



European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF)

Call for proposals

Regional flagships projects supporting sustainable blue economy in EU
sea basins - Smart Specialisation and Regenerative Ocean Farming
and Algae Innovation
(EMFAF-2025-PIA-FLAGSHIP)

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EUROPEAN CLIMATE, INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENVIRONMENT EXECUTIVE AGENCY (CINEA)

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

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

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0. Introduction

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

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

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

The call is launched in accordance with the 2024-2025 EMFAF Work Programme² and will be managed by the **European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency (CINEA)** ('Agency').

The call covers the following **topics**:

EMFAF-2025-PIA-FLAGSHIP-I3 — Maritime regional cooperation fostering Smart Specialisation and Innovation in the Sustainable Blue Economy (Topic 1)

EMFAF-2025-PIA-FLAGSHIP-OCEANFARMING — Demonstrating feasibility and environmental benefits of regenerative ocean farming and boosting algae innovation (Topic 2)

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

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

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

- the [Call Document](#) outlines the:
 - background, objectives, scope, activities that can be funded and the expected results (sections 1 and 2)
 - timetable and available budget (sections 3 and 4)
 - admissibility and eligibility conditions (including mandatory documents; sections 5 and 6)
 - criteria for financial and operational capacity and exclusion (section 7)
 - evaluation and award procedure (section 8)
 - award criteria (section 9)
 - legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements (section 10)
 - how to submit an application (section 11)

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 of 14.11.2023 on the financing of the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund and the adoption of the work programme for 2024 and 2025.

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

1. Background

Overview and EU policy context

European seas and coasts have great potential to foster innovation and technological development. The EU blue economy is poised for growth over the coming years, driven by the transition to a sustainable and circular economy, the ambitious net-zero climate targets and a focus on innovation and research. According to the most recent figures³, in 2021 the established sectors of the EU blue economy directly employed close to 3.59 million people and generated around EUR 623.6 billion in turnover. Turnover increased by 21% from 2020 to 2021. Employment increased by 17% in the same period. Innovative blue economy sectors offer significant potential for economic growth and employment creation.

In 2021, the European Commission adopted two main Communications addressing a sustainable blue economy in the EU, with innovation at the centre:

- "A new approach for a sustainable blue economy in the EU" (May 2021)⁴ that sets out a vision for the blue economy to play a major role in achieving the European Green Deal objectives.
- "The European Missions" (September 2021) including the EU Mission "Restore our ocean and waters by 2030" (the Mission Ocean)⁵, with the aim to provide a systemic approach for the restoration, protection and preservation of our ocean, seas and waters.

As stated in both Communications, innovation is one of the key drivers of the blue economy. Through innovation, coastal communities can rebuild or reshape their economies and become local drivers of sustainability, growth, and jobs. Yet, one of the fundamental challenges for a more innovative blue economy in all European sea basins is that the transfer of research results into business ventures must become easier in order to develop and bring faster to the market new technologies, ideas, processes and solutions.

Similarly, despite significant EU funding being available for innovation in the 2021-2027 period (under instruments such as Horizon Europe, the Interregional Innovation Investment instrument and cohesion policy funds), synergies between existing funding sources remain difficult to implement at operational level. This is a significant obstacle

³ [The EU blue economy report 2024](#)

⁴ [COM\(2021\) 240 final](#)

⁵ https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/document/download/470f388c-1b44-43a1-87f5-cf9119ee0251_en?filename=ec_com_heu_randi_missions_29092021.pdf

to creating a critical mass for what are usually capital-intensive investments in innovation and its concrete applications. Crucially, there is still a lack of strategic public-private projects, particularly transnational ones, to develop innovative business solutions and harness investment opportunities in the EU blue economy.

