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Directorate C: Fisheries Policy Atlantic, North Sea, Baltic and Outermost Regions
 Unit C3: Scientific Advice and Data Collection

CALL FOR PROPOSALS MARE/2020/08

Strengthening regional cooperation in the field of data collection

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1. INTRODUCTION

Legal basis for this call: Regulation (EU) No 508/2014 of the European Parliament and Council of 15 May 2014 on the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF), and in particular Articles 85(a) and 86 thereof.

Type of grant: Action grant following a call for proposals.

This is a call for proposals for EU grants in the field of fisheries data collection aimed at strengthening regional cooperation, in accordance with the 2020 Work Programme for grants and procurement financed under the EMFF.

The Commission Implementing Decision of 17 December 2019¹ on the financing of the EMFF and the adoption of the work programme for 2020 (“the Decision”), constitutes the basic act and the financing decision under which this call for proposals is published.

The point 2.2.2 of the annex to the Decision relates specifically to the scope and financing of grants for “Strengthening regional cooperation in the area of fisheries data collection”.

This call will be managed by DG MARE and is subject to the standard submission and evaluation procedure (one-stage submission and one-step evaluation).

This call document outlines the following:

- background, objectives, themes and priorities, activities that can be funded and the expected outputs of the call (sections 1 and 2)
- timetable and available budget (section 3 and 4)
- admissibility, eligibility, exclusion, selection criteria, award criteria (sections 5 to 9)
- legal commitment and financial provisions (section 10 -11)
- publicity and processing of personal data (section 12-13)
- submission procedure (section 14)

All the relevant information to this call for proposals is published and available for downloading on the following website under the call number **MARE/2020/08**:

https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-opportunities-maritime-affairs-and-fisheries_en

1.1. Background

Reliable and complete data are essential to the correct functioning of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP)². For this reason, the EU framework for the collection and

¹ C(2019) 8977 (final)

² Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 on the Common Fisheries Policy, amending Council Regulations (EC) No 1954/2003 and (EC) No 1224/2009 and repealing Council Regulations (EC) No 2371/2002 and (EC) No 639/2004 and Council Decision 2004/585/EC. OJ L354, 28.12.2013, p.22

management of fisheries data was established in 2000³, renewed in 2008⁴ and recast in 2017⁵ resulting in the existing Data Collection Framework (DCF). The DCF establishes a harmonised set of EU rules governing the collection, management and use of biological, environmental, technical, and socio-economic data on the fisheries, aquaculture and processing sectors. It aims to ensure that the scientific data necessary for fisheries management are collected, managed and made available to end-users, including bodies designated by the Commission.

Related DCF legal acts:

- Regulation (EU) 2017/1004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 May 2017 on the establishment of a Union framework for the collection, management and use of data in the fisheries sector and support for scientific advice regarding the common fisheries policy and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 199/2008 (current DCF regulation)
- Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2019/909 of 18 February 2019 establishing the list of mandatory surveys and thresholds for the purposes of the multiannual Union programme for the collection and management of data in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors
- Commission Delegated Decision (EU) 2019/910 of 13 March 2019 establishing the multiannual Union programme for the collection and management of biological environmental, technical and socioeconomic data in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors
- Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2016/1701 of 19 August 2016 laying down rules on the format for the submission of work plans for the data collection in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors
- Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2018/1283 of 24 August 2018 laying down rules on the format and timetables for the submission of annual data collection reports in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors

Regulation (EU) 2017/1004 (current DCF Regulation) forms the legal basis for the Data Collection Framework. Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2019/909 and Commission Delegated Decision 2019/910 set out the data to be collected in the form of the EU Multiannual Programme (EU-MAP) for the period of 2020-2021.

³ Council Regulation (EC) No 1543/2000 of 29 June 2000 establishing a Community framework for the collection and management of the data needed to conduct the common fisheries policy

⁴ Council Regulation (EC) No 199/2008 of 25 February 2008 concerning the establishment of a Community framework for the collection, management and use of data in the fisheries sector and support for scientific advice regarding the Common Fisheries Policy

⁵ Regulation (EU) 2017/1004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 May 2017 on the establishment of a Union framework for the collection, management and use of data in the fisheries sector and support for scientific advice regarding the common fisheries policy and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 199/2008 (current DCF regulation)

Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2016/1701 lays down the rules on the format for the submission of work plans for data collection under the EU-MAP and Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2018/1283 lays down the rules on the format and timetables for the submission of annual data collection reports.

1.2. Regional Coordination Groups

Regional coordination groups (RCGs) were established under the current DCF Regulation to facilitate cooperation on data collection among Member States (MS) in the same marine region or on specific fisheries⁶. They also make efforts to coordinate their actions with third countries having sovereignty or jurisdiction over waters in the same marine region. RCGs aim at developing and implementing procedures, methods, quality assurance and quality control for collecting and processing data, which will allow to further improve the reliability of scientific advice. RCGs consist of experts appointed by Member States, including MS's national correspondents for data collection, and the Commission.

The following RCGs were established:

- RCG Baltic (RCG Baltic),
- RCG North Atlantic (RCG NA),
- RCG North Sea & Eastern Arctic (RCG NS&EA),
- RCG Mediterranean and Black Sea (RCG Med&BS),
- RCG Long Distance Fisheries (RCG LDF), and
- RCG Large Pelagics (RCG LP).

To assess and discuss issues that affect several marine regions, the Commission created the Expert Group on Fisheries Data Collection (E02750), which meets in several subgroups annually, such as the Liaison meeting, the National Correspondents meeting, and the Planning Group on Economic Issues (PGECON, a pan-regional group that deals with the collection of the economic data). PGECON is not an RCG but operates in a similar way and with the same objectives and is, therefore, subsumed under the reference to “RCGs” in this call for proposals.

The RCGs are now well established: the work has developed from a single annual Regional Coordination Meeting (RCM) under previous legislation into a continuous cooperation process. RCGs contribute to translating scientific advice into concrete regionally coordinated approaches to data collection, produce reports on specific topics of relevance and organise workshops. All RCGs have adopted rules of procedure (RoP)⁷ and prepared terms of reference (ToR) for their annual meetings. Some RCGs hold joint meetings with common ToR, which in addition may cover several years⁸. RCGs have

⁶ Physical region, as the Baltic Sea; or area of activity, like specific fisheries such as the long distance fisheries.

⁷ PGECON is still in the process of adopting RoPs: RoPs finalised in 2019 are expected to be adopted in 2020.

⁸ The RCG NA and the RCG NS&EA held one single meeting during 2019. For 2020, a single meeting merged also with RCG Baltic is planned. The three RCGs sent common ToR covering the next three years (2019-2021).

established intersessional sub-groups⁹ (ISSG), which work year around on common topics, such as data quality, dialogue between data providers and end users, diadromous fish, regional overviews of fisheries etc, but also on region-specific priorities as agreed at RCG level.

1.3. Challenges for RCGs

The following main challenges to the current operation of the RCGs have been identified.

1.3.1. *Regional work plans*

One of the primary purposes of the RCGs is to prepare regional work plans, which should include, amongst other possible elements, sampling designs/plans, procedures, methods, quality assurance and quality control for collecting and processing data, and conditions for the delivery of data. RCGs are also a vehicle for the preparation and submission to the Commission of regional work plans.

However, discussions in the RCGs do not always go sufficiently beyond the national perspectives to allow achieving concrete, coordinated regional approaches and implementation thereof. As a consequence - while some common parts of national work plans have been elaborated and currently exist (e.g. joined meetings to attend, common pilot studies, as is the case for PETs in the Mediterranean) - no RCG has come forward to date (Spring 2020) with a proposal for a regional work plan for approval by the Commission.

