Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership

Call Announcement

2023 First Joint Transnational Co-Funded Call

The way forward: a thriving sustainable blue economy for a brighter future

Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership

2023

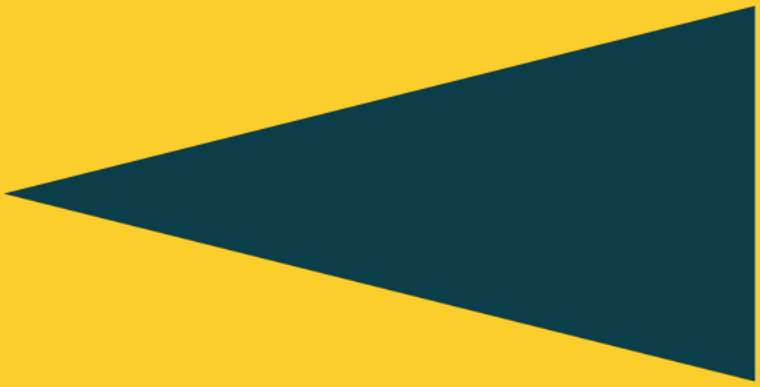

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Table summarizing the different editions of this document, including the changes made within each version

VERSION	PUBLICATION DATE	CHANGES MADE
V0	**13/02/23**	N/A
V1	**03/03/23**	Additional participating country in the call : Brazil ; updates made at 4.1 and in Table 1 LATVIA/LCS: update of the funded priority areas for Latvia (Table 1)
V2	**10/03/23**	BRAZIL/CONFAP: update of the overall budget ITALY/MUR: update of the overall budget
V3	**17/03/23**	BRAZIL/CONFAP: update of the overall budget

1.0 BACKGROUND OF THE JOINT CALL

The Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership (SBEP) is starting in 2022 under Horizon Europe. The vision of the Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership is to design, steer and support a just and inclusive transition to a regenerative, resilient, and sustainable blue economy. This Partnership aims to boost the transformation needed towards a climate-neutral, sustainable, productive, and competitive blue economy by 2030 while creating and supporting the conditions for a healthy ocean for the people by 2050. A total of 23 countries among Member-States (MS) and Associated Countries (AC) with the support of the European Commission (EC) are participating in this wide initiative.

The Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership will deliver solutions to strengthen European Union (EU) and international science-policy interfaces in marine- and maritime-related domains of the EU Green Deal and Digital Europe strategies through aligning national, regional, and EU R&I priorities and bringing together science, industry, policy, and citizens. In addition, it will contribute to accelerating the post-pandemic recovery and resilience of NextGenerationEU.

In line with the "EC COM (2021) 240 final" on "a new approach for a sustainable blue economy in the EU. Transforming the EU's Blue Economy for a Sustainable Future"[1] , the Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership rolls out impact-oriented pathways to:

- Catalyse the transformation of ocean economy value chains towards climate neutrality by 2050, delivering a resilient future for our seas and oceans promoted by marine ecosystems restoration, biodiversity conservation, and a healthy ocean.

- Deliver ocean knowledge and impact-driven R&I solutions.

- Enable cooperation to respond to international, EU, and national regulations, recommendations, and policy strategies, *e.g.*, Green Deal, Digital Europe, Water

[1] EC COM (2021) 240 final 'A new approach for a sustainable blue economy in the EU: Transforming the EU's Blue Economy for A Sustainable Future'.

Framework Directive (WFD), Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD), Maritime Spatial Planning Directive (MSPD), Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), Integrated Maritime Policy (IMP), Biodiversity Strategy, Farm to Fork, Circular economy action plan, European Data Strategy, and the Proposal for a Nature Restoration Law characterised by restoration quality objectives with very stringent targets and in the frame of United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN-SDGs), the EU Europe's strategy for international cooperation[2] , amongst others.

- Contribute to the social and digital transition by developing innovative governance frameworks that benefit marine and maritime communities, including by reinforcing skills in line with the EC COM (2020) 274 final – EU Skills Agenda[3] and enhance our ocean observation capacity, contributing to a functional EOOS (the European Ocean Observation System), and GEOSS (the Global Earth Observing System of Systems).

A main ambition for this partnership is to launch a series of annual co-funded joint calls tackling priority areas drawn from the Strategic Research and innovation Agenda (SRIA) of the Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership (Figure 1). The partnership will also identify other mechanisms for alignment to be tested at a later stage and look for further economic support of R&I programs leveraging other funding and finance streams, including, the NextGenerationEU recovery plan, sustainable private capital (*e.g.*, of banks, companies, foundations) to accelerate market uptake, structural funds, and producing a cascade of investments. In parallel, a long-term structuring ambition will support the creation of a community of practice, fostering co-creation, coordinating all relevant initiatives at the pan-European level, promoting the EU blue economy, and seeking cooperation at the global level.

The 2023 Joint Call is the first Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership call, and it pools national and regional financial resources through participation of ministries and funding

[2] EC COM (2021) 252, final Global Approach to Research and Innovation, Europe's strategy for international cooperation in a changing world. Europe's strategy for international cooperation in a changing world.
[3] EC COM (2020)274final - EU Skills Agenda.

organisations from 23 countries responsible for funding research and innovation actions in blue economy, with the financial support from the EC.

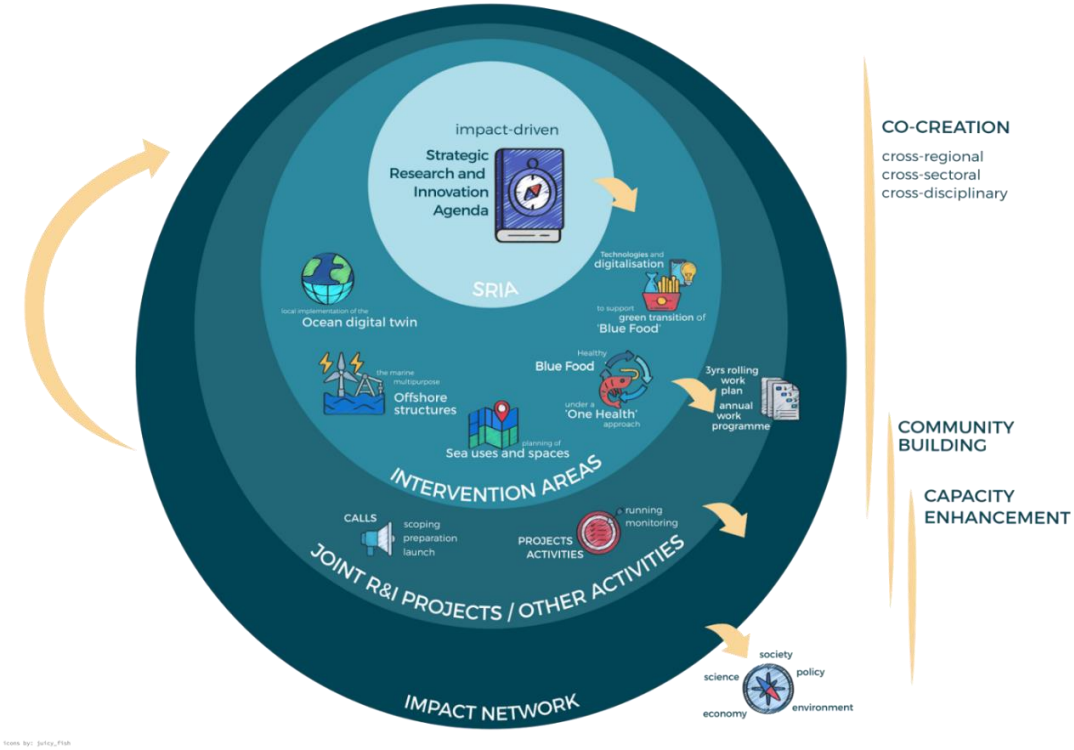

Figure 1: The Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership approach entails a 4-dimension (4D) rolling structure to design calls and manage, monitor, and ensure the impact of the co-funded R&I projects and other activities. The Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership architecture is comprised of the SRIA, the Intervention Areas (IAs), the joint R&I projects / other activities and the impact network and function according to the co-creation, community building and capacity enhancement principles.