Smart Specialisation

In this context, an approach that deserves special attention is Smart Specialisation, which is underpinned by regional Smart Specialisation Strategies (S3). S3 are a useful tool to support transition towards a sustainable blue economy by creating the necessary innovation ecosystems in Member States and regions while promoting investments that boost the competitiveness of blue economy sectors. To support this, the S3 Thematic Platform for Sustainable Blue Economy⁶ provides a framework of cooperation among blue economy stakeholders of the quadruple helix⁷ to exchange ideas and best practices, address common needs, prepare joint project proposals and collaborate in the implementation of innovative projects. The Platform was formally launched in March 2022 and forms part of the Smart Specialisation Community of Practice.⁸ It aims at fostering the creation of interregional partnerships that develop EU-wide value chains in the sustainable blue economy, exploiting the strengths of each European sea basin to design innovation strategies, boost investment and develop smart and sustainable business solutions.

Five brokerage sessions and a follow up event were organised in 2022 by DG MARE, to raise the interest of stakeholders in creating interregional partnerships on priorities of common interest. As result, the following five thematic areas have been identified:

Fisheries: e.g. social innovation; better governance; reducing environmental impact & marine litter; decarbonisation; circular economy; marketing and product innovation; use of under-utilised and/or invasive species; health and biotechnology; data and digitalisation; robotics; vessel monitoring systems.

Aquaculture: e.g. lowering carbon footprint; decarbonisation; aquaponics; regulatory and business models for IMTA (Integrated Multitrophic Aquaculture); space and investments: mussels and algae farming.

Marine Renewable Energy: e.g. clusters; certification services; corrosion; operations and maintenance optimisation; MREs and ports; digital twin options; skills – reskilling and upskilling; testing and demonstration in real environments; environmental issues.

Blue biotechnology: e.g. algae as a contributor for sustainable food systems; microalgae; bio products; bio products from invasive species; bioplastics and farming waste materials, circularity.

Coastal and maritime tourism: e.g. Circularity; digitalisation; data indicators, use in decision making; ecotourism – innovative packages for protected areas; sustainable nautical tourism (cruise and yachting); fishing tourism; sustainable mobility; seasonality – elongation of tourism periods; skills, upskilling and reskilling; sanitary protocols.

This call for proposals aims to support interregional partnerships in developing new blue economy business solutions, boosting investment and promoting cooperation among quadruple helix stakeholders at all levels. The call will also support the implementation of priorities identified by the existing EU sea basin strategies, with a particular focus on innovation and Smart Specialisation, notably in the Atlantic (Atlantic Maritime

⁶ [Inforegio - Sustainable Blue Economy \(europa.eu\)](https://inforegio.europa.eu/)

⁷ The Quadruple Helix Model of innovation recognises four major actors in the innovation system: science, policy, industry and society.

⁸ https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/policy/communities-and-networks/s3-community-of-practice_en

Strategy), the Western Mediterranean (WestMed Initiative), and the Black Sea (Common Maritime Agenda) regions. It will further contribute to reaching the objectives of the Mission Ocean and its sea basin-level “lighthouses”.

Regenerative Ocean Farming and algae innovation

The Communication on a new approach for a sustainable blue economy⁹ calls for a transformation of the blue economy in line with the priorities of the European Green Deal. Notably, this includes the Farm to Fork Strategy, which underlines the potential of farmed seafood in the transition to a sustainable food system, as a source of protein for food and feed with a low-carbon footprint.

On 15 November 2022 the Commission adopted the Communication “Towards a strong and sustainable EU algae sector”¹⁰ an initiative aimed at unlocking the potential of algae as a sustainable source of alternative protein. Among several actions, the Communication envisaged the funding of pilot projects supporting the reorientation of fishers’ careers from fishing to regenerative ocean farming, enhancing targeted support for innovative SMEs and projects in the algae sector, and facilitating sea basin and macroregional cooperation by promoting innovative interregional partnerships (e.g. in the blue bioeconomy, focusing on algae) through smart specialisation strategies and the S3 Sustainable Blue Economy Platform¹¹.

