.)

- Based on the data collection and analysis, determine the most relevant criteria to establish priority areas of intervention and to assess risks and determine the best techniques to deal with submerged munitions.
- Propose concrete actions for intervention in the priority areas identified.
- Develop a risk-based strategy to support national authorities/investors for their decision-making processes.
- Identify and promote best practices for monitoring submerged munitions and their impacts, for responses to munition encounters and for interventions to deal with these munitions.

Enhancing coordination

- Encourage and establish a framework for the sharing of data on munitions in the Baltic Sea, and for coordination and collaboration on monitoring and removing submerged munitions, building on the existing Baltic Sea cooperation.
- Develop knowledge sharing and capacity building initiatives between Member State authorities on monitoring submerged munitions, and their impacts on human and ocean health, the marine environment, and the maritime economy, as well as on remediating submerged munitions.
- Support capacity building for private entities that may encounter underwater munitions in carrying out their economic activities at sea.
- Share best practices on dealing with underwater submerged munitions and putting in place mechanisms to transfer knowledge and methods to other EU sea basins, notably the Black Sea.

Awareness raising

- Raise awareness among Member State authorities, public and private bodies, investors and citizens, on the issues and impacts of munitions in the Baltic Sea, as well as sharing best practices in responding to munition encounters.

Expected impact

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

The project is expected to achieve the following impacts to the maximum extent possible in line with the proposed activities:

- Provide a comprehensive and up-to-date picture of the state of play on submerged munitions in the Baltic Sea.
- Facilitate conducting risk assessments, where necessary, based on coherent and common factors.
- Provide the relevant elements (e.g. criteria) needed to choose the most appropriate mitigation actions.
- Stronger, structured and stable coordination and collaboration on submerged munitions, e.g. through a framework/forum bringing together Member State authorities, public and private sector bodies, investors, and citizens.
- A more coherent approach across the Baltic Sea to tackling submerged munitions.
- An acceleration in the mitigation of dumped munitions in the Baltic Sea thanks to campaigns involving the public and private sectors, investors and citizens.

- A high level of open and transparent information sharing across Member States on submerged munitions from civil and military sources, contributing to greater safety and more effective tackling of the issues.
- Greater awareness and increased capacity of Member State authorities on the impacts of submerged munitions and how to measure and monitor these impacts.
- Increased capacity in private entities to contribute to Baltic Sea Region collaboration and activities to mitigate underwater munitions.
- Greater capacity in other sea basins to tackle submerged munitions building on knowledge, capacity and lessons learned in the Baltic Sea and allowing the replication of results in other sea basins, particularly in the Black Sea.
- Contribute to better knowledge on marine observation and data by sharing the results of the work done on submerged munitions in the Baltic Sea with the EMODnet network, if and as appropriate, taking into consideration the level of sensitivity of the data.

The above list of expected impacts is non-exhaustive and applicants may add others if deemed relevant to achieve the objectives of this topic.

3. Available budget

The available call budget is **EUR 2 018 000**.

We expect to fund one project under this topic.

We reserve the right not to award all available funds, depending on the proposals received and the results of the evaluation.

4. Timetable and deadlines

Timetable and deadlines (indicative)	
Call opening:	28 September 2023
<u>Deadline for submission:</u>	<u>18 January 2024 – 17:00:00 CET</u> (Brussels)
Evaluation:	January - February 2024
Information on evaluation results:	March 2024
GA signature:	May 2024

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** (*templates available to be downloaded from the Portal Submission System, completed, assembled and re-uploaded*):
 - detailed budget table: not applicable
 - CVs of core project team: not applicable
 - activity reports of last year: not applicable
 - list of previous projects: not applicable

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

Applications will only be considered eligible if their content corresponds wholly (or at least in part) to the topic description for which it is submitted.

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)]
 - Neighbouring countries cooperating with the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) - these are Norway and Iceland.

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 persons⁹.

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'¹⁰. ⚠ 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)*¹¹ and entities covered by Commission Guidelines No [2013/C 205/05](#)¹²). 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](#).

⁹ See Article 197(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

¹⁰ For the definitions, see Articles 187(2) and 197(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

¹¹ 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](#).

¹² 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).

Consortium composition

Proposals must be submitted by a consortium of at least 3 applicants from 3 different eligible countries (beneficiaries; not affiliated entities) participating in and/or cooperating with the EUSBSR (these are Sweden, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Iceland and Norway). The consortium must include:

- Minimum 1 international organisation
- Minimum 1 research institute
- Minimum 1 local authority

The participation of relevant private sector entities (e.g., from offshore industries) is encouraged.

The coordinator must be established in one of the following EU Member States participating in the EUSBSR: Sweden, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland.

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.

Geographic location (target countries)

Proposals must relate to activities concerning the Baltic Sea region.

Duration

Projects should normally range between 24 and 36 months.

Extensions are possible, if duly justified and through an amendment.

Project budget

We expect to fund one project within the project budget (maximum grant amount) of EUR 2 018 000.

This does not however preclude the submission/selection of proposals requesting lower amounts. The grant awarded may be lower than the amount requested.

Ethics

Projects must comply with:

- highest ethical standards and

- applicable EU, international and national law (including Directive 98/58¹³, Regulation 1099/2009¹⁴, and Regulation (889/2008)¹⁵).

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

¹³ 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).

¹⁴ 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).

¹⁵ 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).

- 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

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 participate¹⁶:

- 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 misconduct¹⁷ (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

¹⁶ See Articles 136 and 141 of EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

¹⁷ 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.

- 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 EU Regulation [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 rejected if it turns out that¹⁸:

- 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) 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'.
- 2) 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.

¹⁸ See Article 141 EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

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 will be 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:

1. 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 initiatives¹⁹
- 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
- extent to which the proposal demonstrates innovation potential and provides added value compared to the state-of-the-art/existing solutions; extent to which the proposal addresses specific industrial/ economic/ social/ environmental challenges/priorities, and risks and opportunities related to successful market introduction of the innovation taking into consideration technical, commercial and regulatory aspects (10 points)

2. 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

¹⁹ For sea basins strategies and other relevant sea basin information for the Atlantic, Baltic Sea, Black Sea, Mediterranean or North Sea, see [Europa website](#).

problem-solving mechanisms for cooperating within the project teams and consortium (if applicable) (10 points)

3. 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 budget (i.e. up to the budget ceiling). 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. A retroactive starting date can be granted exceptionally for duly justified reasons — but never earlier than the proposal submission date.

Project duration: see section 6 above.

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 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
- D. Other cost categories
 - D.1 Financial support to third parties
- E. Indirect costs

Specific cost eligibility conditions for this call:

- personnel costs:
 - SME owner/natural person unit cost²⁰: Yes
- travel and subsistence unit cost²¹: 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

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.

²⁰ 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)7115).

²¹ 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).

 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 be 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 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](#).