



European Maritime and Fisheries Fund

Call for proposals

Blue Economy SME Window call 2020
EMFF-BEW-2020¹

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European Maritime and Fisheries Fund
Blue Economy SME Window call 2020
EMFF-BEW-2020²

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² Call ID in 2019 EMFF Work Programme: EMFF-2020-2.1.8

0. Introduction

This is a call for proposals for EU action grants for SMEs in the area of Blue Economy under the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund.

The call for proposals is launched in accordance with the 2020 Work Programme for the implementation of the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) (section 2.1.8 of the annex to the Work Programme)³ and will be managed by the Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (EASME).

It covers the following topic:

- **EMFF-BEW-2020** – BlueInvest Grants: investing in Blue Innovation

We invite you to read the call documentation carefully, i.e. this **call document** and the **Guide for applicants**. 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 impacts of the call (sections 1 and 2)
 - timetable and available budget (section 3)
 - admissibility, eligibility, and other conditions (sections 4, 5 and 7)
 - award criteria (section 6)
 - evaluation procedure (section 8)
 - legal and financial set-up and submission procedure (section 9 and 10)
- the Guide for applicants outlines the:
 - procedures to register and submit proposals online via the [EU Funding & Tender Opportunities Portal](#) ('Portal');
 - recommendations for the preparation of the proposal;
 - explanation on the application form (Proposal Template - Part A and B);
 - overview of the cost eligibility criteria.

Applicants are encouraged to take into account the principles of the [EASME Environmental Policy Charter](#) when preparing their proposals. More information about the environmental policy of EASME is provided in Annex to this call.

You also are encouraged to visit the [EASME website](#) to consult the list of projects funded previously under the EMFF and the [BlueInvest platform](#) to discover a package of coaching, investment readiness assistance, capacity building and other business services.

³ Commission Implementing Decision C(2020)6973 of 16.10.2020 amending Decision C(2019) 8977 of 17.12.2019 on the financing of the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and the adoption of the work programme for 2020

1. Background to the call

The Commission's economic report on the blue economy in 2020 shows that the maritime sectors present a huge potential⁴ to support Europe's post-crisis economic recovery through innovative products and services creating high-value jobs that shift the EU towards the objectives of the Green Deal.

However, a market study⁵ conducted by the Commission shows that businesses in innovative, sustainable and circular blue economy sectors, while receiving financial support including funding from Horizon 2020, lack support, particularly for SMEs, on the path towards market entry and scaling up.

The objective, therefore, is to help close this funding gap by supporting the development and market uptake of new products, services and business models in blue economy value chains, allowing pre-commercial innovations ultimately becoming revenue-generating activities that provide sustainable and innovative blue growth in Europe's sea basins.

The grants offered to SMEs in this blue economy window call for proposals shall help advance market-readiness of new products, services or processes. Activities could, for example, include trials, prototyping, validation, demonstration and testing in real environment conditions, and market replication.

A sustainable blue economy can also contribute significantly to European Green Deal objectives, including the biodiversity, circular economy, digital earth and farm to fork strategies and the transition to a climate-neutral economy. It can help communities and industries hit hard by the coronavirus or migration of key workers to recover through a more resilient economy with reduced carbon and environmental footprint and competitiveness on a global scale.

Also branded as 'BlueInvest Grants', this call for proposals belongs to a package of measures set up under the '[BlueInvest platform](#)' encompassing assistance services for investment readiness and EUR 75 million worth of liquidity made available in 2020 for investing equity in funds specialising entirely or mostly in the blue economy or co-investing in particular companies.

Definitions

- *Blue economy* — The blue economy covers economic activities that take place in the marine environment or that use sea resources as an input, as well as economic activities outside the marine environment that are involved in the production of goods or the provision of services that will contribute to those activities. They can also be land-based activities such as, for instance, micro-algae production and processing, land-based aquaculture, or similar.
- *Value chain* — the entire range of activities that (one or more) actors engage in to bring a product from its conception to its end use, ranging from design, production and marketing to distribution and support to the final consumer⁶.

⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/sites/maritimeaffairs/files/2020_06_blueeconomy-2020-ld_final.pdf, https://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/sites/maritimeaffairs/files/2020_06_blueeconomy-2020-annexes-ld-part1_final.pdf, https://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/sites/maritimeaffairs/files/2020_06_blueeconomy-2020-annexes-ld-part2_final.pdf

⁵ <https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/aee1a34c-3b0c-11e9-8d04-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

⁶ <http://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/value-chains>

- *Demonstration project* — a project consisting of activities directly aiming at producing plans and arrangements or designs for new, altered or improved products, processes or services. For this purpose they may include prototyping, demonstrating, piloting, large-scale product validation and market replication. The new solution can be a new technology, process, service, business model, or a new application of an existing solution.
- *Key enabling technologies* — KETs comprise micro and nanoelectronics, nanotechnology, industrial biotechnology, advanced materials, photonics, and advanced manufacturing technologies⁷. They provide the basis for innovation in a wide range of industries such as automotive, food, chemicals, electronics, energy, pharmaceuticals, construction, and telecommunications. They can be used in emerging and traditional sectors.
- *Business plan* — The business plan is a document including details of expected sales and costs, and how the business can be financed, and showing why the plan will make money.
- *First Commercialisation plan* — The first commercialisation plan describes the strategy that your organization/consortium will use to generate revenue and, business opportunities. It maps out a strategy to move forward and describes the current and anticipated landscape/resources required to address the opportunity enabled by the innovation presented in the proposal⁸.
- *Letter of intent* —
 - a letter from a financial intermediary eligible for equity or guarantees from the European Fund for Strategic Investment (EFSI) or equivalent institution which intends to invest in the product/service/solution provided that the work described in the submitted proposal is carried out accordingly.

or

 - significant firm commitment from a customer who will buy the product or service on this basis.

The letter of intent shall mention the name of investor or customer, type of investment support or purchasing conditions (including quantity), amount, duration, date and signature.

- *Pitch deck presentation* — A pitch deck is a brief presentation, often created with a software package (ex.: PowerPoint, Keynote, Prezi, etc.), used to provide a quick overview of one's business plan to an audience. Typically, one will use a pitch deck during face-to-face or online meetings with potential investors, customers, partners, and co-founders.

⁷ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - "Preparing for our future: Developing a common strategy for key enabling technologies in the EU" SEC(2009) 1257 final /*COM/2009/0512*/

⁸ Commercialization is the process of bringing new products or services to market. The broader act of commercialization entails production, distribution, marketing, sales, customer support, and other key functions critical to achieving the commercial success of the new product or service.

2. Objectives – Scope- activities – expected impacts of the call

Objectives

The objectives of this call for proposals are to:

- a) Bring to market new products, services, processes, and business models in blue economy value chains and help advance their market-readiness;
- b) develop sustainable and innovative blue economy in Europe's sea basins;
- c) de-risk investment in these projects to facilitate their access to other financing schemes for the next stages of their activities.

The proposals should aim at developing business concepts further into a market-ready product, service or process aligned with the applicant's blue economy growth strategy. Projects are therefore expected to reach Technology Readiness Level⁹ (TRL) between 6-8¹⁰, as defined in the [General Annex G of H2020 Work Programme](#).

Scope and activities that can be funded

In order to achieve the objectives above, proposals should aim to:

- establishing new product and/or service and/or processes and/or business model in the blue economy value chains that contributes to one or more Commission political priorities, with a particular focus on the objectives targeted by the European Green Deal¹¹, including e.g. biodiversity, circular economy, digital earth and farm to fork strategies and the transition to a climate-neutral economy with reduced carbon and environmental footprint that is competitive on a global scale.
- and/or
- shifting existing products and/or services and or processes and/or business model in the blue economy value chains towards the above mentioned political priorities and objectives.

A non-exhaustive list of relevant areas for the blue economy includes:

- the blue bioeconomy – the cultivation, husbandry or capture of living material from fresh or saltwater and activities based on the use or processing of this material
- digital transformation of ocean and coastal activities
- renewable energy – including energy from wind, sun (floating), tide, wave and thermal gradients; logistic or supporting activities in that area are covered

⁹ Technology Readiness Levels (TRL): scale applied by public and industry stakeholders to assess the maturity of evolving technologies/applications in terms of their feasibility and commercial potential. The Technology Readiness Level (TRL) of the proposed actions must be from 6 to 9 (see [General Annex G of the H2020 Work Programme](#) to assess the TRL of your innovation):

TRL 6 - Technology demonstrated in relevant environment
 TRL 7- System prototype demonstration in operational environment
 TRL 8 - System complete and qualified
 TRL 9 - Actual system proven in operational environment

¹⁰ The limit to the frame of intervention of the proposed actions is to pre-commercial activities

¹¹ https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/european-green-deal-communication_en.pdf

- enabling technologies such as sensors, corrosion or biofouling resistant materials or coating, digitisation, electricity transmission equipment, multi-purpose platforms
- production of new products from living or non-living resources that would otherwise be wasted
- cleaner shipping
- pollution monitoring, clean-up or management
- new facilities that support the diversification or energy efficiency of ports
- sustainable tourism aiming at reducing its carbon footprint or enhancing biodiversity, or efficiently managing resources (e.g. water, food and waste) or tourist flows (e.g. diversifying offer, addressing seasonality and safety)

Excluded areas are:

- exploration or extraction of gas and petroleum

Activities could, for example, include trials, prototyping, validation, demonstration and testing in real- or close to real environment conditions, and market replication.