The Communication on Strategic guidelines for more sustainable and competitive EU aquaculture for the period 2021 to 2030¹² highlights how aquaculture, in addition to creating jobs and economic development opportunities, can also contribute to:

- Decarbonise the economy, fight climate change and mitigate its impact (through carbon sequestration and nature-based coastal protection).
- Reduce pollution, contribute to better preserving biodiversity and ecosystems (in line with the objectives of the EU Biodiversity Strategy¹³ and the Zero-Pollution Action Plan¹⁴ ambition for a toxic-free environment).
- Contribute to a more circular management of resources.

The Strategic guidelines recognise the main themes below:

- Knowledge creation and sharing, and promotion of innovative approaches for regenerative ocean farming, including technical, economic, environmental and social aspects linked to the reorientation process.
- Identification of skills and training needs and developing online training programmes.
- Access to space and water, and particularly in connection with Maritime Spatial Plans and Marine Protected Areas (MPAs).
- Permitting and authorisation processes for the installation of new regenerative ocean farms e.g. by synergising with EU4Algae Licensing Toolkit.

⁹ [COM\(2021\) 240 final](#)

¹⁰ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM%3A2022%3A592%3AFIN>

¹¹ [Smart Specialisation Platform](#)

¹² [COM\(2021\) 236 final](#)

¹³ [COM\(2020\) 380 final](#)

¹⁴ [COM\(2021\) 400 final](#)

- Demonstration activities for setting up and operating regenerative ocean farming focusing on small regenerative ocean farms/gardens set up by local actors to cultivate seaweed and/or shellfish species for local community needs.

Regenerative ocean farming is a form of mariculture that involves restoration and regeneration of seaweed habitats and/or other marine habitats in nearshore or offshore ocean environments. It follows sustainable mariculture principles, e.g. marine permaculture, with zero feeds and fertilisers inputs in the system, with the effect of sequestration of carbon and nutrients and restoration of coastal and marine ecosystems. Regenerative ocean farming may include seaweed and/or combinations of seaweed, shellfish and/or other low trophic organisms.

The purpose of the Topic 2 under this call for proposals is to prove the feasibility and viability of setting up and operating ocean farms across various EU marine regions. It further aims to measure and quantify environmental benefits of regenerative farming of either local seaweed species or seaweed in combination with shellfish and to spur algae innovation by supporting its development and bringing to market new algae-based products and services.

Cross-border and transnational cooperation are considered an essential element to disseminate new sustainable practices in the blue bioeconomy and aquaculture, notably in the Mediterranean and Black Sea regions, where stakeholders have shown less interest in regenerative ocean farming compared to those in the Atlantic, North Sea and Baltic Sea. It will also help address potential challenges, such as the availability of proper expertise, availability of seeds, pest and disease control. The selected projects should develop synergies with ongoing EU initiatives (e.g. EU4Algae Forum)¹⁵ and projects funded under EU programmes, e.g. EMFF/EMFAF, LIFE, Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe, INTERREG.¹⁶

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

2.1 EMFAF-2025-PIA-FLAGSHIP — Maritime regional cooperation fostering Smart Specialisation and Innovation in the Sustainable Blue Economy (Topic 1)

Objectives

The objective of this call topic is to animate and underpin the S3 Thematic Platform for Sustainable Blue Economy with strategic interregional partnerships that develop and implement highly innovative solutions addressing priorities in the EU sustainable blue economy (i.e. decarbonisation of the blue economy sectors, energy transition, sustainable fisheries and aquaculture, circular blue economy, new forms of aquaculture including algae, coastal resilience and marine litter prevention, sustainable food systems, and green coastal and maritime tourism).

Themes and priorities (scope)

This topic will focus on:

- Boosting existing interregional partnerships that work on the identification of innovative blue economy solutions and investment with business potential.

¹⁵ <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/maritimeforum/en/frontpage/1727>

¹⁶ E.g. COmmunity Ocean farms and Local Business cLUstErs (Cool Blue) and Community-driven Farming for the Atlantic and Arctic sea basins through REgeneRative aquaculture (C-Faarer) as well as the EMFAF project COmmunity Ocean farms and Local Business cLUstErs in the BALTIC sea” (Cool Blue Baltic).