2.0 CONTEXT AND OBJECTIVES OF THE JOINT CALL

The COVID-19 pandemic accentuated the vulnerabilities in the EU economy and the need for greater autonomy in terms of production and supply chains of goods, services, and workforce to ensure resilience. This was acutely highlighted in key blue economy sectors such as seafood and coastal tourism, and maritime sectors on which the

livelihoods of communities in peripheral regions are often completely dependent. An opportunity to tackle the challenges presented by the pandemic is in advancing science-industry collaboration to achieve a more resilient and sustainable recovery of the blue economy[4]. For instance, sustainable offshore investments could provide at least five times greater returns than costs[5], demonstrating that sustainability and economic development are not mutually exclusive goals, but reinforce one another. Moreover, it is predicted that the ocean can sustainably provide six times more food than it does today through sustainable management and technological innovation[6]. In addition, research[7] has shown that restoring and protecting the world's large marine ecosystems would not only result in a healthier ocean, with associated positive impacts for coastal communities and livelihoods but also transform several maritime sectors resulting in significant opportunities for new jobs[8], requiring new skills.

In several maritime sectors were identified advances[9] with the potential to deliver 'win-win solutions', *i.e.*, strengthening economic development while at the same time supporting ecosystem preservation and restoration. Delivering such win-win solutions across all maritime sectors will require the establishment of new businesses, new business models, and the use of direct and indirect government support to change ocean business, in some cases incremental, but in others, transformative. Based on research, knowledge, and data, ocean industries and SMEs can drive the innovation needed to

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[4] United Nations Global Compact Blue Resilience Brief: Towards a more resilient and sustainable blue economy opportunities for science-industry joint action and collaboration. Sustainable Ocean Business Action Platform https://ungc-communications-assets.s3.amazonaws.com/docs/publications/Towards-a-More-Resilient-and-Sustainable-Blue-Economy.pdf

[5] Konar, M. & Ding, H. A Sustainable Ocean Economy for 2050: Approximating Its Benefits and Costs (World Resources Institute, 2020).

[6] Costello, C., L. Cao, S. Gelcich et al. 2019 The Future of Food from the Sea. Washington, DC: World Resources Institute.

[7] Hudson, A. (2017) Restoring and Protecting the world's large marine ecosystems: An engine for job creation and sustainable economic development. Environmental Development 22: 150-155 https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envdev.2016.10.003

[8] Hudson, A. (2017) Restoring and Protecting the world's large marine ecosystems: An engine for job creation and sustainable economic development. Environmental Development 22: 150-155 https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envdev.2016.10.003

[9] OECD (2019), Rethinking Innovation for a Sustainable Ocean Economy, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264311053-en

address the grand challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss, and post-pandemic recovery, and meet the Green Deal targets. Digitalization, technological and nature-based solutions, knowledge-based governance and decision-making systems, social innovation, Open Science, equitable access to Findable Accessible Interoperable and Reusable (FAIR) data, enhanced Ocean Literacy, and engagement of citizens are further essential components to fast-track the transition to climate-neutral and sustainable practices.

Cooperation for the Implementation of Smart Specialization Strategies (RIS) represents a key opportunity, not only to prioritise regional research and innovation investments in blue economy sectors, but also to promote interregional partnerships and blue economy value chains across borders.

RIS can be considered as a starting point for understanding the specialisation and the development trajectory envisioned by each region, and whether the region would be relevant for innovations or becoming specific demonstration sites developing the required technologies or innovations needed.

The impact of the pandemic has triggered the need to accelerate the speed and scale of the twin green and digital transitions to enable the transformation of the blue economy.

However, to pursue this transformation, several bottlenecks need to be addressed. Policy responsibilities, R&I disciplines, and industrial sectors are often compartmentalised or siloed. This issue is common at all levels: global, EU, national and local. These silos discourage cooperation across socioeconomic sectors and disciplines and ultimately prevent the provision of knowledge for "green" development of, and transformation to, and evidence and knowledge-based blue economy[10]. Other shortcomings are policy disconnects resulting in a lack of harmonised definitions, results, and frameworks around ecosystem services, thus limiting their contributions to the valuation of services and measurements of the impacts of interventions. In the case of the Ecosystem Approach

[10] European Commission, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, LAB – FAB – APP: Investing in the European future we want: report of the independent High-Level Group on maximising the impact of EU research & innovation programmes, Publications Office, 2017, https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/403189

to Management (EAM), a planning procedure that integrates the management of human activities and their institutions with the knowledge of the functioning of ecosystems (as defined in CBD (2000)[11]), overcoming the knowledge fragmentation across maritime/marine sectors as well as social disciplines, is fundamental for its full implementation, including as a guiding principle for environmental strategies as formulated in the relevant EU legislation.

It is reasonable that a large portion of the planned €800 billion investments planned by the EC over the next decade[12] will be devoted to innovative, more sustainable, smart marine and maritime infrastructures, including ports, offshore platforms, vessels, aquaculture farms, and energy production platforms. EU Member-States (MS) and Associated Countries (AC) have their socio-political priorities and accordingly often specific for their R&I investments. For instance, in the EU, more than 85% of the investments in research, development & innovation are provided at national level. In 2010, EU MS agreed to increase their total R&D spending to 3% of GDP by 2020, a target that has been reaffirmed in 2021[13]. This has not been achieved, but the alignment of public R&I funding can at least maximise the impact of the investments and contribute significantly to strengthening a functioning and high-performing European Research Area (ERA).

The first Joint Co-funded Call within the Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership is entitled "The way forward: a thriving sustainable blue economy for a brighter future" and encompasses all the five Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership Intervention Areas (IAs) declined for this call in five priority areas as follows:

(1) Planning and managing sea-uses at the regional level

(2) Development of offshore marine multi-use infrastructures to support the blue economy

(3) Climate neutral, environmentally sustainable, and resource-efficient blue food and feed

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[11] Conference of the Parties – Convention on Biological Diversity, CBD-COP 5 Decision V/6 (2000), A (1).

[12] www.reuters.com/article/us-eu-recovery-idUSKCN2DD3XQ and The EU's 2021-2027 long-term Budget and NextGenerationEU April 2021, ISBN 978-92-76-30627-6 doi:10.2761/808559.

[13] COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION (EU) 2021/2122 of 26 November 2021 on a Pact for Research and Innovation in Europe.

(4) Green transition of Blue Food production

(5) Digital Twins of the Ocean (DTOs) test use cases at EU sea-basins and the Atlantic Ocean.

These priority areas were selected to maximise participation while reinforcing the European blue economy through improved resilience of marine ecosystems, thus maximising the impact potential of funded projects. The priority areas embrace actionable routes from science to policy to observe, assess and mitigate the impact on vital ecological assets such as biodiversity and other ecosystem services on which our economies depend, thus supporting coastal communities.

3.0 JOINT CALL DESCRIPTION

3.1 Requirements

Projects in this call must be impact-driven contributions to the transformation into a blue economy for a more resilient future and towards carbon neutrality targets, following an impact pathway approach (see section 3.3 – Impact of the proposals, and Annex A).

A fundamental requirement for all projects is to establish close cross-sectorial cooperation in the science, innovation, and economic sectors. Stakeholder engagement in the research projects will be positively evaluated to enhance innovation, policy, and societal relevance and ultimately, to increase the impact of the projects.

Projects need to be developed in agreement with the different EU policies described in the Background of the Joint Call (1.0).

The projects will be developed at a pan-European level and in the different European Sea basins: the Mediterranean, the Black Sea, the Baltic Sea, the North Sea and the Atlantic Ocean. At the regional level, complementarities and synergies with the lighthouses of the Mission "Restore our Oceans and waters" will be requested mainly on the valorisation of the outcomes of the projects. The users of the outcomes should be identified in the application and involved from the outset.

3.2 Five priority areas in the same call

Overall, 36 funding organisations from 23 countries in addition to the European Commission will finance the different priority areas (see Table 1 in 4.2, and Annex B). Every proposal needs to be formed by a consortium consisting of partners from a minimum of three independent legal entities from three different countries participating in the call, whilst meeting National/regional eligibility criteria for each relevant funding organisation. In addition, self-funded partners including partners from countries (and/or regions) not participating in the call are allowed but do not contribute to the minimum eligible consortium size.

All the impact-oriented priority areas address transversal issues and point to the need for multidisciplinary approaches, involving actors from research – including, where appropriate, social sciences and humanities – and innovation (public and private sectors) to policymakers and citizens of the relevant communities. The actual consortium composition can vary in the number of different types of actors involved and must be tuned to the specific project objectives. A broad and strong project consortium will give leverage to increase the impact of the research and innovation project and the uptake of its outputs in marine-related policies. The further desired outcomes would then be that a project contributes significantly to a sustainable productive blue economy, that is carbon neutral and with minimal negative impacts. Relevant ocean literacy measures will be assessed as the other proposed actions to increase outcomes of the projects such as mobility, training, capacity building, knowledge transfer etc.

The priority areas are described below, including key areas for inclusion in project proposals and examples to guide the applicants.