Applicants must explain how their proposals will advance towards the commercial phase by improving the market-readiness of innovative products and services and demonstrating their benefit to potential clients.

Expected impacts

Proposals should specify the concrete outcome of the projects in terms of new products and/or services and criteria for their market uptake. Particular attention should be paid to Intellectual Property protection and ownership; applicants will have to present convincing measures to ensure the possibility of commercial exploitation ('freedom to operate').

Projects are expected to achieve the following impacts:

- Enhance SMEs profitability and growth performance,
- Generate a measurable social and environmental impact, contributing to EU policy priorities as, for example, climate neutral and circular economy ('European Green Deal'), and the [UN's Sustainable Development Goals](#) (e.g. SDG 14),
- Seize new market and business opportunities in the EU and beyond,
- Increase private investment in blue innovations, notably by leveraging private co-investment and/or follow-up investments,
- Demonstrate European added value, by contributing in a concrete way to EU growth, creation or maintenance of high quality jobs and, where relevant, to the EU's sea-basin strategies¹²,
- Help communities and industries hit hard by the coronavirus or migration of key workers to recover through a more resilient economy with reduced carbon and environmental footprint that is competitive on a global scale.

¹² Sea basins strategies Atlantic, Baltic Sea, Black Sea, Western Mediterranean or Adriatic and Ionian Seas: https://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/policy/sea_basins_en

Applicants should justify how they address some or all of the expected impacts listed above.

The expected impact should be clearly described in qualitative and quantitative terms (e.g. on turnover, employment, market size, IP management, sales, return on investment and profit).

3. Timetable & available call budget

Time-table

Timing (planned)	
Call publication:	12 November 2020
Opening of submissions:	12 November 2020
Deadline for applications:	16 February 2021 – 17:00 CET
Evaluation:	February – May 2021
Information on evaluation result:	June-August 2021
Grant agreement signature (indicative time):	September-November- 2021
Indicative Starting time:	October-December 2021

Call budget

The available call budget is **EUR 20 000 000**.

This budget might be increased by maximum 20%.

EASME considers that proposals requesting a contribution in the range **between EUR 700 000 and EUR 2 500 000** would allow the specific objectives of the Call topic to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of proposals requesting other amounts.

EASME reserves the right not to award all available funds for this call depending on the applications received and the evaluation results.

4. Admissibility conditions

Admissibility

Applications must be submitted before the call deadline (*see time-table section 3*).

Applications must be submitted electronically via the Funding & Tender Opportunities Portal Electronic Submission System (accessible via the Call Topic page in the [Search Funding & Tenders](#) section). Paper submissions are no longer possible.

Applications (including annexes and supporting documents as listed in section 10) must be submitted using the forms provided inside the Electronic Submission System (not the documents available on the Call Topic page — these are only for information).

The application must be readable, accessible and printable and contain all the requested information and all required annexes and supporting documents (*see section 10*).

Applications are limited to 45 pages, additional pages will not be considered by the evaluators.

5. Eligibility conditions

Participants

General eligibility conditions for participants:

1. In order to be eligible for a grant, the applicants must:

- be exclusively for-profit SMEs' e.g. micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises, as defined in Commission Recommendation 2003/361/EC, that are not 'non-profit legal entities' (i.e. 'legal entity which by its legal form is non-profit-making or which has a legal or statutory obligation not to distribute profits to its shareholders or individual members')
- be legally established in EU Member States (including overseas countries and territories OCTs)¹³

By way of derogation applicants established in non-EU countries are eligible for funding only if their involvement is necessary in view of the nature of the action and in order to reach its objectives. This shall be adequately justified in the application.

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).

Special rules may apply for entities from certain countries (e.g. entities which are established in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea or the city of Sevastopol, countries covered by [Council sanctions](#), entities covered by Commission Guidelines No [2013/C 205/05](#)¹⁴. Such entities are not eligible to participate in any capacity, including as subcontractors or recipients of financial support to third parties under the grant (if any).

To prove eligibility, all applicants must register in the [Participant Register](#) — before the call deadline — and upload the necessary documents showing legal status and origin. In addition applicants must obtain a positive SME assessment in the Participant Register and be validated as 'for profit entity'.