1.3.2. *Administration and coordination*

The annual meetings of RCGs, and the continuous work in the form of ISSG, involve a multitude of administrative and coordination tasks (e.g. finding venues and accommodation, supporting travel arrangements of participants, organising side events, ensuring timely production and distribution of documents, facilitating access to relevant information, written consultations following meetings and/or in preparation of meetings). RCGs have also emphasised the need for the creation of a dedicated *website*¹⁰ to share information and increase the visibility of the RCGs' work to stakeholders.

Under the current set up it is the RCG chairpersons who are performing these tasks (and are expected to follow up on additional upcoming initiatives such as providing updates for the website). This occupies capacities that they could otherwise devote to steering the further development of the content of RCG work to drive successful outcomes, such as progress on the regional work plans and sampling plans.

⁹ At the end of 2019, there counted 15 intersessional sub-groups (ISSG), such as ISSG on Development of Draft Regional WP, ISSG on Metier Issues or ISSG on End-Users and RCGs.

¹⁰ Currently, RCG related information is published on the DCF web site host by JRC:
<https://datacollection.jrc.ec.europa.eu/index.html>

1.3.3. *Regional Databases*

Regional databases (RDBs), referenced under the 2017 DCF Regulation, allow having available data at low aggregation level concentrated in one place and facilitate the work of MS and RCGs, among other things by reducing the burden of multiple data submissions (for data calls) under different formats. RDBs also allow end-users to calculate statistical estimates of data tailored to their needs and help to streamline and ease the reporting of MS on the data collection. Together with the corresponding RCGs, the Commission, MS and end-users are entrusted to cooperate on the creation of RDBs.

RDBs have existed for a period of time for the RCGs Baltic, the RCG North Sea and Eastern Arctic and the RCG North- Atlantic (hosted by ICES). In 2019, data related to the RCG LDF were included in the ICES RDB and data from RCG LP are expected to be hosted as well in this RDB once some necessary adjustments have been completed. However, no RDB has been established for the Mediterranean and Black Seas. For the latter, DCF data of different aggregation levels are still placed in different databases, spread mainly between the Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC) and the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM), which are not necessarily compatible.

2. OBJECTIVES, PRIORITIES AND THE EXPECTED OUTPUTS OF THE CALL

2.1. Objectives

The shared funding for data collection in the EMFF is based on the national envelopes (per MS) and does not foresee EU-wide or regional funding mechanisms. Therefore, this grant aims to support the operation and functioning of the RCGs, helping RCGs to advance beyond national approaches, to achieve in a transparent and impartial way, the expected results of coordinated regional work for data collection.

Building on the results of the call for proposals launched in 2014¹¹ and 2016¹² and other relevant existing work, this call for proposals aims to support projects that further enable RCGs and MS to strengthen regional or EU-wide cooperation on data collection. The purpose of the call helps to provide, as well as develop the tools and support to accomplish further regional or EU-wide cooperation but not to finance activities on a recurrent basis.

2.2. Priorities

The supported projects should, in particular, address the challenges identified in section 1.3. and provide creative and feasible ways forward based on these.

The intention is not to duplicate the activities and outputs already existing, but to build further on them, where applicable. The deliverables of these grants should not be a compilation of existing work - carried out in ongoing or finalised studies, scientific

¹¹ MARE/2014/19, cf. DCF website <https://datacollection.jrc.ec.europa.eu/regional-coordination>

¹² MARE/2016/22, https://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/call-proposals-mare201622_en, cf. DCF website <https://datacollection.jrc.ec.europa.eu/regional-coordination>

working groups of end users, such as ICES¹³ and STECF¹⁴, Member States pilot studies or earlier grants - but should demonstrate novelty, added value and be complementary to the existing accomplishments.

2.3. Activities

The detailed description of the objectives, themes, priorities and expected outputs as well as the description of the work packages for each grant category can be found in the Annexes 1 to 3.

Annex 1: Establishing regional work plans for the following regions covered by the work of RCGs: Baltic / North Atlantic, North Sea, Eastern Arctic / Med & BS / long distance fisheries / large pelagics.

Annex 2: Actions in support of the work of RCGs (administrative support, website, future structure and financing).

Annex 3: Development, of the Regional Database for the Mediterranean and Black Seas.

In order to realise the objectives and priorities outlined above, projects should implement targeted activities resulting in concrete, and measurable outputs and results.

In all cases, the proposed activities must:

- Be in line with and contribute to ongoing operations of RCGs.
- Be adapted to meet specific issues and needs linked to progress of RCGs, including assistance to the Commission where relevant (e.g. presentations on relevant forums).
- Be built on experiences from the past Data Collection projects and other relevant existing works as mentioned in section 2.1.

Applicants are invited to propose the activities that meet the needs of the selected Annex to this call (Annexes 1 to 3) always considering the detailed description of the work packages provided in these Annexes.

Concerning Annex 1, applications should focus on one of the mentioned RCGs. Applications covering more than one RCG could be funded if there is a solid justification of the rationale behind the merge, e.g. joined work plans. The intention of the Commission is to grant up to 6 projects.

Concerning Annex 2, the intention of the Commission is to grant only one project covering all RCGs.

Concerning Annex 3, the intention of the Commission is to grant only one project covering the relevant RCG.

Applicants are allowed to submit multiple applications addressing different RCGs under Annex 1, e.g. one application for the RCG Baltic and one application on the RCG Long distance fisheries. Applicants are also allowed to submit more than one application

¹³ International Council of the Exploration of the Seas

¹⁴ Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries

addressing different Annexes, e.g. application in reply to Annex 1 RCG Med&BS and application in reply to Annex 3 Regional Database for the Mediterranean and Black Sea.

2.4. Expected outputs

The expected outputs resulting from this call for proposals are (i) *regional work plans*, (ii) *actions in support of the work of RCGs*, and (iii) *development work for a Regional Database for the Mediterranean and Black Seas* in order to:

- further develop regionally/EU-widely tools and processes applicable for the data collection framework (data collection, management, storage and transmission)
- facilitate the implementation and regional/EU-wide coordination of MS pilot studies (2017-2019) and results of the 2014 and 2016 grants that detail data collection requirements in specific fields;
- support the implementation of results (from earlier grants) on the establishment and coordination of available and new regional sampling plans, including transfer of knowledge and training of staff in Member States and RCGs;
- facilitate the transfer of knowledge and experience between MS in the different sea basins on fisheries data collection (including regarding observer on board programmes, statistically sound sampling schemes, execution of scientific surveys and data storage systems);
- conduct work between the annual meetings of RCGs and the Planning Group on Economic Issues (PGECON) on the implementation of their work programmes; and
- support the development and establishment of Regional Data Bases as provided for in the DCF Regulation.

3. TIMETABLE

3.1. Indicative timetable

The indicative timetable for this call for proposals is:

	Steps	Date and time or indicative period
(a)	Publication of the call	4th May 2020
(b)	Deadline for submitting applications	31 July 2020 at mid-day (12:00) CET
(c)	Evaluation period	August – October 2020
(d)	Information to applicants	October 2020
(e)	Preparation and signature of grant agreement(s)	October – December 2020
(f)	Start of activities	January 2021

(g)	Progress reports ¹⁵	Every 6 months
(h)	Interim report ¹⁶	Within 60 days after the end of the interim reporting period (Month 1-12 included).
(i)	Final report ¹⁷	Within 60 days after the end of the project.

3.2. Implementation period.

The Project should, in principle, NOT exceed the duration of **24 months**.

The project shall start on the first day of the month following when the last of both parties signs the grant agreement or on the date specified in the grant agreement.

4. BUDGET AVAILABLE

The total budget earmarked for the co-financing of all projects under this call for proposals is estimated at **EUR 1.300.000** and shall be financed from budget line 11.066201 of the General Budget of the European Union for 2020.