- Promoting the creation of interregional partnerships by building on existing smart specialisation strategies and shared blue economy priorities of European regions.
- Addressing thematic priorities (within the five blue economy sectors mentioned under section 1 and listed below under 'Activities that can be funded') supporting a sea basin or cross-sea basin approach, including the sea basin-scale cooperation of the Mission Ocean lighthouses.

Activities that can be funded

Projects selected under this call for proposals will be implemented through an investment portfolio approach, which identifies several investment-ready sub-projects that address one or several bottlenecks in a value chain identified in the application, within a specific thematic/technological area of cooperation in one or more of the following five blue economy sectors: fisheries, aquaculture, marine renewable energy, blue biotechnology, coastal and maritime tourism.

These sub-projects are necessary to accelerate the uptake of innovation, thus increasing the competitiveness of EU value chains in the blue economy. The project application must clearly describe the progress from innovation towards commercialisation and upscaling that is expected as a result of the project and its investment portfolio.

The project application must also provide an outline of an exploitation plan that sets out the expected way forward following the completion of the project, especially if the new products/processes or services are not yet ready for the market.

Projects should carry out as many as possible of the following activities. The list is non-exhaustive, and proposals may include other relevant activities that meet the themes and priorities of the call topic:

- Activities to support plans and arrangements or designs for new, altered or improved products, processes, or services such as demonstrating, testing and piloting activities by companies, large-scale product validation and market replication.
- Adaptation of existing prototypes and tailoring them to the companies' needs for the demonstration in a real environment.
- Development of portfolios of projects for close-to-market investments that deploy new or improved technologies or processes.
- Activities directly aiming at producing plans with a concrete timetable, arrangements or designs for new, altered or improved products, processes or services. This can include testing, demonstration, piloting, large-scale product validation and market replication.
- Activities connecting or making complementary use of testing and demonstration facilities to accelerate market uptake and scale-up of innovative solutions in shared smart specialisation areas.
- Innovation services for interconnecting value chains.
- Test beds and complementary activities needed to improve regulations, standards and/or to remove barriers and bottlenecks to innovation.
- Activities bringing innovative ideas and new products to the market.

- Advisory support for investment: developing or implementing interregional business and “go to market” investment plans in specific value chains.
- Organising and participating in workshops, matchmaking or networking events with other projects and initiatives at EU level and the S3 thematic partnerships established under the S3 Sustainable Blue Economy Platform.
- Activities to support the interregional partnerships in terms of mentoring, coaching, training, investment readiness support, or other advisory and financial planning support.

Projects must involve at least two private sector business partners active in the chosen blue economy sector and should be aligned with and build on the priorities of existing Sea Basin strategies, the Smart Specialisation strategies of the regions in the consortium, other relevant instruments and initiatives at EU level (e.g., EU Mission Restore our Ocean and Waters by 2030 and its sea basin-level lighthouses, BlueInvest¹⁷, ERDF, the Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership¹⁸, the Energy Transition Partnership for the Fisheries and Aquaculture Sectors¹⁹, the strategic guidelines for a more sustainable and competitive EU aquaculture, the EU Offshore Renewable Energy Strategy²⁰, the EU Algae Initiative²¹, etc.) as well as at national and regional level.

Projects are encouraged to organise cluster meetings with projects funded under the remit of the Mission Ocean & Waters as well as under other EU programmes and instruments to enhance synergies²². Moreover, the organisation of matchmaking activities with local authorities is welcome to promote the alignment of regional funds and synergies across sectors.

Applicants may propose other activities they deem necessary to achieve the objectives of this call, where relevant and justified.

Expected impact

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

- Innovative technologies tested and adopted by the maritime industry and public administrations.
- Innovative solutions deployed improving businesses’ confidence, competences and means to digitalise and grow the EU sustainable blue economy ecosystem.