¹³ The Overseas Countries and Territories (as per Annex II of the Treaty on the functioning of the EU) are: Anguilla (UK), Aruba (NL), Bermuda (UK), Bonaire (NL), British Antarctic Territory (UK)*, British Indian Ocean Territory (UK)*, British Virgin Islands (UK), Cayman Islands (UK), Curaçao (NL), Falkland Islands (UK), French Polynesia (FR), French Southern -and Antarctic Territories (FR)*, Greenland (DK), Montserrat (UK), New Caledonia and Dependencies (FR), Pitcairn (UK), Saba (NL), Saint Barthelemy (FR), Sint Eustatius (NL), Sint Maarten (NL), South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands (UK)*, Saint Helena, Ascension Island, Tristan da Cunha (UK), St. Pierre and Miquelon (FR), Turks and Caicos Islands (UK), Wallis and Futuna Islands (FR). (*) OCTs without a permanent local population. OCTs have a specific status since they are not part of the territory of a Member State but closely linked to it and not a fully independent state.

¹⁴ 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). Note that these guidelines extend to third parties receiving financial support within the meaning of Article 204 EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

Linked third parties (i.e. affiliated entities¹⁵ that participate in the project with their own funding, but do not become beneficiaries) are allowed and must comply with all conditions set out in this call (just like applicants) (see below page 18).

For UK applicants: Please note that following the entry into force of the EU-UK Withdrawal Agreement¹⁶ on 1 February 2020 (and in particular Articles 127(6), 137 and 138), the references to natural or legal persons residing or established in an EU Member State are to be understood as including persons residing or established in the United Kingdom. UK entities are therefore eligible to participate under this call.

Specific eligibility conditions for participants:

2. The applications can be submitted by a consortium of partners¹⁷ or a single applicant.
3. The consortium coordinator or the single applicant submitting the application has to be established in an EU Member State.

Activities

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

Where applicable, applicants should explain how their proposal build on, complement or differ from previously funded projects, whether EU or supported from other sources.

Financial support to third parties is not allowed.

Duration

Projects are expected to run for a duration of up to 36 months depending on the scope of the project (extensions may be granted only exceptionally, for duly justified reasons and following the formal agreement of EASME as granting authority).

¹⁵ See Article 187 EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

¹⁶ Agreement on the withdrawal of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland from the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community (OJ 2019 C 384 I).

¹⁷ For profit SMEs only.

6. Award criteria

This call is subject to a two-step evaluation procedure (see section 8. Evaluation & award procedure)

Admissible and eligible applications will be evaluated and ranked against the following award criteria that will be applied for each evaluation step as described below:

INNOVATION Step 1- 25% WEIGHTING	IMPACT Step 1 – 50% WEIGHTING	IMPLEMENTATION Step 1- 25% WEIGHTING
<p>Objectives and scope and methodology</p> <p>Soundness of the concept and credibility of the proposed methodology.</p> <p>Clarity and pertinence of the overall and specific objectives for the project, which should be measurable and realistic and within its duration. Consistency of objectives with the expected exploitation and impact of the project.</p> <p>Challenge and solution</p> <p>Quality and effectiveness of the methodology to identify the business need, technological challenge or market opportunity.</p> <p>Timeliness of innovation.</p> <p>Plans to overcome potential barriers to entry into the market (legal, regulatory and technology standards requirements).</p>	<p>Market and business opportunities</p> <p>Projected competitive advantage of proposed solution backed up by thorough and realistic analysis of competitors (including substitutes and alternatives).</p> <p>Quality and effectiveness of the proposed measures to reach the targeted users and/or customers, unique selling point, and addressed market type (e.g. niche, low/high volume, new/mature), size (e.g. volume, value, geographical scope), growth rate, and targeted market share.</p> <p>Market uptake and increase of private investment</p> <p>Quality and effectiveness of the strategy for knowledge management and protection including IPR strategy (e.g. IPR assets), and of the measures to ensure commercialisation ('freedom to operate').</p>	<p>Consortium cooperation & roles</p> <p>Consortium cooperation & roles - Note: Not applicable for mono-beneficiary grants (single applicants). In the case of a consortium, demonstration that each of the partners constitutes an essential part of the project.</p> <p>Complementarity of the participants (all beneficiaries and linked third parties) and extent to which the consortium, as a whole, brings together the necessary expertise.</p> <p><i>(Note: if there is a partner from a non-EU country, justification of why their involvement is necessary in view of the nature of the action and its objectives – see section 5).</i></p>