3.2.1 Planning and managing sea uses at the regional level

Innovative support for planning and managing Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) sea uses, here below called 'MSP initiative', aims to resolve conflicting uses, and to minimise the respective impacts on marine ecosystems, notably through the removal of unexploded chemical and conventional munitions. The objective is to promote a new approach with

the integration of the national and/or local initiatives at the regional sea-basin between the different bordering countries, including the evolution of coastal environments.

The relevant scale of the MSP initiative must be well-defined and justified. It will have to be co-designed with competent local authorities from regional and national structures of different countries in synergies with existing EU funded projects and the Mission" Restore our Oceans and Waters". Participation of other stakeholders (including private sector and society) will be positively considered following the impact pathway approach (See Annex A). Cross-border cooperation between different countries and close interaction with all relevant sectors at the national level will be mandatory to obtain a consensual integrated MSP at the basin or sub-basin scale. The projects will need to reflect on previous local MSP developed in the area.

All the regional sea-basins and the Atlantic Ocean are concerned by this priority area to develop and sustainably manage marine and maritime industries. The targeted research questions to be explored in the project formulation are presented hereafter. **A project needs, as a minimum, to address one or more of the following points including a multi-actor approach**:

- Changing environmental scenarios, co-designed with the relevant authorities, about climate change, that address the effects of *e.g.,* sea level rise, and the changing risks of coastal flooding will be proposed. The time horizon should not be less than the next 50 years with an application at the local level of (/downscaling from) International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) scenarios. The respective impacts of extreme events, erosion, sedimentation, subsidence, etc., on human activities, will be forecasted to be integrated into the MSP initiative. The consequences of future changes in nutrient inputs to the maritime area will be analysed in regards with the future applicable regulations of the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Expected trends in the relevant freshwater hydrological regimes such as the increase of droughts related to climate change are important elements, for which the changes in ecosystem productivity of estuaries and coastal areas, should be addressed. These cumulative impacts will include changes of inputs from the watershed to the coastal zone;

- Each country is planning, following the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, to increase the surface of its Marine Protected Areas (MPA) with a target of 30% of its marine area

protected[14] including 10% with a high level of protection. The identification of the biodiversity hotspots to be protected is the main issue. For continental European coasts, integrated approaches need to be promoted in the same region between the different national MPAs and the other competing uses in the area. These are conditions to achieve efficient conservation of marine and coastal biodiversity avoiding harmful uses in, but also at the vicinity of the MPAs;

- Previous studies have demonstrated that the connectivity of MPAs is an important element to maintain genetic diversity and to include all the stages of the life history of sessile species such as spawning grounds, nurseries, etc. The MSP initiative should address how ecological corridors between different MPAs could be proposed to maintain genetic diversity to achieve biodiversity conservation. All the targets to maintain and restore marine and coastal biodiversity should be integrated, at the proper scale, in the MSP initiative;

- All MSP initiative activities in sea basins will take account of the sectoral aspects of marine and maritime space management: fisheries management, aquaculture zone, navigation, sediment removal, offshore wind farms, oil and gas extraction, internet cables, munition deposit zone etc. The development of such activities in these coastal zones, such as industries, harbours, coastal cities, tourism, recreation, MPAs, terrestrial aquaculture, and agriculture effects etc., have to be estimated and evaluated with their potential impacts and quality requirements. The legacies of past impacts and their long-term effects on coastal environments in association with the possible future of these activities have to be considered in development scenarios. Therefore, industrial plants and their associated impacts (*e.g.* dumping sites) must not be ignored;

- Space-based remote sensing tools, offering global observations homogeneously over Europe on a regular basis, enhance the ability of coastal-resource managers to keep pace with increasing population pressure on coastal resources and improve climate change adaptation strategies. Remote sensing techniques allow assessments that are

[14] Stated in the Convention on Biological Diversity, UN Biodiversity Conference CBD-COP15 – Montreal 2022.

impossible to do with traditional methods. It is recommended to use satellite data (*i.e.*: Copernicus programme) for this priority area;

- It is recommended that the MSP initiative contributes to the development of new Decision Support Tools (DSTs), including socio-economical components, making them amenable for transfer to competent authorities of different countries, for their use. They could be developed on the base of existing DSTs with updates on biodiversity conservation through MPAs, development of offshore wind farms and integration of climate change impact such as Sea Level Rise and erosion… DSTs are aimed to facilitate interaction and decision-making with the stakeholders, policymakers and all the actors and citizens of the area using *inter alia* foresight scenarios at the relevant regional/international scale.

3.2.2 Development of offshore marine multi-use infrastructures to support the blue economy

Increasing the development of multi-use structures from the sea surface to the sub-seabed could deliver synergistic benefits for the different uses including industrial sectors. About the increasing demand for space, for activities and functions at sea, multi-use infrastructures and multi-use spatial concepts are promoted. At the same time, the risk of conflicts and negative environmental effects needs to be minimised. Cross-sectoral scientific, industrial, and technological innovation and cooperation should contribute to advancing innovations in this area.

All the regional sea basins are concerned by this priority area to develop marine and maritime industries.

Connection with the Mission "Restore our Oceans and Waters" call on the Lighthouse in the Baltic and the North Sea basins will be established by planning joint actions with projects funded by the Mission to increase synergies and avoid duplication. The projects will be complementary to the Clean Energy Transition Partnership (CETP) focused on high TRL technologies but for a single source of energy.

The exhaustion or reduced production of petroleum or gas reservoirs induces a decommissioning or repurposing of existing platforms in parallel with the accelerating

green energy transition that includes a strong expansion of offshore energy development in different countries.

- Offshore multi-use platforms are likely to have as consequences the limitation of some activities in the nearby area, with, *e.g.*, trawling for fisheries and the creation of No Take Zones (NTZ). The function of such zones could be "Marine Protected Areas", or areas where Nature-Based solutions such as artificial reefs or the creation of spawning areas or nurseries for fish, can be proposed to increase biodiversity. The combination of active economic use with natural and ecological functions including ecosystem services will be promoted. The project must comply with the EU "Do no significant harm" principle (DNSH).

A project needs, as a minimum, to address one or more of the following points including a multi-actor approach:

- Innovation and technological development of multi-use structures, with a focus on the primary function and the possible associated uses/functions including a sustainability approach on the materials along with the conceptual approach: reduce, recycle, reuse and resistance to extreme environmental conditions;

- The increase of fixed or floated constructions to harvest marine renewable energy sources such as wind, waves, currents etc., and their possible integration/coordination with floating systems for photovoltaic or other renewable production systems and storage solutions;

- The combination of marine renewable energy constructions with hydrogen (or other energy carrier substances) production, transport and storage;

- The modification of existing offshore platforms, or the combination of new ones combined with aquaculture facilities as well as fish, shellfish and seaweed facilities such as cages or long lines;

- The combination of marine renewable energy constructions with offshore structures to produce freshwater by desalination of seawater, with means to minimize the impact on the marine ecosystem and identification of their advantages with coastal ones including the socioecomical aspects;

- Effects of the offshore industries, such as the release of contaminants, or underwater noise and light pollution, must be considered for associated aquaculture development and biodiversity conservation. Integrated models of the environmental conditions and the interactions between the different uses should be suitable to support decision-makers and industry and to propose options to reduce the different impacts;

- Based on economical mutual benefits studies, a win-win approach of the co-uses, including economical mutual benefits, could be developed in collaboration with industry and relevant policymakers;

- In conjunction, the social acceptance and proposed solutions to solve competition or conflicts between the different users of the multi-use platforms or their surroundings will be important components to succeed in the multi-uses offshore platform development;

- The development should include the provision of input for the future innovative legal framework including permitting processes and how this can reflect the elaborated innovations.

3.2.3 Climate-neutral, environmentally sustainable, and resource-efficient blue food and feed

The 'Blue Food', or food and feed from the sea, targets the sustainable management of ocean bioresources to produce environmentally sustainable, high-quality, resilient and climate-neutral seafood, including feed for blue food production[15]. The projects must be in agreement with the objectives of Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), Biodiversity Strategy, Farm to Fork Strategy and Circular economy action plan under the umbrella of the EU Green Deal. It will focus on three issues:

(i) The reduction of bycatch, discards, and processing waste, and how value can be created from unavoidable biomass side streams, to increase the efficiency and circularity of aquaculture and fisheries;

[15] In line with the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity, UN Biodiversity Conference CBD-COP15 – Montreal 2022.

(ii) The exploration of the potential of low trophic level species in fisheries and aquaculture for blue food and feed purposes such as algae, shellfish, molluscs etc.

(iii) Increasing the supply of blue food by utilising a larger proportion of fish catches from fisheries and aquaculture for human consumption and by utilising new sustainable marine resources, such as algae.