¹⁷ https://maritime-forum.ec.europa.eu/theme/investments/blueinvest_en

¹⁸ <https://bluepartnership.eu/>

¹⁹ https://blue-economy-observatory.ec.europa.eu/energy-transition-partnership_en#:~:text=The%20Energy%20Transition%20Partnership%20aims,energy%20transition%20in%20the%20sector.

²⁰ <COM/2020/741>

²¹ <COM-2022-592>

²² E.g. OLAMUR, ULTFARMS, COOL BLUE, C-FAARER, AlgaePro BANOS and LOCALITY, COOL BLUE BALTIC, etc.

- The uptake of technologically/economically reliable and viable solutions on the market.
- The deployment of new green and digital technologies fostering the growth of Europe's blue economy sectors.
- Identification of possible sources of funding and financing to cover the residual investment needs (public-private partnerships for the deployment of innovation, collaboration with venture capital investors, the BlueInvest platform and EIB group, etc).
- Reinforcing the capacity of regions to co-invest together, joining forces on common S3 investment priorities (interregional investments).
- Identifying new interregional business and investment opportunities and value chains, services, technologies and applications in highly innovative, high potential blue economy sub-sectors or sub-domains.
- Promoting and disseminating the benefits and added value of the deployment of the sustainable technologies and innovation at the local level, involving also the youth and civil society.

2.2 EMFAF-2025-PIA-FLAGSHIP-OCEANFARMING – Demonstrating feasibility and environmental benefits of regenerative ocean farming and boosting algae innovation (Topic 2)

Objectives

This call topic aims to support the development of regenerative ocean farming by proving its feasibility and viability and generating knowledge on the environmental benefits including by testing these approaches, as far as possible, in connection with Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). It further aims to promote innovation in algae by supporting the development and bringing to market new algae-based products and services, thus offering new green employment opportunities.

This topic is specifically targeting the EU Member States, notably in sea basins where regenerative ocean farming is not currently developed, such as the Mediterranean and the Black Sea.

Themes and priorities (scope)

This topic will focus on:

- Setting up and operating ocean farms across various EU marine regions and measuring and quantifying environmental benefits of regenerative farming of either local seaweed species or seaweed in combination with shellfish;
- Testing and demonstration of innovative algae-based products and services to bring them closer to market.

Proposals are expected to cover one or both of the above priorities.

If projects collect in-situ marine observation data, beneficiaries must make them openly available through the European Marine Observation and Data network (EMODnet)²³, based on FAIR (findable, accessible, interoperable, reusable) principles²⁴.

Activities that can be funded

Projects should carry out as many as possible of the following activities. The list is non-exhaustive and proposals may include other relevant activities that meet the themes and priorities of the call topic.

For regenerative ocean farms:

- Preparatory activities for the set-up of regenerative ocean farms.
- Activities to install and operate regenerative ocean farms.
- Establishment of baseline environmental data in the farm site.
- Measurement and analysis of the environmental impacts/benefits of regenerative ocean farming.
- Development of recommendations to optimise regenerative ocean farming practices.
- Activities to promote the benefits of regenerative ocean farming and/or algae-based products and services.
- Activities to assess and test the viability of regenerative ocean farming in connection with marine protected areas (MPAs).
- Carrying out awareness-raising campaigns and activities to increase social acceptance e.g. among local communities and youth by sharing experience and evidence of the positive impacts of regenerative ocean farming.
- Identifying enabling and/or inhibiting legislative frameworks and engaging with local authorities and authorities responsible for maritime spatial planning to remove barriers (e.g. licensing of farms, access to space) and find solutions for the set up and operation of regenerative ocean farming without affecting other aspects of ecosystem conservation/restoration.

For algae innovation:

- Development, testing and demonstration of new and innovative algae-based products and services.
- Activities to support the market readiness of the new products and services, e.g. business and investment planning, marketing, IP registration.

For all projects:

- Activities to engage and network with local stakeholders and communities.
- Coaching, training and other activities to promote entrepreneurship.