<p>Innovation potential</p> <p>Extent that the proposed work is beyond the state of the art, and demonstrate innovation potentials, including its current development stage referring to Technology Readiness Levels (TRL) (see General Annex G to the Horizon 2020 Work Programme 2018-2020)</p>	<p>Quality and effectiveness of the plans for subsequent financing of the proposed innovation, notably leverage of private co-investment and/or follow-up investments.</p> <p>European added value</p> <p>The extent to which the project contribute to a European dimension: including its potential for replicability/transferability of the results in the EU; and its contribution to reducing regional disparities.</p> <p>The extent to which the project shows potential to generate measurable social and environmental impacts contributing to EU goals as listed in the call text.</p> <p>The extent to which the proposed innovation contributes to EU policies, including EU growth and the creation or maintenance of high quality jobs in the EU.</p> <p>Communication and dissemination</p> <p>Quality of the proposed strategy for communicating and disseminating the project results and activities, including how to reach relevant target group(s), appropriate activities, tools and channels. Where relevant measures for public or societal engagement.</p>	<p>Work plan, management structures and decision-making mechanisms and risk management</p> <p>Quality and effectiveness of the work plan, providing a time-efficient planning (Gantt chart or equivalent).</p> <p>Quality and effectiveness of the organisational structure and the decision-making mechanisms, and their appropriateness to the complexity and scale of the project.</p> <p>Appropriateness of the identified potential risks, uncertainties and difficulties related to the implementation of the project, and of the measures/strategy for addressing them, including the likelihood and impact (high, medium, low) of each risk.</p> <p>Use of resources</p> <p>Explanation of how the project represents good value for money and description of how applicant(s) ensure(s) cost efficiency in the estimated budget (taking into account the project set-up, budget and outputs and deliverables).</p> <p>Extent to which the resources assigned to work packages are in line with the activities proposed and allow achieving their objectives and deliverables.</p>
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INNOVATION Step 2- 25% WEIGHTING	IMPACT Step 2 – 50% WEIGHTING	IMPLEMENTATION Step 2- 25% WEIGHTING
<p>Feasibility</p> <p>The technological, practical and economic feasibility of the proposed innovation, area of application and/or business plan. If relevant, explanation of the scalability of the model.</p>	<p>Growth performance</p> <p>Quality and effectiveness of the outline of business model, the revenue model and commercialisation plan (marketing channels and techniques for customers/users outreach and retention, key partners in value chain), and appropriateness of the time-to-market or deployment.</p> <p>Rate of projected impact of innovation on the company financials (profit/loss, turnover and cash flows), and efficiency/productivity improvement in the 3 years following the launch of this project.</p>	<p>Team</p> <p>Appropriateness of the team, their achievements and experience (underlining strengths and weaknesses), their roles within the project including those of the company owner(s), staff and experts).</p> <p>Appropriateness of the company's ownership and capital structure, and potential investor/customer support (based on the letter of intent).</p>

Maximum points (step 1 and step 2): 30.

Individual thresholds (per award criterion): 3 points out of 5. Half points can be given.

Overall threshold for step 1: 10 points.

Overall threshold for step 1 and step 2: 21 points.

Highest scored proposals that pass the individual thresholds AND the overall threshold for step 1 and step 2 will be considered for funding — within the limits of the available indicative budget per topic.

Other applications will be rejected.

The evaluation procedure is explained further in section 8.

7. Other conditions

Financial capacity

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

The financial capacity check will be carried out by the Commission services on the basis of the documents project participants will be requested to upload in the [Participant Register](#) (profit and loss account and balance sheet for the last two closed financial years, or for newly created entities possibly the business plan; for applicants requesting more than EUR 750 000: audit report produced by an approved external auditor, certifying the accounts for the last closed financial year).

The analysis will take into account elements such as dependency on EU funding and deficit and revenue in previous years.

It will normally be carried out for all applicants, 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 (low-value grant).

If needed, it may also be carried out for linked third parties.

If the financial capacity of project participants is considered not satisfactory, the following may be required:

- further information
- an enhanced financial responsibility regime, i.e. full joint and several responsibility for all applicants (*see below, section 9*)
- (one or more) pre-financing guarantees (*see below, section 9*)

or

- propose no pre-financing
- reject your participation or, if needed, the entire application.

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

Operational capacity

Applicants must have the know-how and qualifications to successfully implement the project.

This capacity will be assessed on the basis of the experience of the applicants and their teams.

Applicants will have to show this via the following information¹⁸:

¹⁸ By filling in the operational capacity fiche (Annex 2 to the Proposal Template (Part B))

- for each applicant, a list of 2 or 3 activities (i.e. projects, publications, products, services and/or other achievements) relevant to the call content and connected to the subject of the proposal
- where appropriate, a description of the technical equipment, tools or facilities and patents at the disposal of the applicants.