The Commission expects to fund 6-8 proposals, with an average budget of approximately EUR 200.000. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of proposals requesting other amounts.

The EU grant is limited to a maximum co-funding rate of 85% of eligible costs actually incurred.

The Commission reserves the right not to distribute all the funds available.

5. ADMISSIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

In order to be admissible, applications must be:

- sent no later than the deadline for submitting applications referred to in section 3 (timetable);
- submitted in writing (see [section 14](#)), using the application form provided in Annexes 4 and 5 to this Call for Proposals and available at https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-opportunities-maritime-affairs-and-fisheries_en ;
- drafted in one of the EU official languages. For practical reasons a translation into English would be appreciated.

Failure to comply with those requirements will lead to rejection of the application.

¹⁵ Please see section 11.3.3.

¹⁶ idem

¹⁷ idem

6. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Applications will only be evaluated if all documents mentioned [in section 14](#) of this call are submitted and if they comply with the following eligibility criteria:

6.1. Eligible applicants

1. Applicants must be legal entities. Natural persons are not eligible as applicants for the purpose of the present call.
2. The following types of entities are eligible to participate in the Call as applicants:
 - non-profit organisations (private or public);
 - public authorities (national, regional, local);
 - international organisations;
 - universities;
 - educational institutions;
 - research centres;
3. Legal entities must be established in one of the EU Member States (including overseas countries and territories)
4. In the event of private bodies, they must be properly constituted and registered under national law.
5. To be considered a public entity, the body in question must fulfil all of the following criteria:
 - The body has been created by a public authority or is governed by private law with a public service mission;
 - The public interest of the body must be explicitly mentioned in the relevant legal or administrative act(s);
 - The body is financed totally or to a large extent by public sources;
 - In the event that the entity stops its activities, all rights and obligations including financial rights and obligations will be transferred to a public authority.

For bodies to be considered as public entities, proof of compliance with all above criteria must be provided together with the proposal.

6. Affiliated entities

Legal entities having a legal or capital link with applicants, which is neither limited to the action nor established for the sole purpose of its implementation, may take part in the action as affiliated entities, and may declare eligible costs as specified in section 11.2.

For that purpose, applicants shall identify such affiliated entities in the application form. The affiliated entities will have to comply with the eligibility and exclusion criteria.

7. Participation of applicants from the UK

Please be aware that following the entry into force of the EU-UK Withdrawal Agreement on 1 February 2020¹⁸ and in particular Articles 127(6), 137 and 138, the references to natural or legal persons residing or established in a Member State of the European Union are to be understood as including natural or legal persons residing or established in the United Kingdom.

UK residents and entities are therefore eligible to participate under this call.

6.2. Multi-beneficiary (Consortium) requirements

1. Proposals must be submitted by a consortium composed of at least three legal entities, as defined in section 6.1.
2. Concerning Annex 1 – the consortium must include applicants from at least three Member States participating in one, and the same, of the following RCGs/type of fisheries: Baltic Sea, North Sea & Eastern Arctic, North Atlantic, Mediterranean & Black Sea, Large pelagic fisheries on highly migratory species or Long distance fisheries beyond EU waters.
3. One of these organisations must act as the consortium coordinator, while the others will act as partners (members of the consortium).
4. The Coordinator is responsible for the management, communication, implementation and coordination of activities amongst the Partners in the selected regions. All partners of the consortium, including affiliated entities, will provide the Coordinator with a power of attorney in writing through a mandate signed for that purpose (Annex 7). The mandate shall fully empower the coordinator to act on the partners' behalf in the context of the grant agreement.
5. EU bodies can NOT be part of the consortium.
6. Applicants must be directly responsible for the preparation and management of the project with the other members of the consortium, i.e. not acting as an intermediary.

6.3. Supporting documents

In order to assess the applicants' eligibility, the following supporting documents are requested:

- **private entity:** extract from the official journal, copy of articles of association, extract of trade or association register, VAT registration document (if, as in certain countries, the trade register number and VAT number are identical, only one of these documents is required);

¹⁸ Agreement on the withdrawal of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland from the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community

- **public entity:** copy of the resolution/law/decreed/decision establishing the entity or, if not available, any other official document proving the establishing the entity by the national authorities;
- **Affiliated entities:** shall demonstrate their legal/capital link with the applicant.

6.4. Eligible activities

Eligible activities are the ones that can be funded and that address the objectives of this call. Examples of activities eligible under this call can be found in section 2.3 and in annexes 1 to 3 of this call.

Projects must clearly demonstrate that they are complementary to the prevention/preparedness efforts already made in their countries.

The activities under these projects may not be included and financed by any other member States' Operational Programme under the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund¹⁹.

6.5. Observers

In addition to eligible applicants as defined in section 6.1, it is possible for other relevant parties to participate with an observer status, e.g. public bodies from non EU Member States, EU Member States from sea basins other than the one targeted by the project, or other regional or international organisations active in the area.

Observer status means that the entity will not receive any European Union co-financing and will not join or sign any statements. Thus participation in any project's activity will be at the observer's own expenses (e.g. travel costs for observers are not eligible under this action). Moreover, these entities will not be taken into consideration for determining compliance with the eligibility conditions for consortia set out above.

7. EXCLUSION CRITERIA

7.1. Exclusion

The authorising officer shall exclude an applicant from participating in call for proposals procedures where:

- (a) the applicant is bankrupt, subject to insolvency or winding-up procedures, its assets are being administered by a liquidator or by a court, it is in an arrangement with creditors, its business activities are suspended, or it is in any analogous situation arising from a similar procedure provided for under EU or national laws or regulations;
- (b) it has been established by a final judgment or a final administrative decision that the applicant is in breach of its obligations relating to the payment of taxes or social security contributions in accordance with the applicable law;

¹⁹ REGULATION (EU) No 508/2014 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 15 May 2014 on the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and repealing Council Regulations (EC) No 2328/2003, (EC) No 861/2006, (EC) No 1198/2006 and (EC) No 791/2007 and Regulation (EU) No 1255/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council

- (c) it has been established by a final judgment or a final administrative decision that the applicant is guilty of grave professional misconduct by having violated applicable laws or regulations or ethical standards of the profession to which the applicant belongs, or by having engaged in any wrongful intent or gross negligence, including, in particular, any of the following:
 - (i) fraudulently or negligently misrepresenting information required for the verification of the absence of grounds for exclusion or the fulfilment of eligibility or selection criteria or in the performance of a contract, a grant agreement or a grant decision;
 - (ii) entering into agreement with other applicants with the aim of distorting competition;
 - (iii) violating intellectual property rights;
 - (iv) attempting to influence the decision-making process of the Commission during the award procedure;
 - (v) attempting to obtain confidential information that may confer upon it undue advantages in the award procedure;
- (d) it has been established by a final judgment that the applicant is guilty of any of the following:
 - (i) fraud, within the meaning of Article 3 of Directive (EU) 2017/1371 of the European Parliament and of the Council and Article 1 of the Convention on the protection of the European Communities' financial interests, drawn up by the Council Act of 26 July 1995;
 - (ii) corruption, as defined in Article 4(2) of Directive (EU) 2017/1371 or Article 3 of the Convention on the fight against corruption involving officials of the European Communities or officials of Member States of the European Union, drawn up by the Council Act of 26 May 1997, or conduct referred to in Article 2(1) of Council Framework Decision 2003/568/JHA, or corruption as defined in the applicable law;
 - (iii) conduct related to a criminal organisation, as referred to in Article 2 of Council Framework Decision 2008/841/JHA;
 - (iv) money laundering or terrorist financing within the meaning of Article 1(3), (4) and (5) of Directive (EU) 2015/849 of the European Parliament and of the Council;
 - (v) terrorist offences or offences linked to terrorist activities, as defined in Articles 1 and 3 of Council Framework Decision 2002/475/JHA, respectively, or inciting, aiding, abetting or attempting to commit such offences, as referred to in Article 4 of that Decision;
 - (vi) child labour or other offences concerning trafficking in human beings as referred to in Article 2 of Directive 2011/36/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council;
- (e) the applicant has shown significant deficiencies in complying with main obligations in the performance of a contract, a grant agreement or a grant decision financed by the Union's budget, which has led to its early termination or to the application of liquidated damages or other contractual penalties, or which has been discovered following checks, audits or investigations by an authorising officer, OLAF or the Court of Auditors;