This thematic area is open to projects in different geographical locations of the different sea-basins and the Atlantic Ocean either with a pan-European and/or with a specific sea-basin perspective.

A project needs, as a minimum, to address one or more of the following points including a multi-actor approach:

- All possible approaches to avoid or drastically reduce bycatch and discards can be considered. Projects should benefit from the analysis of previous successes or failures to reduce them, to avoid the fishing of undersized and non-commercial or protected species. Projects could address the development of innovative fishing gears and fisheries technologies such as attraction with baits, light…, keeping in mind the need to reduce the fisheries' carbon footprint (fuel consumption) and to help minimise fishing impacts on marine biodiversity and habitat destruction;

- Development of innovative new products and technologies with low energy consumption to increase the sustainable supply of food production. They will include the utilisation of side streams and residues from fish processing industries as well as unwanted wastes bycatch and discards, the use of low-value fish species and algae for innovative use for healthy and sustainable food and feed for human consumption with production of high-value products;

- Harvesting and cultivation of a wide range of low trophic marine species provide an opportunity for increased sustainable production of Blue Food and feed. Projects could address generic issues or sea-basin-specific issues for such production. Environmental sustainability, provision of services for climate mitigation and adaptation, and ecosystems or reduction of carbon footprints are expected outcomes of the projects;

- As the mesopelagic ecosystem is facing increasing fishing pressure, there is a need to propose a sustainability approach. It is important to promote studies focusing on

ecological-based and assessment of the limits of the possible exploitation of this part of the marine ecosystem. Such innovative studies should provide an understanding of the productivity of low-trophic level marine species which is a prerequisite to recommend the potential level of management to develop a sustainable activity. The counterexample of unsustainable deep-sea fisheries should be avoided.

- Before exploring an eventual exploitation of the mesopelagic ecosystem, it is important:

(i) to increase our knowledge of the biological characteristics (growth, reproduction, spawning behaviour etc.) and ecosystem functioning (trophic position, role in carbon pumping to the deep ocean) of potential mesopelagic potential resources, and;

(ii) to assess the possible sustainability of mesopelagic fisheries from the biological, ecological, and socio-economical perspectives, including backup studies where necessary.

3.2.4 Green transition of Blue Food production

The 'green transition of Blue Food production' priority area targets the objectives of Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), Biodiversity Strategy, Farm to Fork Strategy and Circular economy action plan. It is focused on technological, digital, smart, and just transition of the seafood sector to a sustainable, high quality and climate-neutral one. Key elements are the Internet of Things (IoT), Big Data, predictive analyses, automation, robotics and artificial intelligence.

There is a need for close knowledge, research, technological and innovation gaps of new as well as existing and promising solutions to boost the sustainability and viability of Blue Food production. As food production is more and more consumer-driven there is a growing demand to buy local fresh products from small producers and small scale fisheries and particular attention must be done to evaluating their way to increase their carbon efficiency and maintain coastal communities.

This thematic area is open to projects in different geographical locations of the different sea-basins and the Atlantic Ocean with a pan-European and/or a sea-basin-specific perspective. **A project needs, as a minimum, to address one or more of the following points including a multi-actor approach**:

- Research projects need to be developed by, or in close cooperation with the private sector. A focus on the refinement or the development of new innovative solutions for production processes in sustainable and integrated aquaculture and fisheries value chains while increasing food quality, carbon neutrality and potential development in light of the ongoing climate change are expected. Methods to ensure traceability of fisheries and aquaculture products to answer the consumer request. Particular attention will be brought on small scale fisheries to remain efficient and develop their competitivity;

-- The development of new technological and energy smart innovations (*e.g.* increase of fuel efficiency, alternative fuels etc.) in the fishing and aquaculture production which are the most energy and fuel-consuming (such as trawling and recirculation aquaculture systems) including the co-planning and acceptance of such innovations by entrepreneurs and by consumers;

- The development of new solutions to facilitate the energy transition in small-scale coastal fisheries;

- The analysis of the life cycle of the processes to reduce carbon footprint in fisheries and aquaculture;

- The assessment of the reduction of CO_2 capture by the seabed caused by demersal fishing gears through resuspension of mineralised seabed sediment and disturbance of benthic biodiversity;

- The promotion of digital and space-based solutions to contribute to enhancing fisheries sustainability and reduce overfishing; The development of digital solutions can also be promoted in aquaculture to optimize the production system, reduce energy consumption and carbon footprint;

- Socio-economic effects of the proposed innovations and their social acceptance by the actors from aquaculture and fisheries, and also by the citizens.

3.2.5 Digital Twins of the Ocean (DTOs) test use cases at EU sea-basin scale and the Atlantic Ocean

Digital Twins of the Ocean (DTOs) test use cases will be developed at the sub-sea-basin scale to assess the state and health of the marine coastal systems and their ecosystems, the impacts of human activities and interventions, under different scenarios, thereby providing support to decision making processes and policies implementation. They should rely on existing data, assimilate data flows into AI or modelling capacities to produce directly usable information and knowledge. They should therefore consider other larger scale initiatives from other European actions and in particular the "Restore our Ocean and Waters" Mission's Digital Twin Ocean[16]. Identification of data gaps should be performed to better understand relevant ecosystems functioning and forecasting their state and evolution. An assessment of their contribution to the capabilities of the twin(s) should be included. Projects should help to define digital solutions responding to existing needs (*e.g.* EU policy needs, climate change related scenarios, environmental or policy impacts assessment) for information from the different stakeholders. It should illustrate how scientific innovation and technologies can address knowledge gaps for future Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership calls. Cross-sea-basins exchange will be welcome to share knowledge and processes on DTO.

This call is contributing to the objectives of the Mission "Restore our Oceans and Waters" It is focused on studied area which could be associated to the mission lighthouses with a thematic and geographical definition, at the relevant time scales, the identification of data available and the creation of sea-basin database. The definition of modelling suites for ocean state, ocean health and ecosystem functioning, to support the development of evolution scenarios, to be co-designed with stakeholders, policymakers, and citizens.

This priority area is open to proposals in different geographical locations of the different sea basins, including the Atlantic Ocean, either with a pan-European and/or a sea-

[16] https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe/eu-missions-horizon-europe/restore-our-ocean-and-waters/european-digital-twin-ocean-european-dto_en

basin-specific perspective. Proposals must provide clear problem statements of the issues the proposed DTO use case should help solving. Proposals should rely on EU programmes and initiatives (*e.g.* Copernicus, EMODnet, EU DTO) but should go beyond and avoid duplication with the Copernicus Marine Service or other operational services.

Proposals should address some of the following points, with a multi-actor approach:

- Actions dedicated to the initial development of DTO use cases at a sub-sea-basin scale. The implementations are selected according to the current coverage of data and information for the proposed (sub-)sea-basin and/or coastal areas. It will include the availability of existing data: oceanographic, detailed bathymetry, information about marine species with fisheries stocks, ecological data and biodiversity species, impact of human activities, etc… Avaibility of data on appropriate spatial and temporal scales should be considered;

- Existing data collection and representation: Analysis of the existing information, quality control and data management including format. Building of a regional database. Discovery of patterns in data analyses via data processing and analytics. Retrieve most important parameters and supporting data (collect for example of physical parameters *e.g.* provided by the Copernicus Marine Service and downscaling them) combine data and coupling issues with integrated multidisciplinary models and estimate probability distributions;

- Identification of gaps in data, propose of a new monitoring scheme with new or existing sensors;

- Ecological/Ecosystem Modelling: Analysis of the existing ecological / ecosystem models, intercomparison between existing models, selection and demonstration of sets of coherent and suitable models, for use in the next following call on the implementation of the regional/ local DTO use cases;

- DTO, will also contribute to assess potential impacts of the environmental scenarios on the economy and society of the sub-sea-basin and/or costal region: possible societal and economic benefits for sea-based economic activities;

- DTO use cases development in the regional sea-basin should support the lighthouses of the Mission "Restore our Oceans and Waters by 2030", and should seek to contribute to

its EU core DTO (with data, models and/or services). Synergies with other relevant digital twin pilots, such as those in the ILIAD project[17], should be pursued, avoiding duplication over regions of thematic interest. The actions should be complementary and/or contribute to EMODnet and similar national or regional initiatives. Duplication with Copernicus Marine Services and other operational services should be avoided. Observations should also contribute to the European Ocean Observation System (EOOS);

- Function of the location and the regional issues of the DTO use cases, request to make connections with the partnership Water4All, to consider for input (water flows and nutrients) from the watershed will be recommended and with the lighthouses of the Mission "Restore our Oceans and Waters";

- Propose scenarios demonstration to assess short-term consequences of current decisions and policies implementation (7-12 years) as well as long-term (*e.g.* 30/50 years) forecasting models will propose scenarios for evolutions/changes to estimate potential impacts of climate change, such as sea level rise, or changes in sediment load and hydrodynamics and seafloor evolution. DTO use cases addressing adapted measures for risk reduction and resilience of direct use by managers, policymakers, industries, and citizens should be proposed.