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

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

Exclusion

Applicants that are subject to an EU administrative sanction (i.e. exclusion or financial penalty decision)¹⁹ or in one of the following situations²⁰ are excluded from receiving EU grants and will automatically be rejected:

- 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 misconduct²¹ (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or natural 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 natural 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 or grant decision (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or natural 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 natural 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 natural persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant).

¹⁹ See Article 136(1) EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

²⁰ See Articles 136(1) and 141(1) EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

²¹ 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.

Applicants will also be rejected if it turns out during the grant award procedure that they²²:

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

²² See Article 141(1) EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

⚠ IMPORTANT

- **Coordinator & consortium** — The coordinator represents the consortium towards the EU. You must have agreement of the other members and their mandate to act on their behalf and will have to confirm this in your application. Moreover you will have to declare that the information in the proposal is correct and complete and that all participants comply with the conditions for receiving funding (especially eligibility, financial and operational capacity, no exclusion, etc.) and have agreed to participate. Before signing the grant agreement, each participant will have to confirm this again by signing a declaration of honour (DoH). Proposals without full support will be rejected.
- **Linked third parties** — Applicants may participate with linked third parties (i.e. affiliated entities) that receive funding. Linked third parties must comply with all the conditions set out in this call (just like applicants), but they do not sign the grant agreement and do not count towards the minimum eligibility criteria for consortium composition.
- **Subcontractors** — Subcontracting is allowed, but subject to specific rules as stated in the Article 10 of the Grant agreement.
- **Registration** — All applicants must register in the [Participant Register](#) — before the call deadline — and upload the necessary documents showing legal status and origin. Linked third parties can register later (during grant preparation).
- **Completed/ongoing projects** — Applications for projects that have already been completed will be rejected; applications 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 proposal submission).
- **Balanced project budget** — Applicants 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*). You may be requested to lower the estimated costs, if they are ineligible (including excessive).
- **No-profit rule** — Grants may NOT give a profit (i.e. surplus of receipts + EU grant over costs). This will be checked at the end of the projects.
- **No double funding** — Any given action may receive only one grant from the EU budget. The project must therefore NOT receive any financial support under any other EU funding programme (including EU funding managed by authorities in EU Member States or other funding bodies, *e.g. Regional Funds, Agricultural Funds, EIB loans, etc.*). Cost items may NOT be declared twice under different EU actions.
- **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 the Guide for applicants for the detailed cost eligibility conditions.*

- **Multiple applications** — Applicants may submit more than one application for *different* projects under the same call (and be awarded a grant for them).

Organisations may participate in several applications.

BUT: if there are several applications for the *same/very similar* project, only one application will be accepted and evaluated; the applicants will be asked to withdraw one of them (or it will be rejected)

- **Language** — You can submit your proposal in any official EU language. However, for reasons of efficiency, we strongly advise to use English. If you need the call document in another official EU language, please submit a request within 10 days after call publication (for the contact information, see section 10).
- Applications that do not comply with all the call conditions will be **rejected**. This applies also to applicants: All applicants need to fulfil the criteria; any applicant that does not meet all criteria must be replaced or the entire proposal will be rejected.

8. Evaluation & award procedure

This call is subject to a two-step evaluation procedure.

Under step 1, applications will be checked by EASME against the formal requirements (admissibility and eligibility check). Admissible and eligible applications will be then evaluated by an evaluation committee (assisted by independent experts) against the operational capacity and award criteria (see section 6) and then ordered in a ranking list according to their evaluation score for step 1. Proposals that are outside scope will be scored '0' for the "Innovation" criterion (— with the comment 'out of scope of the call') and not further evaluated.

Ranked proposals above threshold of step 1 (see section 6) will all pass to step 2 only if their cumulative EU requested grant amount is inferior to twice the amount of the available call budget. If the above cumulative EU requested grant amount is superior to twice the amount of the available call budget, ranked proposals will then pass on to step 2 until their cumulative EU requested grant amount for grant funding is as close as possible to twice the amount of the available call budget. Therefore, the actual threshold to pass to step 2 will be dynamic.

Proposals that pass to step 2 are to be invited for an **interview**, that is expected to take place during the week of **26-30 April 2021**, to clarify their proposal (especially with regard to aspects relating to the award criteria of step 2).

The interviews may be held in Brussels or remotely, e.g. by videoconference. The modalities of the interview will be communicated to the applicants in the invitation letter.

Based on the total of the weighted scores obtained after steps 1 and 2, proposals above threshold will be ranked in descending order. Proposals within the available budget will be funded.