²³ <https://emodnet.ec.europa.eu/en>

²⁴ <https://www.go-fair.org/fair-principles/>

- Matchmaking activities to promote interactions and synergies across sectors, e.g. algae and shellfish farming.
- Providing technical and policy feedback on the challenges, opportunities and needs to develop regenerative ocean farming and boost algae innovation in the EU.

Expected impact

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

- Demonstrated viability of regenerative ocean farms, particularly in connection with Marine Protected Areas (MPAs).
- Increased knowledge and awareness of the environmental benefits of regenerative ocean farming.
- A strengthened business case for algae-based products and services.
- Increased knowledge on the needs and challenges for regenerative ocean farming and innovation in algae in the EU.
- Increased awareness among coastal communities of the opportunities offered by regenerative ocean farming, including social acceptance.
- New opportunities for jobs and growth in regenerative ocean farming and the algae sector.

For Topics 1 and 2:

Networking with relevant EU projects

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

Projects are also expected to participate in events and initiatives organised at EU level (e.g., European Maritime Day, events under Presidencies of the Council of the EU, Mission Ocean-related events, etc.) and are encouraged to use the S3 Community of Practice and S3 Thematic Platforms for cooperation and dissemination opportunities.

Legacy plan

Proposals must include a legacy (business) plan in their deliverables proposing options to continue their activities once the EU funding is over to ensure the sustainability of the proposed actions. This is especially important to ensure that the identified business solution/idea (Topic 1), regenerative ocean farm or algae-based service or product (Topic 2) is developed to commercial readiness and enters the market.

Indicators

Applicants have to list the main results²⁵ in a concrete, realistic and quantified way, as far as possible. The results should be presented in a format comparable to the relevant performance and result indicators (KPI) of EMFAF²⁶ as per below list (only relevant indicators should be considered):

- CR 01 - New production capacity (tonnes/annum)
- CR 03 - Businesses created (number of entities)
- CR 04 - Businesses with higher turnover (number of entities)
- CR 06 - Jobs created (number of persons)
- CR 07 - Jobs maintained (number of persons)
- CR 08 - Persons benefitting (number of persons)
- CR 09 - Area addressed by operations contributing to a good environmental status, protecting, conserving, and restoring biodiversity and ecosystems (km² or km)
- CR 10 - Actions contributing to a good environmental status, including nature restoration, conservation, protection of ecosystems, biodiversity, animal health and welfare (number of actions)
- CR 11 - Entities increasing social sustainability (number of entities)
- CR 13 - Cooperation activities between stakeholders (number of actions)
- CR 14 - Innovations enabled (number of new products, services, processes, business models or methods)
- CR 16 - Entities benefitting from promotion and information activities (number of entities)
- CR 17 - Entities improving resource efficiency in production and/or processing (number of entities)
- CR 18 - Energy consumption leading to CO₂ emissions reduction (kWh/tonnes or litres/h)
- CR 19 - Actions to improve governance capacity (number of actions)
- CR 20 - Investment induced (EUR)
- CR 21 - Datasets and advice made available (number)
- CR 22 - Usage of data and information platforms (number of page views)

3. Available budget

The available call budget is **EUR 5 700 000**. This budget might be increased by maximum 20%.

²⁵ Results: capture more direct, short to medium term changes in a situation, which are achieved by the end of the project. E.g. if four FTE jobs are expected to be created by the end of the project, this will be an expected project result.

²⁶ See Annex I of EMFAF Regulation [2021/1139](#)

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

Topic	Topic budget
1 — EMFAF-2025-PIA-FLAGSHIP-I3 — Maritime regional cooperation fostering Smart Specialisation and Innovation in the Sustainable Blue Economy	EUR 3 800 000
2 — EMFAF-2025-PIA-FLAGSHIP-OCEANFARMING – Demonstrating feasibility and environmental benefits of regenerative ocean farming and boosting algae innovation	EUR 1 900 000

We expect to fund one-two projects for topic 1, and one-two projects for topic 2 provided that for each topic at least one proposal reaches a sufficient quality score following the evaluation of the award criteria.