- (f) it has been established by a final judgment or final administrative decision that the applicant has committed an irregularity within the meaning of Article 1(2) of Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 2988/95;
- (g) It has been established by a final judgement or final administrative decision that the applicant has created an entity in a different jurisdiction with the intent to circumvent fiscal, social or any other legal obligations of mandatory application in the jurisdiction of its registered office, central administration or principal place of business;
- (h) it has been established by a final judgement or final administrative decision that an entity has been created with the intent referred to in point (g);
- (i) for the situations referred to in points (c) to (h) above, the applicant is subject to:
 - (i) facts established in the context of audits or investigations carried out by European Public Prosecutor's Office after its establishment, the Court of Auditors, the European Anti-Fraud Office or the internal auditor, or any other check, audit or control performed under the responsibility of an authorising officer of an EU institution, of a European office or of an EU agency or body;
 - (ii) non-final judgments or non-final administrative decisions which may include disciplinary measures taken by the competent supervisory body responsible for the verification of the application of standards of professional ethics;
 - (iii) facts referred to in decisions of persons or entities being entrusted with EU budget implementation tasks;
 - (iv) information transmitted by Member States implementing Union funds;
 - (v) decisions of the Commission relating to the infringement of Union competition law or of a national competent authority relating to the infringement of Union or national competition law; or
 - (vi) decisions of exclusion by an authorising officer of an EU institution, of a European office or of an EU agency or body.

7.2. Remedial measures

If an applicant declares one of the situations of exclusion listed above (see section 7.4), it must indicate the measures it has taken to remedy the exclusion situation, thus demonstrating its reliability. This may include e.g. technical, organisational and personnel measures to correct the conduct and prevent further occurrence, compensation of damage or payment of fines or of any taxes or social security contributions. The relevant documentary evidence which illustrates the remedial measures taken must be provided in annex to the declaration. This does not apply for situations referred in point (d) of section 7.1.

7.3. Rejection from the call for proposals

The authorising officer shall not award a grant to an applicant who:

- (a) is in an exclusion situation established in accordance with section 7.1; or
- (b) has misrepresented the information required as a condition for participating in the procedure or has failed to supply that information; or

- (c) was previously involved in the preparation of documents used in the award procedure where this entails a breach of the principle of equal treatment, including distortion of competition, that cannot be remedied otherwise.

The same exclusion criteria apply to affiliated entities.

Administrative sanctions (exclusion) may be imposed on applicants, or affiliated entities where applicable, if any of the declarations or information provided as a condition for participating in this procedure prove to be false.

7.4. Supporting documents

All applicants, including the consortium coordinator, the other partners and the affiliated entities must provide a **declaration on their honour** (see template in the annexed application form –Annex 4.a– and available at https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-opportunities-maritime-affairs-and-fisheries_en), signed and dated by an authorised representative, stating that they are not in one of the situations of exclusion referred to in Articles 136(1) and 141 FR.

The Commission reserves the right to verify whether the successful applicants are in any of the situations of exclusion by requiring the supporting documents listed in the declaration of honour.

8. SELECTION CRITERIA

Selection criteria should enable an assessment of the applicant's ability to complete the proposed action. The necessary ability of the applicant will be assessed under both **financial** and **operational** aspects.

8.1. Financial capacity

Applicants must have stable and sufficient sources of funding to maintain their activity throughout the period during which the action is being carried out or the year for the grant is awarded and to participate in its funding. The applicants' financial capacity will be assessed on the basis of the following supporting documents to be submitted with the application:

For public entities and international organisations:

On the basis of article 131(3) FR and given the eligibility criteria set for applicants under section 6 of this call for proposals, such applicants are considered to have stable and sufficient sources of funding to maintain their activity throughout the period during which the action is being carried out and to participate in its funding.

This type of applicants has to submit a declaration of honour that they have the financial capacity to carry out the project, but no additional supporting documents are requested.

For all other entities:

- a) If the total grant value²⁰ is ≤ EUR 60 000:

²⁰ The 'total grant value' is the total grant amount requested for the proposed action, not the portion of the requested grant per applicant.

- a declaration on their honour (to be provided by each of the applicants).
- b) If the total grant value is > EUR 60 000:
- a declaration on their honour, and
- EITHER
- the profit and loss account as well as the balance sheet for the last two financial years for which the accounts were closed;
 - for newly created entities: the business plan might replace the above documents;
- OR
- the financial capacity table provided for in the application form –Annex 4.b–, filled in with the relevant statutory accounting figures, in order to calculate the ratios as detailed in the form.
- c) If the total grant value is > EUR 750 000:
- In addition to the supporting documents required under point b) above, applicants shall provide an audit report produced by an approved external auditor certifying the accounts for the last two financial years available, where such an audit report is available or whenever a statutory report is required by law.
 - In the event of an application grouping several applicants (consortium), the above thresholds apply to each applicant.

On the basis of the submitted documents, in case the Commission considers that financial capacity is weak, it may:

- request further information; decide to give pre-financing covered by a bank guarantee (see section 11.3.2 below);
- where applicable, require the joint and several financial liability of all the co-beneficiaries.
- Or reject the application.

8.2. Operational capacity

Applicants must have the professional competencies as well as appropriate qualifications necessary to complete the proposed action. These qualifications will vary depending on the type of proposed action addressing the detailed work packages described in annexes 1 to 3. Applicants must show the operational capacity requested specifically to perform the proposed action. In this respect, applicants have to submit a declaration on their honour, and the following supporting documents:

- curriculum vitae or description of the profile of the people primarily responsible for managing and implementing the operation (and the parts of it where these are distinct) (accompanied where appropriate, like in the field of research and education, by a list of relevant publications);
- For each applicant, a list of up to 3 activities (i.e. projects, publications, products, services and/or other achievements) relevant to the call content including its technical aspects or to the actions to be carried out;

- Where appropriate, a description of the technical equipment, tools or facilities and patents at the disposal of the applicant;

However, based on article 131(3) of the Commission's Financial Regulation (FR), and given the eligibility criteria set for applicants under section 6 of this Call for Proposals, public entities and international organisations are considered to have the professional competencies, as well as appropriate qualifications, necessary to complete the proposed project. In this respect, applicants have to submit a declaration of honour that they have the operational capacity to carry out the project

The Commission may request further supporting documents to confirm the operational capacity of any applicant. Their form will depend on the nature of the proposal addressing the detailed work packages described in annexes 1 to 3.

9. AWARD CRITERIA

The applications will be checked if they fulfil the formal requirements (admissibility and eligibility) and then evaluated by an evaluation committee against the operational and financial capacity, and award criteria, and then listed in accordance to their quality rank..