3.3 Impact of the proposals

With Horizon Europe, the EC Members-States and Associated Countries want to generate impact-driven R&I projects and to create significant societal and environmental impacts. In line with this perspective, it is requested to include a plan that describes what impact the research is expected to achieve in the long run and how it contributes to the overall impacts defined for the call:

[17] https://www.ocean-twin.eu/

- *the potential for impact beyond the academic world, such as in societal, technical, environmental, economic, policy-making, or behavioural realms.*
- *how relevant stakeholders can be involved in, and/or benefit from, the design and achievement of the research project.*
- *to what extent the project addresses the uptake of research findings into decision-making processes and policymaking.*
- *how approaches for achieving impact are integrated into the research design and conducted by the consortium.*

One way to make such a plan is to establish a methodology of Theory of Change (ToC) with a related Impact Pathway (IP) to describe the research process, mentioning well-specified outputs and outcomes. Please refer to the Annex A: THEORY OF CHANGE, for more information on how to set up a Theory of Change, as well as to a workshop from the Dutch Research Council (NWO), which is freely accessible: https://impact.nwo.nl/en/working-with-an-impact-plan.

The integration of the above elements will be considered in the evaluation of the proposals. In particular, it will be considered whether the proposal ensures that the project consortium, in its composition, sufficiently reflects the project's stated aims in relation to output, outcome and impact creation, *i.e.*, that its initial Theory of Change is realistic and achievable by the consortium partners.

4.0 CALL STRUCTURE

4.1 Participating countries

A total of 37 Funding Organisations (FOs) from 24 countries (19 Member-States and 4 Associated Countries and 1 Non-EU country) have agreed to launch the first Joint Call for R&I proposals. The list of countries are as follows: Belgium, Brazil, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Faroe Islands, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania,

Malta, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, The Netherlands, and Türkiye.

4.2 Financial commitment

A total of approx. 50 million Euros have been provisionally allocated for this Joint Transnational Call by the participating FOs with the support of the EU (Table 1). These funds will be used for R&I activities carried out by researchers, institutions, and companies according to the funding rules and legal frameworks of their respective FOs (Annex B).

Partners applying in a consortium cannot request more than the maximum amount stated by the FO from which they seek funding in Annex B of the national/regional regulations to this Call Announcement.

Table 1. Sustainable Blue Economy PartnershipFunding organisations: priority areas and indicative budget

		Priority Areas					
Country	Funding organisation	Planning and managing sea uses at the regional level	Development of offshore marine multi-use infrastructures to support the blue economy	Climate-neutral, environmentally sustainable, and resource-efficient blue food and feed	Green transition of Blue Food production	Digital Twins of the Ocean (DTOs) test use cases at EU sea-basin scale and the Atlantic Ocean	Indicative Budget
Belgium	BELSPO *Belgian Science Policy Office*	×	×	×	×	×	1 000 000 €
Belgium	FIO/VLAIO *Fonds innoveren en ondernemen*	×	×	×	×	×	1 000 000 €
Belgium	F.R.S.-FNRS *Fonds de la Recherche Scientifique*	×	×	×	×	×	300 000 €
Belgium	FWO *The Research Foundation – Flanders*	×	×	×	×	×	700 000 €
Brazil	CONFAP* *Brazilian National Council of State Funding Agencies*	×	×	×	×	×	840 000€
Cyprus	RIF *Research and Innovation Foundation*	×	×	×	×	×	2 000 000 €

Denmark	IFD *Innovation Fund Denmark*	×	×	×	×	×	1 000 000 €
Estonia	ETAG *Estonian Research Council*			×	×	×	100 000 € (100.000 € if project partner 150.000 € if project coordinator)
Estonia	KEM *Estonian Ministry of the Environment*			×		×	150 000 €
Estonia	MEM *Ministry of Rural Affairs of the Republic of Estonia*			×	×	×	100 000 €
Faroe Islands	RCFI *Research Council Faroe Islands*	×	×	×	×	×	135 000 €
Finland	AKA *Academy of Finland*			×	×		850 000 €
Finland	MMM *Ministry of agriculture and forestry*			×	×		500 000 €
France	ANR *Agence Nationale de la Recherche*	×	×	×	×	×	2 000 000 €
Germany	BMBF/PtJ *Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) represented by Project Management Jülich,*	×	×	×	×	×	1 250 000 €

	Forschungszentrum Jülich GmbH						
Iceland	RANNIS *The Icelandic Centre for Research*			×	×	×	800 000€
Ireland	MI *Marine Institute*	×		×	×	×	1 000 000 €
Italy	MIMIT *Ministry of Enterprises and Made in Italy*	×	×	×	×	×	10 000 000 €
Italy	MUR *Ministry of Universities and Research*	×	×	×	×	×	5 000 000€
Latvia	LCS *The Latvian Council of Science*	×		×		×	600 000 €
Lithuania	LMT *Lietuvos mokslo taryba*	×	×	×	×	×	200 000 €
Malta	MCST *Malta Council for Science and Technology*	×	×	×	×	×	500 000 €
Norway	RCN *The Research Council of Norway*	×	×	×	×	×	2 900 000 €
Poland	NCBR *The National Centre for Research and Development*	×	×	×	×	×	1 000 000 €
Portugal	CCDRC *Comissão de Coordenação e*	×	×	×	×	×	250 000 €

	Desenvolvimento Regional do Centro						
Portugal	FCT *Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia*	×	×	×	×	×	500 000 €
Portugal	FRCT *Fundo Regional da Ciência e Tecnologia*	×			×	×	100 000 €
Romania	MCID *Ministerul Cercetarii Inovarii si Digitalizarii*	×	×	×	×	×	1 000 000 €
Slovenia	MVZI Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation	×	×	×	×	×	900 000 €
Spain	AEI *Agencia Estatal de Investigación*	×		×	×	×	1 500 000 €
Spain	CDTI *Centro para el Desarrollo Tecnologico y la Innovacion e.p.e.*	×	×	×	×	×	400 000 €
Sweden	FORMAS *The Swedish Research Council for Environment, Agricultural Sciences and Spatial Planning*	×	×	×	×		2 000 000 €
Sweden	SNSA *Swedish National Space Agency*					×	650 000 €
The Netherlands	LNV, IenW, NWO	×	×	×	×	×	1 250 000 €

	Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management Dutch Research Council						
Türkiye	TÜBİTAK *The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Türkiye*	×	×	×	×	×	400 000 €

(*) CONFAP: Please check the National regulations (Annex B) for details on the Brazilian State Funding Agencies supporting the call

4.3 Call process

The Joint Call will be advertised online from the following web pages:

- Online Submission Tool: https://proposals.etag.ee/sustainable-blue

- Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership Website: www.bluepartnership.eu

- RFOs web pages and on the EC Funding & Tenders portal.

The application process consists of two consecutive steps:

STEP 1

The Consortium Coordinator must submit a pre-proposal on behalf of the consortium, providing key data on the proposed project. The deadline for the submission of the pre-proposal is **14/04/2023, 15.00 CET (Brussels time). Submission of pre-proposals is mandatory**; it is not possible to enter the procedure at a later stage.

STEP 2

The Consortium Coordinator must submit a full proposal (upon invitation) on behalf of the consortium. The deadline for full proposal submission is **13/09/2023, 15.00 CET (Brussels time). Deadline to be confirmed after Step 1.**

4.4 Dates and deadlines

January 2023	Pre-announcement
13 February 2023, 15:00 CET (local time in Brussels)	Official launch – Call Publication
14 April 2023, **15.00 CET**	Deadline for submission (pre-proposals)
Early-May 2023	First eligibility check by Joint Call Secretariat (JCS) and National Contact Points (NCPs)

Early-July 2023	Results of the pre-proposal evaluation Invitation to submit full proposals
Early- to mid-July 2023	Period for the redress procedure
Mid-July to early-August 2023	Evaluation of the requests of redress and communication of decisions to the applicants
13 September 2023, 15:00 CET	Deadline for submission (full proposals)
Early-October 2023	Second eligibility check by JCS and NCPs
November 2023	Results of full proposal evaluation (ranked list of proposals)
Early-December 2023	Projects recommended for funding by the Call Steering Commitee (CSC) Communication of results to applicants
Early- to mid-December 2023	Period for the redress procedurel
Mid-December 2023 to mid-January 2024	Evaluation of the requests of redress and communication of decisions to the applicants
1 February to 31 May 2024	Start of funded projects
31 January to 30 May 2027	End of funded projects

4.5 Confidentiality and conflict of interests

The Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership Funding Organisations are committed to avoid any Conflict of Interests and to safeguard good scientific practice. A Code of Conduct related to Conflict of Interests, confidentiality and non-disclosure is defined and applies to the Call Steering Committee (CSC), independent observer and International Evaluation Committee (IEC). An important aspect of this code is the avoidance of any conflicts between personal interests and the interests of the applicants. The Call Steering Committee (CSC) and related National Contact Points (NCPs), the independent

observer, and the International Evaluation Committee (IEC) will perform their work impartially and take all measures to prevent any situation where the impartial and objective implementation of the work is compromised for reasons involving economic interest, political or national affinity, family or emotional ties or any other shared interest ('conflict of interests').