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

4. Timetable and deadlines

Timetable and deadlines (indicative)	
Call opening:	26 September 2024
<u>Deadline for submission:</u>	<u>18 February 2025, 17:00 CET</u> (Brussels)
Evaluation:	March-April 2025
Information on evaluation results:	May 2025
GA signature:	September/October 2025

5. Admissibility and documents

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

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

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

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

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

Eligible participants (eligible countries)

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

- be legal entities (public or private bodies)
- be established in one of the eligible countries, i.e.:
 - EU Member States (including overseas countries and territories (OCTs));
 - non-EU countries that are part of the EU sea basin strategies targeted in this call for proposals:

Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia and Turkey; Mauritania, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya.

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

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

Specific cases


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

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

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

Entities without legal personality — Entities which do not have legal personality under their national law may exceptionally participate, provided that their representatives have the capacity to undertake legal obligations on their behalf, and offer guarantees for the protection of the EU financial interests equivalent to that offered by legal persons²⁷.

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'²⁸.  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)²⁹ and entities covered by Commission Guidelines No [2013/C 205/0530](#)). 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).

Following the Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/2506, as of 16 December 2022, no legal commitments (including the grant agreement itself as well as subcontracts, purchase contracts, financial support to third parties etc.) can be signed with Hungarian public interest trusts established under Hungarian Act IX of 2021 or any entity they maintain. Affected entities may continue to apply to calls for proposals however, in case the Council measures are not lifted, such entities are not eligible to participate in any funded role (beneficiaries, affiliated entities, subcontractors, recipients of financial

²⁷ See Article 197(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

²⁸ For the definitions, see Articles 187(2) and 197(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

²⁹ 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](#).

³⁰ 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).

support to third parties). In this case, co-applicants will be invited to remove or replace that entity and/or to change its status into associated partner. Tasks and budget may be redistributed accordingly.



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

Consortium composition

Proposals must be submitted by a **consortium**, which complies with the following conditions:

For topic 1:

- Minimum four participants (beneficiaries; not affiliated entities) from two different EU Member States.
- Minimum one regional administration, minimum two private sector entities active in commercial blue economy sectors and minimum one partner from research/academia.
- The coordinator must be established in an EU Member State.

Applicants are encouraged to ensure coverage of the quadruple helix by including a balance of partners from public, private, academia/research and civil society, including maritime clusters, and notably when focusing on the establishment of an interregional partnership.

For topic 2:

- Minimum two participants (beneficiaries; not affiliated entities) from minimum two different EU countries.
- Minimum one private sector participant active in ocean farming and/or algae sectors.
- The coordinator must be established in an EU Member State.

Applicants are encouraged to ensure a balance of partners from public, private, academia/research, civil society, NGOs, coastal communities and local partnerships³¹.

Eligible activities

Eligible activities are the ones set out in section 2 above.

Projects should take into account the results of relevant projects and activities supported by other EU funding programmes and by established S3 thematic partnerships. 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.

³¹ E.g. [Community-Led Local Development](#)

Geographic location (target countries)

Topic 1

Proposals for Topic 1 must relate to activities concerning one of the following sea basins/areas: Black Sea, the Atlantic and the Western Mediterranean Sea basins as well as the EU Outermost regions marine areas.

Proposals can focus on a part/sub-region of these sea basins/areas or have a cross-sea basin perspective.

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

Topic 2

Proposals for Topic 2 must relate to activities concerning one of the following sea basins/areas: Black Sea, Baltic Sea, North Sea, the Atlantic and the Mediterranean Sea basins as well as the EU Outermost regions marine areas.

Duration

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

Project budget

Project budgets (maximum grant amount) are expected to range between EUR 1 500 000 and EUR 2 500 000 per project for Topic 1 and from EUR 700 000 to EUR 1 000 000 for Topic 2, 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 98/58³², Regulation 1099/2009³³, and Regulation (889/2008³⁴).

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.

³² 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).

³³ 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).