The application will be assessed on the basis of the general award criteria described in the table below:

<p>1. Relevance and added value</p> <p>Max. score – 30 points (minimum required 15 points)</p>	<p>Relevance and added value will be assessed on the following basis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Relevance and scope of the proposal and its expected results to achieve the objectives of the action and the detailed requirements covered in annexes 1 to 3; – Added value of the proposal in terms of innovation, synergies/complementary aspects with other relevant initiatives or national and EU policies; – Capacity to involve and promote dialogue and cooperation with relevant stakeholders and mainly RCGs. – Involvement of as many Member States as possible and in terms of appropriate geographical coverage. – The extend to which the project connects to RCGs (consortia have to work together with the relevant RCGs) – The extend to which the project integrates or builds on current data collection efforts including previous projects and initiatives.
<p>2. Project implementation Plan</p> <p>Max. score – 30 points (minimum required 15 points)</p>	<p>The Project implementation Plan will be assessed on the following basis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Effectiveness and coherence of the planned tasks; – Appropriate structure and methodology; – Feasibility in terms of activities and timetable; – Appropriate and balanced allocation of tasks and human resources; – Appropriate project management set-up; – Complementarity of partners in terms of competence and experience in regional cooperation with the aim to delivering the expected results; – Adequate risk management.
<p>3. Budget and cost-effectiveness</p> <p>Max. score – 20 points (minimum required 10 points)</p>	<p>Budget and cost-effectiveness will be assessed on the following basis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Clearly presented and appropriate budget representing cost-effective allocation of financial resources in relation to the planned activities and outputs.
<p>4. Project Impact</p> <p>Max. score – 20 points (minimum required 10 points)</p>	<p>Impact will be assessed on the following basis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Expected outputs and impact; the extent to which the proposal describes the intended long-term impact of the results on the regional cooperation in the field of data collection, beyond the project lifetime, and includes appropriate and concrete measures to sustain the project activities or results after the end of the EU funding. – Dissemination, sustainability and transferability of the expected results and potential multiplier effect.

A maximum of 100 points will be awarded for the quality of the proposal. The required minimum overall score is 60 points and a minimum score of 50% is required for each criterion (see below).

Proposals will be ranked according to their total score.

The Commission may call upon external experts in order to support of the evaluation of the proposals.

Applications that pass both the individual threshold AND the overall threshold will be considered for funding — within the limits of the available budget of the call.

Other applications will not be considered for funding.

10. LEGAL COMMITMENTS

In the event of a grant awarded by the Commission, a grant agreement, drawn up in euro and detailing the conditions and level of funding, will be sent to the applicant, as well as the information on the procedure to formalise the agreement of the parties.

Two copies of the original agreement must be signed first by the beneficiary/coordinator and returned to the Commission immediately. The Commission will sign it last.

Please note that the award of a grant does not establish an entitlement for further support after the end of the project.

The applicants understand that submission of a grant application implies acceptance of the general conditions attached to this call for proposals (See Annex 6 – Model Grant Agreement). These general conditions bind the beneficiary to whom the grant is awarded and shall constitute an annex to the grant decision.

11. FINANCIAL PROVISIONS

11.1. General principles

a) Non-cumulative award

An action may only receive one grant from the EU budget.

Under no circumstances shall the same costs be financed twice by the Union budget. To ensure this, applicants shall indicate in the grant application the sources and amounts of Union funding received or applied for the same action or part of the action or for its (the applicant's) functioning during the same financial year as well as any other funding received or applied for the same action.

b) Non-retroactivity

No grant may be awarded retrospectively for actions already completed.

A grant may be awarded for an action which has already begun only where the applicant can demonstrate in the grant application the need to start the action before the grant agreement is signed.

In such cases, costs eligible for financing may not have been incurred prior to the date of submission of the grant application.

c) Co-financing

Co-financing means that the resources which are necessary to carry out the action may not be entirely provided by the EU grant.

Co-financing of the action may take the form of:

- the beneficiary's and affiliated entities' own resources,
- income generated by the action,
- financial contributions from third parties.

Co-financing may also take the form of in-kind contributions from third parties, i.e. non-financial resources made available free of charge by third parties to the beneficiary.

d) Balanced budget

The estimated budget of the action is to be attached to the application form. It must have revenue and expenditure in balance. A model of a budget overview can be found in Annex 5 - Budget form - https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-opportunities-maritime-affairs-and-fisheries_en ;

The budget must be drawn up in euros.

Applicants who foresee that costs will not be incurred in euros, shall use the exchange rate published on the Infor-euro website available at http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts_grants/info_contracts/inforeuro/inforeuro_en.cfm

e) Implementation contracts/subcontracting

Where the implementation of the action requires the award of procurement contracts (implementation contracts), the beneficiary may award the contract in accordance with its usual purchasing practices provided that the contract is awarded to the tender offering best value for money or the lowest price (as appropriate), avoiding conflicts of interest.

The beneficiary is expected to clearly document the tendering procedure and retain the documentation in the event of an audit.

Entities acting in their capacity as contracting authorities within the meaning of Directive 2014/24/EU²¹ or contracting entities within the meaning of Directive 2014/25/EU²² must comply with the applicable national public procurement rules.

²¹ Directive 2014/24/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 February 2014 on public procurement and repealing Directive 2004/18/EC (OJ L 94, 28.3.2014, p. 65-242)

²² Directive 2014/25/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 February 2014 on procurement by entities operating in the water, energy, transport and postal services sectors and repealing Directive 2004/17/EC (OJ L 94, 28.3.2014, p. 243-374)

Beneficiaries may subcontract tasks forming part of the action. If they do so, they must ensure that, in addition to the above-mentioned conditions of best value for money and absence of conflicts of interests, the following conditions are also complied with:

- a) subcontracting does not cover core tasks of the action;
- b) recourse to subcontracting is justified because of the nature of the action and what is necessary for its implementation;
- c) the estimated costs of the subcontracting are clearly identifiable in the estimated budget;
- d) any recourse to subcontracting, if not provided for in description of the action, is communicated by the beneficiary and approved by the Commission. The Commission may grant approval:
 - (i) before any recourse to subcontracting, if the beneficiaries requests an amendment
 - (ii) after recourse to subcontracting if the subcontracting:
 - is specifically justified in the interim or final technical report and
 - does not entail changes to the grant agreement which would call into question the decision awarding the grant or be contrary to the equal treatment of applicants;
- e) the beneficiaries ensure that certain conditions applicable to beneficiaries, enumerated in the grant agreement (e.g. visibility, confidentiality, etc.), are also applicable to the subcontractors.

N.B. The model grant agreement imposes additional requirements where the value of the contracts necessary for the implementation of the action or subcontracting of tasks forming part of the action exceeds EUR 130.000.

f) Financial support to third parties

Financial support to third parties is not an eligible expenditure.

11.2. Form of the grant

Funding takes the form of mixed financing.

Mixed financing grants are calculated on the basis of a detailed estimated budget indicating clearly the costs that are eligible for EU funding (in particular see section 11.2.1 and 11.2.5 below). The grant amount may neither exceed the eligible costs nor the amount requested. Amounts are indicated in euros.

11.2.1. *Maximum amount requested*

The EU grant is limited to a maximum co-funding rate of **85%** of eligible costs actually incurred.

Consequently, part of the total eligible expenses entered in the estimated budget must be financed from sources other than the EU grant (see section 11.1c)

11.2.2. *Contributions in kind*

The external co-financing may be made up of contributions in kind in order to cover other costs necessary to carry out the project. Such contributions must not exceed:

- either the costs actually borne and duly supported by accounting documents;
- or, in the absence of such documents, the costs generally accepted on the market in question.

In-kind contributions shall be presented separately in the estimated budget to reflect the total resources allocated to the action. Their unit value is evaluated in the provisional budget and shall not be subject to subsequent changes.

In-kind contributions shall comply with national tax and social security rules.