The following situations will automatically be considered as a conflict of interest:

- Being involved in (the preparation of) any pre- and/or full proposal;

- Having submitted a proposal as a principal investigator or a team member, under the call;

- Being director, trustee or partner or in any way involved in the management of an applicant;

- Being employed or contracted by one of the applicants;

- Having close professional proximity, *e.g.* being a member of the same scientific institution with a hierarchical or department relation or impending change of the IEC member to the institution of the applicant in a position with a hierarchical or department relation or vice versa;

- Having close family ties (spouse, domestic or non-domestic partner, child, sibling, parent etc.) or other close personal relationship with the applicants of the proposal;

- Having (or have had during the last five years) a close scientific collaboration with an applicant of the proposal;

- Having (or have had) a relationship of scientific rivalry or professional hostility with an applicant of the proposal;

- Having (or have had), a mentor/mentee relationship with a principal investigator of the proposal;

- Having a current or prior (past 5 years) activity in advisory bodies of the applicant's institution, *e.g.* scientific advisory boards;

- Having direct or indirect benefit if any proposal submitted is accepted or rejected;

- Having personal economic interests in the funding decision. Other situations preventing the IEC members or reviewers to participate in the evaluation impartially could be considered a conflict of interest and should be reported as such by the IEC members.

Applicants included in a (pre-)proposal submitted to this call (including all the team members) may not serve as IEC members.

At the implementation level, the Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership Consortium partners that might apply to the co-funded calls are completely excluded from the work of call preparation, selection and projects' follow-up and monitoring. All related information is kept non-accessible to these Consortium members. In that way, the possibility for research units belonging to these organisations to participate in Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership calls for proposals is safeguarded. To ensure complete transparency and inform the recipients of calls, the Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership Consortium partners that may apply to the co-funded calls are explicitly listed in Annex C, emphasizing their absolute extraneousness to the process of preparing the calls both in terms of defining the priority areas of the call and the procedures for evaluating and selecting project proposals. Concrete measures to avoid potential Conflicts of Interest or unequal treatment of applicants are ensured.

4.6 Publishable information

A list of the funded projects will be published at the end of the call process (once the projects have been selected) on the Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership Website. Therefore, applicants should be aware that the following information from the proposals may be published by the Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership and the Funding organisations for promotional purposes: (1) Project Title and Project Acronym, (2) Publishable abstract, (3) Duration of the project, (4) Total costs and total funding of the research project, (5) Organisation name and country of each partner, (6) Name of the Project Coordinator.

Each of the funding organisations will subsequently handle projects approved for funding. Projects approved for funding will be governed by the confidentiality rules in the national law of the funding organisations.

4.7 Privacy policy

By submitting the application, the Consortium Coordinator and partners agree to the use, to the share (for specific purposes: *e.g.*, evaluation, for the future nomination of experts, Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership-specific communication) and the storage of projects-related information according to the Privacy Policy and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Further information on the Privacy Policy is presented on the Online Submission Tool (https://proposals.etag.ee/sustainable-blue).

5.0 ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

When applying to this call, the applicants must be aware that their project (pre-) proposals must meet both (i) general eligibility criteria, summarized in Table 2, and (ii) national/regional eligibility criteria (Annex B).

A (pre-)proposal that does not fulfil all the general eligibility criteria will be declined without any further review.

Each partner involved in the project will be funded by its national/regional funding organisations. The consortium must therefore also comply with all the relevant national/regional eligibility rules (Annex B). It is particularly important to note that some funding organisations may require the submission of national documents in addition to the international (pre-)proposal. Besides, a national/regional funding bodies may not fund all types of organisations.

If the partner acting as the consortium coordinator is not eligible, the whole proposal will be considered ineligible and will not be evaluated.

If any other partner (not applicable to the coordinator) is declared ineligible:

- the ineligible partner could participate in the consortium as a self-funded partner

- the others partners could engage themselves to cover the tasks of the ineligible partner

- the ineligible partner could be replaced by another partner from a country with an undersubscription ratio; the list of the countries with undersubscription ratio will be provided to coordinators invited to submit a full proposal at the end of the fisrt step selection process.

Any change in the consortium composition must conform to the general eligibility criteria defined in 5.1 and be validated by the relevant funding organisations.

Before applying, each and every partner should verify their corresponding national/regional regulations and checked their eligibility with their National contact points (NCPs). The Consortium Coordinator should verify that all partners of the consortium verified their eligibility.

National contact points will provide support about national/regional rules and requirements (Annex B).

(Pre-)proposals that fulfil all requirements *i.e.* general eligibility criteria and all relevant national/regional eligibility criteria, will enter the evaluation process described in 7.0. The Joint Call Secretariat (JCS) on behalf of the Call Steering Committee (CSC), will communicate the results of the eligibility check and the decisions taken to the coordinator of each consortium.

Particular case of beneficiaries of Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership' participating to R&I call for proposals:

Research teams of some beneficiaries of the Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership may participate in this co-funded call; the list of the beneficiaries of the Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership allowed to participate in the projects' consortia is indicated in Annex C. For those beneficiaries, firewall measures have been foreseen to mitigate the risk of, perception of, or de facto conflict of interest or unequal treatment of applicants, including clear segregation of duties. All other beneficiaries of the Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership may not apply for funding under the co-funded call for proposals.

5.1 General eligibility criteria

The general eligibility criteria are described in Table 2. (Pre-)proposals that do not meet all these criteria will be considered ineligible and thus will not be considered for funding.

Table 2. General Eligibility Criteria

Scope	(Pre-)proposals must address **one main priority area.** It is not compulsory to address all sub-themes within the priority area.
Consortium composition	➢ *Each consortium must be composed of **eligible partners from at least three different countries participating in the call and requesting support from at least three different funding organisations participating in the call**.* **Specific requirements regarding self-funded partners, *i.e.* partners that do not require funding:** ➢ *Self-funded partners must demonstrate the willingness to self-fund their own activities or show evidence that others partners are willing to fund their activities;* ➢ *A letter of intent/commitment must be submitted with the full proposal at stage 2;* ➢ *A self-funded partner cannot act as the consortium coordinator;* ➢ *Self-funded partners are not counted for the minimum requirement of eligible partners and countries.*
Consortium coordinator	➢ *In each (pre-)proposal, one entity must act as the consortium coordinator;* ➢ *The consortium coordinator must be eligible for funding by a funding organisation of this call;* ➢ *The consortium coordinator has the responsibility for submitting the (pre-)proposal;* ➢ *The principal investigator (PI) of the entity acting as consortium coordinator must be employed by an eligible organisation in*

	one of the countries participating in the call according to the terms and conditions of the participating funding organisation from which he/she applies for support; ➢ *The PI of an entity can act as consortium coordinator only in one proposal.*
Requested funding	➢ Partners from the same country cannot request more than 60% of the total funding requested by a proposal.
Duration	➢ The international R&I project must be 36 months. *The start date and end date of the researcher groups within the consortium must be aligned as far as possible*.
(Pre-) proposal submission	A two-stage process will apply, with a mandatory submission of pre-proposals at the first stage and submission of full proposals at the second stage. (Pre-) proposals must: ➢ *be written in English* ➢ *be submitted electronically with the Electronic Proposal Submission System (EPSS) before the set deadlines at https://proposals.etag.ee/sustainable-blue* ➢ *Instructions for electronic submission will be available on the Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership website at http://www.bluepartnership.eu in February 2023.* ➢ *be complete, respect page limits and the number/type of attachments allowed, including CV templates that are in line with sound principles for research assessment according to the (pre-)proposals forms (Annexes D-E) and Guidelines for applicants (http://www.bluepartnership.eu)*

5.2 National/regional eligibility criteria

In addition to the general eligibility criteria, each project partner must ensure that his/her contribution to the overall project conforms to:

- *Where applicable, relevance of the (pre-)proposal to the priority areas funded by national/regional funding organisations;*
- *Compliance with national/regional funding eligibility criteria and regulations as reported in the document "National/Regional Regulations" available on the 2023 Joint Transnational Call website and/or on the funding organisations' websites;*
- *Compliance with limits to budget requests;*
- *Where requested by the national funding organisation, submission of additional national documents in accordance with national rules.*

The table in Annex B describes important restrictions related to each national/regional regulation.