³⁴ 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).

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.

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 participate³⁵:

- 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 misconduct³⁶ (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, decisionmaking or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- guilty of irregularities within the meaning of Article 1(2) of Regulation No [2988/95](#) (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- created under a different jurisdiction with the intent to circumvent fiscal, social or other legal obligations in the country of origin or created another entity with this purpose (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant).

Applicants will also be refused if it turns out that³⁷:

- during the award procedure they misrepresented information required as a condition for participating or failed to supply that information

³⁵ See Articles 136 and 141 of EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

³⁶ 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.

³⁷ See Article 141 EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

- 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 (as indicated in section 2) that is not otherwise covered by higher ranked projects will be considered to have the highest priority.
- 2) The *ex aequo* proposals within the same topic will be prioritised according to the scores they have been awarded for the award criterion 'Relevance'. When these scores are equal, priority will be based on their scores for the criterion 'Impact'.
- 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, including the geographical scope. These factors will be documented in the panel report.
- 4) After that, the remainder of the available call budget will be used to fund projects across the different topics in order to ensure a balanced spread of the geographical and thematic coverage and while respecting to the maximum possible extent the order of merit based on the evaluation of the award criteria.

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

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

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

If you believe that the evaluation procedure was flawed, you can submit a **complaint** (following the deadlines and procedures set out in the evaluation result letter). Please note that notifications which have not been opened within 10 days after sending are considered to have been accessed and that deadlines will be counted from

opening/access (see also [Funding & Tenders Portal Terms and Conditions](#)). Please also be aware that for complaints submitted electronically, there may be character limitations.

9. Award criteria

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

- **Relevance:**
 - clarity and consistency of project, objectives and planning; extent to which they match the themes and priorities, and objectives of the call/topic; contribution to the EU strategic and legislative context, including, where relevant, to the objectives of sustainable blue economy and sea basin strategies or initiatives³⁸
 - identification of specific needs/challenges of the policy domains/sea basins/areas targeted in the call; European/trans-national and interregional 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).

Award criteria	Minimum pass score	Maximum score
Relevance	6	10

³⁸ For sea basins strategies and other relevant sea basin information for the Atlantic, Baltic Sea, Black Sea, Mediterranean or North Sea, see [Europa website](#).

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

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 as follows:

- **70%** for Topic 1 and Topic 2;

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 cost³⁹: Yes
- travel and subsistence unit cost⁴⁰: Yes
- equipment costs: depreciation
- other cost categories:

³⁹ 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).

⁴⁰ 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).

- 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: see article 6.3 in the GA.

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.

 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).

- **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).
- **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 cumulation of funding/no double funding** — It is strictly prohibited to cumulate 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 under two EU grants. If you would like to nonetheless benefit from different EU funding opportunities, projects must be designed as different actions, clearly delineated and separated for each grant (without overlaps).
- **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 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 the others (or they will be rejected).

- **Resubmission** — Proposals may be changed and re-submitted until the deadline for submission.
- **Rejection** — By submitting the application, all applicants accept the call conditions set out in this Call Document (and the documents it refers to). Proposals that do not comply with all the call conditions will be **rejected**. This applies also to applicants: All applicants need to fulfil the criteria; if any one of them doesn't, they must be replaced or the entire proposal will be rejected.
- **Cancellation** — There may be circumstances which may require the cancellation of the call. In this case, you will be informed via a call or topic update. Please note that cancellations are without entitlement to compensation.
- **Language** — You can submit your proposal in any official EU language (project abstract/summary should however always be in English). For reasons of efficiency, we strongly advise you to use English for the entire application. If you need the call documentation in another official EU language, please submit a request within 10 days after call publication (for the contact information, see *section 12*).
- **Transparency** — In accordance with Article 38 of the [EU Financial Regulation](#), information about EU grants awarded is published each year on the [Europa website](#). This includes:
 - beneficiary names
 - beneficiary addresses
 - the purpose for which the grant was awarded
 - the maximum amount awarded.

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

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