11.2.3. *Eligible costs*

Eligible costs are costs actually incurred by the beneficiary of a grant which meet all the following criteria:

- a) they are incurred within the duration of the action, with the exception of costs related to final reports;
- b) the period of eligibility of costs will be defined in the grant agreement. If a beneficiary can demonstrate the need to start the action before the agreement is signed, expenditure may be authorised before the grant is awarded. Under no circumstances can the eligibility period start before the date of submission of the grant application (see section 11.1b).
- c) they are indicated in the estimated budget of the action.
- d) they are necessary for the implementation of the action;
- e) they are identifiable and verifiable, in particular being recorded in the accounting records of the beneficiary and determined in accordance with the applicable accounting standards of the country where the beneficiary is established and according to the usual cost accounting practices of the beneficiary;
- f) they comply with the requirements of applicable tax and social legislation;
- g) they are reasonable, justified, and comply with the requirements of sound financial management, in particular regarding economy and efficiency.

The beneficiary's internal accounting and auditing procedures must allow direct reconciliation of the costs and revenue declared in respect of the action/project with the corresponding accounting statements and supporting documents.

The same criteria apply to the affiliated entities.

Eligible costs may be direct or indirect.

11.2.4. *Eligible direct costs*

The eligible direct costs for the action are the costs which, **with due regard to the conditions of eligibility set out above**, are identifiable as specific costs directly linked to the performance of the action and which can therefore be booked on it directly, such as :

- (a) the costs of personnel working under an employment contract with the beneficiary or an equivalent appointing act and assigned to the action, provided that these costs are in line with the beneficiary's usual policy on remuneration.

Those costs include actual salaries plus social security contributions and other statutory costs included in the remuneration. They may also comprise of additional remunerations, including payments on the basis of supplementary contracts regardless of the nature of those contracts, provided that they are paid in a consistent manner whenever the same kind of work or expertise is required, independently from the source of funding used;

The costs of natural persons working under a contract with the beneficiary other than an employment contract or who are seconded to the beneficiary by a third party against payment may also be included under such personnel costs, provided that the following conditions are fulfilled:

- (i) the person works under conditions similar to those of an employee (in particular regarding the way the work is organised, the tasks that are performed and the premises where they are performed);
- (ii) the result of the work belongs to the beneficiary (unless exceptionally agreed otherwise); and
- (iii) the costs are not significantly different from the costs of staff performing similar tasks under an employment contract with the beneficiary;

The recommended methods for the calculation of direct personnel costs are provided in section 16.

- (b) costs of the personnel of national administrations to the extent that they relate to the cost of activities which the relevant public authority would not carry out if the project concerned were not undertaken;
- (c) costs of travel and related subsistence allowances, provided that these costs are in line with the beneficiary's usual practices on travel;
- (d) the depreciation costs of equipment or other assets (new or second-hand) as recorded in the beneficiary's accounting statements, provided that the asset:
- (i) is written off in accordance with the international accounting standards and the beneficiary's usual accounting practices; and
 - (ii) has been purchased in accordance with the rules on implementation contracts laid down in the grant agreement, if the purchase occurred within the implementation period;

The costs of renting or leasing equipment or other assets are also eligible, provided that these costs do not exceed the depreciation costs of similar equipment or assets and are exclusive of any finance fee;

Only the portion of the equipment's depreciation, rental or lease costs corresponding to the implementation period and the rate of actual use for the purposes of the action may be taken into account when determining the eligible costs. By way of exception,

the full cost of purchase of equipment may be eligible under the Special Conditions, if this is justified by the nature of the action and the context of the use of the equipment or assets;

- (e) costs of consumables and supplies, provided that they:
 - (i) are purchased in accordance with the rules on implementation contracts laid down in the grant agreement; and
 - (ii) are directly assigned to the action;
- (f) costs arising directly from requirements imposed by the Agreement (dissemination of information, specific evaluation of the action, audits, translations, reproduction), including the costs of requested financial guarantees, provided that the corresponding services are purchased in accordance with the rules on implementation contracts laid down in the grant agreement;
- (g) costs derived from subcontracts, provided that specific conditions on subcontracting as laid down in the grant agreement are met;
- (h) contributions in-kind: if necessary to implement the action, the beneficiaries may use in-kind contributions provided by third parties whether against payment or free of charge. If the in-kind contribution is provided against payment, the beneficiaries may declare costs related to the payment of in-kind contributions as eligible, up to the third parties' costs for the seconded persons, contributed equipment, infrastructure or other assets or other contributed goods and services. If the in-kind contribution is provided free of charge, the beneficiaries may declare costs incurred by the third parties for the seconded persons, contributed equipment, infrastructure or other assets or other contributed goods and services as eligible. The third parties and their contributions must be set out in Annex 4a. The beneficiaries must ensure that the Agency, the European Court of Auditors (ECA) and the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) can exercise their rights.
- (i) value added tax (VAT) in relation to eligible direct costs where it is not recoverable/deductible by the beneficiary.

11.2.5. *Eligible indirect costs (overheads)*

Indirect costs are costs that are not directly linked to the action implementation and therefore cannot be attributed directly to it.

A flat-rate amount of **7%** of the total eligible direct costs of the action, is eligible as indirect costs, representing the beneficiary's general administrative costs which can be regarded as chargeable to the action/project.

Indirect costs may not include costs entered under another budget heading.

11.2.6. *Ineligible costs*

The following items are not considered as eligible costs:

- a) return on capital and dividends paid by a beneficiary;

- b) debt and debt service charges;
- c) provisions for losses or debts;
- d) interest owed;
- e) doubtful debts;
- f) exchange losses;
- g) costs of transfers charged by the bank of a beneficiary;
- h) costs declared by the beneficiary under another action receiving a grant financed from the Union budget. Such grants include grants awarded by a Member State and financed from the Union budget and grants awarded by bodies other than the Commission for the purpose of implementing the Union budget. In particular, beneficiaries receiving an operating grant financed by the EU or Euratom budget cannot declare indirect costs for the period(s) covered by the operating grant, unless they can demonstrate that the operating grant does not cover any costs of the action.
- i) excessive or reckless expenditure;
- j) deductible VAT.

11.2.7. *Calculation of the final grant amount*

The final amount of the grant to be awarded to the beneficiary is established after completion of the action, upon approval of the request for payment containing the following documents, including relevant supporting documents where appropriate:

- a final report providing details of the implementation and results of the action;
- a final financial statement of costs actually incurred;
- where applicable, a certificate on the financial statements of the action for each beneficiary.

EU grants may not have the purpose or effect of producing a profit within the framework of the action of the beneficiary. **Profit shall be defined as a surplus of the receipts over the eligible costs incurred by the beneficiary**, when the request is made for payment of the balance. In this respect, where a profit is made, the Commission shall be entitled to recover the percentage of the profit corresponding to the Union contribution to the eligible costs actually incurred by the beneficiary to carry out the action.

The final amount of the grant is calculated by the Commission at the time of the payment of the balance. The calculation involves the following steps:

Step 1 — Application of the reimbursement rate to the eligible costs

The amount under step 1 is obtained by applying the reimbursement rate specified in section 11.2.1 and 11.2.5 to the eligible costs actually incurred and accepted by the Commission.

Step 2 — Limit to the maximum amount of the grant

The total amount paid to the beneficiaries by the Commission may in no circumstances exceed the maximum amount of the grant as indicated in the grant agreement. If the amount obtained following Step 1 is higher than this maximum amount, the final amount of the grant is limited to the latter.

If volunteers' work is declared as part of direct eligible costs, the final amount of the grant is limited to the amount of total eligible costs approved by the Commission minus the amount of volunteers' work approved by the Commission.

Step 3 — Reduction due to the no-profit rule²³

‘Profit’ means the surplus of receipts over the total eligible costs of the action, where receipts are the amount obtained following Steps 1 and 2 plus the revenue generated by the action for beneficiaries and affiliated entities other than non-profit organisations.

In-kind and financial contributions by third parties are not considered receipts.