5.3 Recommendations for the applicants

All partners within a consortium should take into consideration the following recommendations for setting up their project (pre-)proposals:

Scope

- *(Pre-)proposals should go beyond the state of the art by providing high-quality R&I and, when appropriate, make use of innovative technologies, approaches, and concepts to do so;*
- *(Pre-) proposals should be scientifically excellent and relevant to policies framed under Blue Economy and consider ongoing research activities funded by other EU Missions, instruments, programmes, or projects. Cooperation with these activities is of high importance to avoid redundancy, favour complementarity and increase synergies;*
- *(Pre-)proposals should contribute to cross-cutting themes such as the open data policy, development of capacity-building activities and ocean literacy activities, promote the inclusion of young people in the activities and knowledge transfer, follow*

partnership communication guidelines using a common visual identity, to promote equal opportunities for participation of women and men in the research consortia and comply with EC ethics self-assessment principles;

- *(Pre-) proposals are strongly encouraged to cover a broad geographic scale (i.e., more than one sub-sea basin). Projects are expected to consider several EU sea basins or, at least, to consider the impact of the projects on several EU sea basins.*

Consortium composition

- *All (pre-)proposals are encouraged to consider geographical balance and implementation in appropriate geographic settings and according to the objectives of the proposal, including in low- and middle-income countries/regions, and less-performing countries;*
- *Participation of legal entities from countries (and/or regions) not participating in the call, at the entities' own expense, is welcome;*
- *Project partners that are not eligible for funding may participate at their own expense or if they have their own separate source of funding;*
- *It is strongly encouraged to involve stakeholders (i.e., small, and medium enterprises (SMEs), industries, authorities, public administrations, associations, as well as civil society organisations) as partners or self-funded partners. The modalities of participation of stakeholders are defined in the national/regional eligibility criteria. Stakeholder engagement in the research projects will enhance innovation, policy, and societal relevance and ultimately the impact of the projects;*
- *All proposals should integrate the gender dimension [18] of R&I activities;*
- *Every partner in a (pre-)proposal, including a self-funded partner, needs a Participant Identification Code (PIC) from the EC to be included in the submission. The applicants must check their PIC or ask for the creation of a PIC well in advance of the submission[19]. The same request applies to subcontractants.*

[18] https://erc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/document/file/GEPs_in_HE_guidelines.pdf

[19] 9-digit number serving as a unique identifier for organisations (legal entities) participating in EU funding programmes/procurements. If needed, one can apply for a temporary PIC at:

Budget

- *There is no specific limit of the total budget for proposals;*
- *The requested total budget of proposals is only limited by the number of eligible partners and by the budget of each partner.* ***Please consider the national regulations of each research funding organisation about the specific budget limitations.***

Data management

Please note that you will be requested to produce data management plans and regularly update them in the course of the project. The guide in Annex F "OPEN ACCESS AND FAIR DATA" presents the core requirements for the establishment of a DMP and the expectations at the stages of (pre-)proposals, and awarded projects.

5.4 Ethical issues

The Joint Call will include the evaluation of compliance with relevant ethical criteria. Applicants should always describe any relevant ethical aspects in their research plans. If a research permit or a statement by an ethics committee is required for the implementation of the project, applicants should provide information on the permits or permit proposals.

Researchers are required to adhere to the principles of good scientific practice and to follow the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity by ALLEA (All European

https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/how-to participate/participant-register. A search tool for organisations and their PICs is available at https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/how-to-participate/participant-register-search. We suggest validating the PICs via the public available Partner Search – Organisation Profile service. This allows to fill out some requested data inputs automatically, which is less error-prone and provides a much better user experience. https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/support/apis

Academies)[20] and the Global Code of Conduct for Research in Resource-Poor Settings [21]. Projects must comply with the "Do no significant harm principle"[22].

Any proposal which seems to contravene fundamental ethical principles will not be selected and may be excluded from the selection procedure by the IEC. Judgment of the significance of ethical issues will be made by using the criteria published by the Commission in its guidelines on How to Complete your Ethics Self-Assessment[23].

6.0 APPLICATION PROCEDURE

6.1 Submission procedure

A two-stage procedure will apply to this Joint Transnational Call; at stage 1 the submission of pre-proposals is mandatory, and at stage 2, applicants must submit full proposals upon invitation.

(Pre-)proposals must be submitted electronically using the Electronic Proposal Submission System (EPSS): https://proposals.etag.ee/sustainable-blue.

Instructions for electronic submission will be available on the Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership website at https://www.bluepartnership.eu/ in February 2023.

For any technical questions regarding the submission procedure using the EPSS, please contact the Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership Joint Call Secretariat: sbep.call-secretariat@agencerecherche.fr.

Please note that:

[20] https://allea.org/code-of-conduct/
[21] https://www.globalcodeofconduct.org/
[22] https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/support/faq/15485
[23]Link:https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/how-to-complete-your-ethics-self-assessment_en.pdf

- The online system may experience high traffic volumes in the last hours before the submission deadline and it is therefore highly recommended to submit the final version of the pre / full proposal well in advance of the deadline to avoid any last-minute technical problems;

- The submission system will close at 15:00 CET of the deadline date set for both Stage 1 and Stage 2. Please note that the joint call secretariat can only ensure responses to email support requests up to noon CET;

- Requests for extensions of the deadline due to last-minute technical problems will not be considered. Any proposals not correctly submitted at this moment will be declared ineligible;

- All complete proposals will be submitted automatically when the platform closes, to avoid a situation where an applicant does not have time to click on the submit button. In this situation, the proposal will be evaluated as it stands;

- Some partners of the consortia may also be required to submit an application to their respective national/regional funding organisations. Please consult the national/regional regulations (Annex B) and contact the designated NCPs, for further information about the procedures to follow.

6.1.1 Stage 1: Submission of a Pre-Proposal (mandatory stage)

Applicants must submit Pre-Proposals, it is not possible to enter the procedure at a later stage. Applicants must submit any national documentation required by each participating funding organisation according to national rules.

A pre-proposal eligibility check will be carried out both at the international level (by the Joint Call Secretariat, based on the general eligibility rules) and the national/regional level according to the funding organisations' rules. The eligible pre-proposals will be sent to the scientific evaluation.

Submission on the EPSS:

- *The consortium coordinator (PI) creates an account on the EPSS (https://proposals.etag.ee/sustainable-blue);*

- *The consortium coordinator can enter, edit and save the electronic forms, add partners to the consortium, upload the project description (5 pages), the required budget for each partner and submit the proposal. Partners can enter and edit their own data only. Each partner must connect itself to the EPSS before the submission deadline, to validate its participation with the project consortium;*
- *All information must be written in English. The proposal is a self-contained document. Links and hyperlinks are not allowed;*
- *Information entered or uploaded on the platform can be updated until the submission deadline;*
- *It is very important to note that the information given in the pre-proposals is binding. It is not possible to change the content of the project between stage 1 and stage 2.*

If applicants have successfully passed the first stage (eligibility checks and evaluation), they will be invited to submit a full proposal at stage 2.

6.1.2 Stage 2: submission of a full proposal (only for invited applicants)

Only invited applicants can submit full proposals: information (in English) on the project consortia, a **16-page description** of the project and the required budget for each partner must be submitted on the EPSS.

All rules described in stage 1 apply to stage 2.

Applicants should note the important following information:

- **Information on the core data (e.g. funding requested or institutions) cannot be changed in full proposals**, unless explicitly requested by evaluators, by a funding organisation or by the Call Steering Committee (CSC);

- In addition, as indicated in Stage 1, **the information given in the pre-proposals is binding. No major changes regarding the proposals' content will be allowed** by the CSC between the pre-proposals and full proposals;

- **Minor changes may be possible to improve your proposal if the objectives remain unchanged.** Applicants must explicitly indicate in their full proposal the changes made as compared to the pre-proposals;

- **Regarding the administrative details, a limited number of changes may be allowed**. They, however, must comply with the general rules of the call and the rules of the relevant funding organisations. Any request for changes must be addressed by email to the JCS and the NCPs and will be reviewed by all funding organisations involved in the proposal;

- **Minor changes to the budget** must be allowed by the relevant funding organisation;

- Regarding changes in the composition of the consortium: **no change will be allowed, except in case of force majeure** or if explicitly requested by the Call Steering Committee (CSC) for the particular cases of i) ineligibility of a partner and/or ii) invitation to add partner from a country with an undersubscription ratio; the list of the countries with undersubscription ratio will be provided to coordinators invited to submit a full proposal at the end of the fisrt step selection process. The request for the change must be submitted to the Joint Call Secretariat, at least one week before the deadline set for the submission of full proposals, it will be discussed on a case-by-case basis by the call steering committee.