The evaluation committee has the right to decide to fund at least one proposal for each EU sea basin amongst those eligible for funding. In the case of ex-aequo proposals (proposals given the same overall score), the following method is applied: Proposals are first prioritised according to scores given for the award criterion 'impact'. Where those scores are equal, priority is then determined using scores for the award criterion 'innovation'. If a distinction still cannot be made, a further prioritisation can be done by considering the overall project portfolio and the creation of positive synergies between projects, and/or other factors related to the objectives of the call for proposals (including geographical diversity). All applicants will be informed of the evaluation outcome after the conclusion the overall evaluation procedure.

⚠ IMPORTANT

- **No commitment for funding** — Invitation to grant preparation does NOT constitute a formal commitment for funding. We will still need to make various legal and financial 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 receiving the grant.

9. Legal & financial set-up of the grants

If your project is selected for funding, you will be asked to sign a grant agreement (available on [Portal Reference Documents](#)).

This grant agreement will set the framework for your grant and its terms and conditions, in particular provisions on deliverables, reporting and payments.

Starting date & project duration

The project starting date and duration will be fixed in your grant agreement (art. 3). Normally the starting date will be after grant agreement signature. Retroactive application can be granted exceptionally only for duly justified reasons; in such case, the earliest possible starting date is the proposal submission date.

Project duration: the projects are expected to have a duration up to 36 months depending on their scope (extensions will be granted only exceptionally and for duly justified reasons – see page 11 above).

Maximum grant amount, reimbursement of eligible costs & funding rate

All grant parameters (maximum grant amount, funding rate, total eligible costs etc.) will be fixed in your grant agreement (art. 5).

Project budget: See section 3 above. The grant awarded may be lower than the amount requested.

The grant will be a reimbursement of actual costs. This means that it will reimburse ONLY certain types of costs (eligible costs) and ONLY those costs you *actually* incurred for your project (NOT the *budgeted* costs). For more details see below "*Cost eligibility rules*".

The costs will be reimbursed at the funding rate fixed in the grant agreement (70%).

EU grants may NOT produce a profit. If there is a profit (i.e. surplus of receipts + EU grant over costs), it will be deducted from the final grant amount.

The received final grant amount will therefore depend on a variety of criteria (*actual costs incurred and project income; eligibility; compliance with all the rules under the grant agreement, etc.*).

Cost eligibility rules

For the cost eligibility rules, see the model grant agreement (art. 6) and the Guide for applicants.

Specific cost eligibility rules for this call:

- 7% fixed flat-rate for indirect costs
- depreciation costs for equipment
- project activities must take place in one of the eligible countries
- financial support to third parties is not allowed
- subcontracting of action tasks is subject to special rules as stated in the Article 10 of the Grant agreement and must be approved by EASME (either as part of your proposal or in a periodic/final report)
- in-kind contributions against payment are allowed (in-kind contributions for free are allowed, but they are cost-neutral, i.e. cannot be declared as cost and will not be counted as receipts)
- VAT — please note that there are new rules in place since 2013 for public entities (VAT paid by beneficiaries that are public bodies acting as public authority is NOT eligible)
- costs for the introductory meeting will be eligible as travel costs (2 persons, return ticket to Brussels, accommodation for one night) — if the meeting takes place after the project starting date set out in the grant agreement.

Reporting & payment arrangements

The reporting and payment arrangements will be fixed in the grant agreement (art. 15 and 16).

After grant signature, EASME will provide you with a float to start working on the project (pre-financing of 40% of the maximum grant amount; exceptionally less or no pre-financing).

There will be 1 or more interim payments, each linked to a periodic report, depending on the duration of the project.

At the end of the project, you will be invited to submit a final report and EASME will calculate the final grant amount. If the total of earlier payments is higher than the final grant amount, EASME will ask you (your coordinator) to pay back the difference (recovery).

Deliverables

Standard deliverables will be listed in the grant agreement (art. 14). The project-specific deliverables will be listed in Annex 1.

Pre-financing guarantee

If a pre-financing guarantee is required, it will be fixed in the grant agreement (art 16.2). The amount will be fixed during grant agreement preparation, and will be equal to or lower than the pre-financing for the grant.

The guarantee should be in euro and issued by an approved bank/financial institution established in an EU Member State.

If the project participants are established in a non-EU country and would like to provide a guarantee from a bank/financial institution in that country, they should

contact Commission services (this may be exceptionally accepted, if it offers equivalent security).

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

The guarantee is NOT linked to individual consortium members. You are free to organise how the guarantee amount should be provided (by one or several beneficiaries, for the overall amount or several guarantees for partial amounts). It is important that the requested amount is covered and the guarantee(s) are sent by the coordinator before the pre-financing (through the Portal) AND the original by post.

If agreed with us, the bank guarantee may be replaced by a joint and several 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.