The total eligible costs of the action are the consolidated total eligible costs approved by the Commission. The revenue generated by the action is the consolidated revenue established, generated or confirmed for beneficiaries and affiliated entities other than non-profit organisations on the date on which the request for payment of the balance is drawn up.

If there is a profit, it will be deducted in proportion to the final rate of reimbursement of the actual eligible costs of the action approved by the Commission.

Step 4 — Reduction due to improper implementation or breach of other obligations

The Commission may reduce the maximum amount of the grant if the action has not been implemented properly (i.e. if it has not been implemented or has been implemented poorly, partially or late), or if another obligation under the Agreement has been breached.

The amount of the reduction will be proportionate to the degree to which the action has been implemented improperly or to the seriousness of the breach.

11.3. Reporting and payment arrangements

11.3.1. *Payment arrangements*

The beneficiary may request the following payments provided that the conditions of the grant agreement are fulfilled (e.g. payment deadlines, ceilings, etc.). The payment requests shall be accompanied by the documents provided below and detailed in the grant agreement:

Payment request	Accompanying documents²⁴
A pre-financing payment corresponding to 40% of the maximum grant amount will be transferred to the beneficiary within 30 days of the date when the last of the two parties signs the grant agreement or from the date stipulated	financial guarantee (see section 11.3.2)

²⁴ Other documents can be requested depending on the amount to be paid or the amount of the grant awarded (e.g. Certificate on the Financial Statement) as mentioned in the Model Grant Agreement (Annex 6)

<p>in the grant agreement. The clearing of the pre-financing will be done with the payment of the balance (See section 11.3.2).</p>	
<p>An interim payment: of a maximum of 40% of the grant amount will be made within 60 days of reception and the approval by the Commission of an interim report on the project implementation including a financial statement and payment claim.</p> <p>The total amount of pre-financing and interim payment shall not exceed 80% of the maximum amount of the grant.</p>	<p>(a) interim technical report (b) interim financial statement</p>
<p>Payment of the balance</p> <p>The Commission will establish the amount of this payment on the basis of the calculation of the final grant amount (see section 11.2.5 above). If the total of earlier payments is higher than the final grant amount, the beneficiary will be required to reimburse the amount paid in excess by the Commission through a recovery order.</p>	<p>(a) final technical report (b) final financial statement (c) summary financial statement aggregating the financial statements already submitted previously and indicating the receipts</p>

11.3.2. *Pre-financing guarantee*

In the event that the beneficiary is a private entity a pre-financing guarantee for up to the same amount as the pre-financing may be requested in order to limit the financial risks linked to the pre-financing payment. This is not necessary when the amount of the pre-financing is up to EUR 60 000 included.

The financial guarantee, in EUR, shall be provided by an approved bank or financial institution established in one of the EU Member States. Amounts blocked in bank accounts shall not be accepted as financial guarantees.

The guarantee may be replaced by:

- a joint and several guarantee by a third party or,
- a joint guarantee of the beneficiaries of an action who are parties to the same grant agreement.

The guarantee shall be released as the pre-financing is cleared against the payment of the balance, in accordance with the conditions laid down in the grant agreement.

11.3.3. *Reporting requirements*

The coordinator shall submit the following reports to the Commission:

- 2 technical progress reports (not linked to payments);
- 1 interim technical implementation report and interim financial statement;

- 1 final technical implementation report and final financial statement.

Progress reports shall cover the following periods:

- The first progress report shall cover the period from month 1 to month 6 included.
- The second progress report shall cover the period from month 13 to 18 included.

Progress reporting for months 7 to 12 and 19 to 24 shall be included in the respective interim and final reports.

Progress reports shall be submitted to the Commission within 15 calendar days of the end of the period in question.

The interim report is due within 60 days of the end of the month 12 of the project.

The final report is due within 60 days of the end of the project.

11.3.4. *Reporting format*

Progress reports shall be submitted to the Commission in the electronic format. They shall demonstrate the progress made on the milestones provided for by the grant agreement. Progress reports are requested for project monitoring purposes and do not result in any payment. Deliverables due for the corresponding period should be submitted with the progress reports.

The interim and final reports must be sent to the Commission both electronically as well as in a paper form in English.

The interim report shall detail the work progress and achievements as well as assessment of the budget implementation during the reporting period, the outputs delivered, and provide a forecast for the second year of implementation. Deliverables due for the corresponding period should be submitted with the interim report.

The final report shall include an executive summary and shall detail all the actions done, the outputs delivered and the final results achieved. All final deliverables should be submitted with the final report.

Reports must be submitted by the coordinator in English, using the available reporting templates (Annex V to the model Grant Agreement) (https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-opportunities-maritime-affairs-and-fisheries_en). Beneficiaries have to ensure the language quality of the reports and deliverables.

In case the deliverables are not available in English, the applicant should provide a short summary in English (max 2 pages) together with the corresponding deliverable.

12. PUBLICITY

12.1. By the beneficiaries

Beneficiaries and its affiliated entities must clearly acknowledge the European Union's contribution in all publications or in conjunction with activities for which the grant is used.

In this respect, beneficiaries are required to give prominence to the name and emblem of the European Commission on all their publications, posters, programmes and other products realised under the co-financed project.

If this requirement is not fully complied with, the beneficiary's grant may be reduced in accordance with the provisions of the grant agreement.

In addition to the text and logo relevant to the EU programme or sub-programme, the RAO will provide beneficiaries with a disclaimer stating that the EU is not responsible for the views displayed in the publications and/or in conjunction with the activities for which the grant is used.

12.2. By the Commission

With the exception of scholarships paid to natural persons and other direct support paid to natural persons in most need, all information relating to grants awarded in the course of a financial year shall be published on an Internet site of the European Union institutions no later than the 30th June of the year following the financial year in which the grants were awarded.

The Commission will publish the following information:

- name of the beneficiary;
- address of the beneficiary when the latter is a legal person, region when the beneficiary is a natural person, as defined on NUTS 2 level²⁵ if he/she is domiciled within the EU or equivalent if domiciled outside the EU;
- subject of the grant;
- amount awarded.

Upon a reasoned and duly substantiated request by the beneficiary, the publication shall be waived if such disclosure risks threatening the rights and freedoms of individuals concerned as protected by the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union or harm the commercial interests of the beneficiaries.

13. PROCESSING OF PERSONAL DATA

The reply to any call for proposals involves the recording and processing of personal data (such as name, address and CV). Such data will be processed pursuant to Regulation (EU) 2018/1725²⁶ on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data by the Community institutions and bodies and on the free movement of such data. Unless indicated otherwise, the questions and any personal data requested that are required to evaluate the application in accordance with the call for proposal will be processed solely for that purpose by the **Head of Unit C3** of the Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries.

²⁵ Commission Regulation (EC) No 105/2007 of 1 February 2007 amending the annexes to Regulation (EC) No 1059/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of a common classification of territorial units for statistics (NUTS), OJ L39, 10.2.2007, p.1.

²⁶ Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2018 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data by the Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 and Decision No 1247/2002/EC (Text with EEA relevance.), PE/31/2018/REV/1, OJ L 295, 21.11.2018, p. 39–98 , <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2018/1725/oj>

Personal data may be registered in the Early Detection and Exclusion System by the Commission, should the beneficiary be in one of the situations mentioned in Articles 136 and 141 of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046²⁷. For more information, see the Privacy Statement on:

https://ec.europa.eu/info/data-protection-public-procurement-procedures_en

14. PROCEDURE FOR THE SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

Proposals must be submitted by the deadline set out under section 3 (**31 July 2020 at mid-day (12:00) CET**).

No modification to the application is allowed once the deadline for submission has elapsed. However, if there is a need to clarify certain aspects or to correct clerical mistakes, the Commission may contact the applicant during the evaluation process.

Applicants will be informed in writing about the results of the selection process.

14.1. Submission on paper

Application forms are available at https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-opportunities-maritime-affairs-and-fisheries_en ;.

The application must contain the following documents:

1. Grant application form (including declaration on honour);
2. Estimated budget of the action (budget form);
3. Information on the applicants:
 - supporting documents as specified in section 8
 - a Legal Entity Form²⁸ and supporting documents as specified in section 6.3 for all applicants and affiliated entities
 - a Financial Identification Form (only by the coordinator of the consortium)

The paper version of the application will legally constitute the application. The paper version must include the completed grant application form including the declarations of honour (see point 1 above) and the estimated budget of the action (see point 2 above). The documents providing further information on the applicants (see point 3 above) shall be provided only in electronic format at application stage; a paper version of these documents may be requested later in the award process.

Applications must be submitted in the correct form, duly completed and dated. They must be submitted in **1 original copy**, signed by the person authorised to enter into legally binding commitments on behalf of the applicant organisation.

Before submission, please make sure to carefully check the last page of the application form, which provides the checklist of all documents to be submitted with the application.

In addition to the submission on paper, the applicant is requested to submit an **electronic copy** of the proposal (i.e. the grant application including the declaration on honour and the

²⁷ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32018R1046>

²⁸ http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts_grants/info_contracts/legal_entities/legal_entities_en.cfm

estimated budget) and all its annexes (see point 3 above) on a USB-stick or similar electronic support **in the same envelope as the paper version**.

Where applicable, additional information considered necessary by the applicant can be included on separate sheets.

The envelope of the paper version must clearly state the reference of the Call (MARE/2020/08).

Applications must be sent either by **post** (evidence will be constituted by the postmark) or by **courier service** (evidence will be constituted by the acknowledgement of receipt) to the following address:

Post:

European Commission
Directorate-General for
Maritime Affairs and Fisheries
Unit MARE/C3
(Ref. **MARE/2020/08**)
Office: J-79 02/022
B – 1049 BRUSSELS

Courier service:

European Commission
Directorate-General for
Maritime Affairs and Fisheries
Unit MARE/C3
(Ref. **MARE/2020/08**)
Office: J-79 02/022
Avenue du Bourget 1
B – 1140 BRUSSELS (Evere)

Or by **hand-delivery**, (evidence will be constituted by the acknowledgement of receipt signed and dated by the official in the Commission's central mail department who takes delivery) by the applicant in person or by an agent, to the following address:

European Commission
Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries
Unit MARE/C3 (Ref. **MARE/2020/08**)
Office: J-99 03/030
Avenue du Bourget 1
B – 1140 BRUSSELS (Evere)

The department is open from 08.00 to 17.00 from Monday to Thursday, and from 8.00 to 16.00 on Fridays. It is closed on Saturdays, Sundays and Commission holidays

Applications sent by fax or e-mail will not be accepted.

14.2. Contacts

All questions related to the call may be sent by electronic means (e-mail) to the functional mailbox: MARE-2020-08@ec.europa.eu no later the 23rd July 2020, indicating the call reference **MARE/2020/08** and the subject title "Strengthening regional cooperation in the area of fisheries data collection".

Such questions, together with their answers, if of a general interest, will be published on:

https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-opportunities-maritime-affairs-and-fisheries_en ;

15. ANNEXES:

Technical annexes (1 to 3)

Annex 1: Establishing regional work plans for the following regions covered by the work of RCGs: Baltic / North Atlantic, North Sea, Eastern Arctic / Med & BS / long distance fisheries / large pelagics.

Annex 2: Actions in support of the work of RCGs (administrative support, website, future structure and financing).

Annex 3: Development, of the Regional Database for the Mediterranean and Black Seas.

Forms and template annexes (4a, 4b and 5). To be completed and submitted.

Annex 4a: Application form (including declaration on honour and checklist of documents to be provided)

Annex 4b: Financial capacity table.

Annex 5: Estimated budget of the action (budget form) (Annex III of the Grant Agreement)

Administrative annexes (6 to 11). For reference only. To be used during project implementation.

Annex 6: Model grant agreement (including Special conditions and Annex II: General Conditions)

Annex 7: Mandate (Annex IV of the Grant Agreement)

Annex 8: Technical report templates (Annex V of the Grant Agreement)

Annex 9: Model Financial Statement (Annex VI of the Grant Agreement).

Annex 10: Template of Terms of reference for the certificate on the financial statements (Annex VII of the Grant Agreement).

Annex 11: Model Report on the Distribution of the EU Final Financial Contribution (Annex X of the Grant Agreement).

16. APPENDIX

Specific conditions for direct personnel costs

1. Calculation

The ways of calculating eligible direct personnel costs laid down in points (a) and (b) below are recommended and accepted as offering assurance as to the costs declared being actual.

The Commission may accept a different method of calculating personnel costs used by the beneficiary, if it considers that it offers an adequate level of assurance of the costs declared being actual.

a) for persons working exclusively on the action:

{ monthly rate for the person

multiplied by

number of actual months worked on the action }

The months declared for these persons may not be declared for any other EU or Euratom grant.

The **monthly rate** is calculated as follows:

{ annual personnel costs for the person

divided by 12 }

using the personnel costs for each full financial year covered by the reporting period concerned.

If a financial year is not closed at the end of the reporting period, the beneficiaries must use the monthly rate of the last closed financial year available;

b) for persons working part time on the action

(i) If the person is assigned to the action at a fixed pro-rata of their working time:

{ monthly rate for the person multiplied by pro-rata assigned to the action

multiplied by

number of actual months worked on the action }

The working time pro-rata declared for these persons may not be declared for any other EU or Euratom grant.

The monthly rate is calculated as above.

(ii) In other cases:

{hourly rate for the person multiplied by number of actual hours worked on the action}

or

{daily rate for the person multiplied by number of actual days worked on the action}

(rounded up or down to the nearest half-day)

The number of actual hours/days declared for a person must be identifiable and verifiable.

The total number of hours/days declared in EU or Euratom grants, for a person for a year, cannot be higher than the annual productive hours/days used for the calculations of the hourly/daily rate. Therefore, the maximum number of hours/days that can be declared for the grant are:

{number of annual productive hours/days for the year (see below)}

minus

total number of hours and days declared by the beneficiary, for that person for that year, for other EU or Euratom grants}.

The ‘**hourly/daily rate**’ is calculated as follows:

{annual personnel costs for the person

divided by

number of individual annual productive hours/days} using the personnel costs and the number of annual productive hours/days for each full financial year covered by the reporting period concerned.

If a financial year is not closed at the end of the reporting period, the beneficiaries must use the hourly/daily rate of the last closed financial year available.

The ‘number of individual annual productive hours/days’ is the total actual hours/days worked by the person in the year. It may not include holidays and other absences (such as sick leave, maternity leave, special leave, etc). However, it may include overtime and time spent in meetings, trainings and other similar activities.

2. Documentation to support personnel costs declared as actual costs

For **persons working exclusively on the action**, where the direct personnel costs are calculated following **point (a)**, there is no need to keep time records, if the beneficiary signs a **declaration** confirming that the persons concerned have worked exclusively on the action.

For **persons assigned to the action at a fixed pro-rata of their working time**, where the direct personnel costs are calculated following **point (b)(i)**, there is no need to keep time records, if the beneficiary signs a declaration that the persons concerned have effectively worked at the fixed pro-rata on the action.

For **persons working part time on the action**, where direct personnel costs are calculated following **point (b)(ii)**, the beneficiaries must keep **time records** for the number of hours/days declared. The time records must be in writing and approved by the persons working on the action and their supervisors, at least monthly.

In the absence of reliable time records of the hours worked on the action, the Commission may accept alternative evidence supporting the number of hours/days declared, if it considers that it offers an adequate level of assurance.