Special provisions

IPR rules: see model grant agreement (art. 19)

Promotion & visibility of EU funding: see model grant agreement (art. 22)

Cost rejection, grant reduction, recovery, suspension & termination

The grant agreement (chapter 6) provides for the measures that may be taken in case of breach of contract (and other violations of law).

Liability regime for recoveries

The liability regime for recoveries will be set out in the grant agreement (art. 28), i.e. either:

- limited joint and several liability with individual ceilings – each beneficiary up to *its* 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 its debt.

10. How to submit an application?

All applications must be submitted electronically via the Portal Electronic Submission System (accessible via the Call Topic page in the [Search Funding & Tenders](#) section). Paper submissions are no longer possible.

The **submission process** is explained in the [Online Manual](#) (together with detailed instructions for the IT tool).

Mandatory annexes & supporting documents (directly available in the Submission System) for this call are:

- operational capacity fiche (annex 2 to the Proposal Template (Part B))
- EMFF project indicators table (annex 3 to the Proposal Template (Part B))

- business plan²³ (annex 4 to the Proposal Template (Part B))
- first commercialisation plan (annex 5 to the Proposal Template (Part B))
- letter of intent to be uploaded by applicants²⁴ (annex 6 to the Proposal Template (Part B)).
- pitch-deck presentation (provided in pdf)²⁵ giving a high-level overview of the various aspects of the proposal.

The pitch-deck will exclusively be considered for the step 2 of the evaluation

Please note that only the pitch-deck provided as part of your proposal may be used during the interview (i.e. no update possible).

Other annexes

- A detailed budget table is available on the Call Topic page (Annex 1 to the proposal part B). You are not required to use this template to prepare your proposal, nor upload it with your application, but you will be requested to provide it if you are selected for funding. However it is highly advisable to submit the detailed budget table with the proposal.

Applicants are encouraged to take into account the principles of [EASME's Environmental Policy Charter](#).

Contact

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

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

Please indicate clearly the reference of the call for proposals and the topic to which your question relates to in the subject line (*see call document cover page*).

²³ Applicants are expected to present and include elements of their business plan and commercialisation plan in part B of the proposal; in addition, they are expected to provide further precise details for each of those plans in the respective dedicated annexes.

²⁴ The letter does not need to comply with a specific formal template but must indicate such elements as the name of the recipient company, name of the investor, type of investment support, amount, date, signature, duration.

²⁵ The pitch-deck should not conform to a specific template but its contents must address the aspects of the proposal highlighted in the evaluation criteria. The pitch presentation shall not last more than 10 minutes.

⚠ IMPORTANT

- **Consult** the Portal Call Topic page regularly. We will use it to publish updates and additional information on the call.

- **Don't wait** until the end.

Questions received later than 7 days before the call deadline cannot be answered.

We strongly advise you to complete your proposal sufficiently in advance of the deadline, to avoid any last minute technical problems. Any problems due to last minute submissions (*e.g. congestion, etc.*) will be at your risk. The call deadline will NOT be extended.

- Before submitting a proposal, all applicants must be **registered** in the [Participant Register](#) and obtain a participant identification code (PIC). One PIC is required for each applicant.
- By submitting their proposal, all applicants **accept**:
 - The terms and conditions of this call (as described in this call document and the documents to which it refers)
 - To use the electronic exchange system in accordance with the [Portal Terms & Conditions](#).
- After the call deadline, the proposal is locked and can no longer be changed.
- Applicants may be contacted after the call deadline if there is a need to **clarify** certain aspects of your **proposal** or for the correction of clerical mistakes.
- Applicants may be asked to submit **additional documents** after the call deadline (*e.g. for the legal entity validation, LEAR appointment and financial capacity check*).
- An **introductory meeting** will possibly be organised for successful applicants to discuss project management, administrative and financial aspects and reporting obligations. Participation by the coordinator (persons in charge of project coordination and financial matters) will be mandatory.
- **For transparency reasons**, information about EU grants awarded is published each year on the [Europa website](#). This includes:
 - the beneficiaries' names
 - the beneficiaries' 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 the rights and freedoms under the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights or harm your commercial interests.

- **Data privacy** — The submission of an application under this call involves the collection, use and processing of personal data (such as name, address and CV). This data will be processed in accordance with Regulation (EU) No 2018/1725 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 (repealing Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 with effect from 11 December 2018). It will be processed solely for the purpose of evaluating your proposal (and subsequent management of your grant and, if needed, programme monitoring, evaluation and communication). Details are available in the [Portal Privacy Statement](#).
- **Cancellation** — There may be circumstances which may require the cancellation of the call. In this case, you will be informed via a call update. Please note that cancellations are without entitlement to compensation.