Please indicate the acronym of your project when your contact the Joint Call Secretariat and/or your NCP.

7.0 EVALUATION OF PROPOSALS

A two-stage evaluation procedure will apply at both Stage 1 (for the pre-proposals evaluation) and Stage 2 (for the full proposal evaluation).

7.1 The International Evaluation Committee (IEC)

The Call Steering Committee (CSC) will establish an international evaluation committee (IEC). The composition of evaluation committees will consider the gender and geographical balance.

The IEC will comprise international scientific experts from the relevant research areas and experts in ethics.

The IEC composition should allow covering, as far as possible, the range of priority areas of the present call.

IEC members will have to sign a confidentiality, non-disclosure and conflict of interest policy and will have to declare all their potential conflicts of interest with submitted pre-proposals at Stage 1 and with submitted full-proposals at Stage 2. The JCS will also check that no conflict of interest exists concerning the proposals evaluated.

IEC members cannot be applicants in the joint call and cannot evaluate proposals with which they declared a conflict of interest, to ensure a fair evaluation process and equal treatment of applicants. The IEC will be headed by a Chair. The Chair will be a regular member of the IEC with the added duties of moderating the IEC meeting and conveying the results of the discussions to the CSC. The Chair and Vice-Chair of the IEC will be selected from a country not represented within the CSC to avoid as much as possible conflicts of interest. Members take part in the IEC as independent experts and do not represent any organisation nor can they send any replacements. This means that their work on this Committee does not represent any organisation or nation.

For each proposal, one of the IEC members will be nominated as a rapporteur and another two as evaluators. They must assess the proposal, in advance of the IEC panel meeting and prepare a draft common Evaluation Summary Report (ESR). Details about the assessment criteria and scoring of proposals are detailed in 7.3.

During the panel meeting, the evaluation results for each full proposal will be presented by the rapporteur. The IEC will discuss the proposals and establish the final ranking of pre- and full proposals based on the set of criteria defined.

In Step 2, the IEC meeting will complete the evaluation procedure, agreeing on the final individual score for each criterion and the overall score for each proposal. An independent expert will be invited as an independent observer to the IEC meeting to assess the conformity of the general procedure.

The decisions of the IEC should be taken collectively, preferably by consensus or by a simple majority of the panel members in case consensus cannot be reached. The IEC will produce a final score and a final Evaluation Summary Report for each proposal, which will be transmitted to the applicants.

7.2 Evaluation procedures

Stage 1 (pre-proposals)

1. Eligibility checks

Pre-proposals will be checked for eligibility at both the international level by the Joint Call Secretariat (see criteria defined in 5.1) and at the national/regional level by the relevant funding organisations according to their national/regional criteria (see national/regional regulations; Annex B).

2. Scientific Evaluation

The eligible pre-proposals will be sent for scientific evaluation that will be carried out by at least three independent reviewers of the International Evaluation Committee (IEC) who will be assigned by matching expert's profiles with the need for pre-proposals evaluation.

The evaluation of each pre-proposal will be based on the following criteria:

- Excellence (Threshold: 3/5)
- Impact (Threshold: 3/5)
A ranking list of pre-proposals will be produced, including only pre-proposals that meet the minimum threshold, *i.e.*, 3 out of 5 in each criterion.

3. Decision

The final score will be calculated by summing up the calculated average scores of the two criteria given by the independent experts (from the IEC) for each criterion.

This first stage aims to identify the best proposals to proceed to stage 2 and to ensure a balance between requested and available funds at the national level. The eligible pre-proposals will be divided into 3 groups, according to their scores:

Group A (highest evaluation scores)	Group B (medium evaluation scores)	Group C (low evaluation scores)
All pre-proposals in Group A, if funds are available, will be invited to stage 2	*Among the pre-proposals in Group B, proposals will be selected to stage 2, taking into account the ranking list, the representativeness of all RFOs and the oversubscription ratio.*	*Pre-proposals in Group C will be dismissed for their low ranking and unavailability of funding*

Consortium coordinators will be informed of the outcomes by the JCS and, if appropriate, invited to submit a full proposal on the EPSS as well as any national documentation required by each participating Funding organisation according to national rules.

Stage 2. (full proposals)

1. Eligibility checks

After the submission deadline for full proposals, the submitted full proposals will be checked (by the JCS, and NCPs) to ensure that they meet the eligibility criteria and have not changed substantially from the respective pre-proposals. Full proposals not meeting the formal conditions will be rejected without further review.

2. Scientific evaluation

All full proposals will be subject to a scientific evaluation by at least three independent reviewers of the International Evaluation Committee (IEC) based **on three criteria:**

- **Excellence *(Threshold: 3/5)***
- **Impact *(Threshold: 3/5)***
- **Quality and efficiency of implementation *(Threshold: 3/5)***

The JCS will produce a preliminary ranking list of the full proposals based on scores calculated with the same methodology used for pre-proposals in stage 1 (first averaging the scores per criterion and, afterwards, summing up the averages).

The threshold on the final score is 10/15: no project with a lower score will be funded.

A ranked list of proposals will be produced based on the final scores.

3. Decision

The final ranking list will be forwarded to the CSC which will meet to decide on the projects to be recommended for funding by FOs.

For this decision, the CSC will consider the order of the ranking list from the IEC and the funding availability.

The projects with the same final scores will be prioritised by the CSC taking into consideration the following principles. The CSC can decide how to use these principles providing that they are used uniformly for all proposals:

- *Maximizing the total number of projects funded and thus optimizing the amount of EC financial support to the Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership call;*
- *Maximizing the number of countries/regions involved in the projects funded;*
- *Ensuring a balance between sea-basins involved in the projects funded;*
- *Assuring a good balance between different priority areas of the call;*
- *Promoting the allocation of the EC financial support pro rata, based on the actual contributions of the RFOs involved in the proposals;*

Official letters on evaluation results will be sent to Consortium coordinators.

7.3 Evaluation criteria and scoring system

The evaluation criteria (and sub-criteria) used by the IEC are summarised in the table below.

Table 3: Evaluation criteria

Excellence **(Stages 1 and 2)**	**Impact** **(Stages 1 and 2)**	**Quality and efficiency of implementation** **(Stage 2 only)**
Threshold: 3/5	**Threshold: 3/5**	**Threshold: 3/5**
Fit to the scope: clarity and pertinence of the project's objectives to the call priority areas Is there adequacy between the proposal's objectives and research questions and the thematic priorities of the present call? **Novelty of research** -the extent to which the proposed work is ambitious, and goes beyond the state of the art - To what extent does the proposed activity suggest and explore creative, original concepts? - Is the proposal contributing to and/or increasing the advancement of its field and	**The credibility of the pathways to achieve the expected outcomes and impacts specified in the call text, and the likely scale and significance of the contributions to the project.** - Is the plan for impact clear and does it follow logically from the expected results of the project? - Is it suitably ambitious with regards to solving the problem addressed? - Is there a strategic impact on reinforcing competitiveness and/or on solving societal or environmental problems at the European and	**Quality and effectiveness of the work plan, assessment of risks, appropriateness of the effort assigned to work packages, and the resources overall.** - Is the proposed organization and management of the scientific project effective and efficient? - Are the management structures and procedures, including risk and innovation management, appropriate? - Are the resources assigned to the work packages in line with

across different fields? - Does the proposal contribute to scientific excellence and significant progress toward the state of the art? - Does the proposal take scientific and/or technological risk? (Please comment…) - Does the proposal have a potential breakthrough despite this risk-taking? **Addressing the knowledge gaps** - Are the methodology and research design clear, feasible and suitable to answer the identified knowledge gaps and/or achieve the proposed objectives? **Are risks properly identified and managed?** **Soundness of the proposed methodology**, including the underlying concepts, models, assumptions, inter-disciplinary approaches,	international levels? **Suitability and quality of the measures to maximise expected outcomes and impacts**, as set out in the dissemination and exploitation plan, including communication activities. - Are there feasible exploitation and dissemination plans of the scientific project results (including management and IPR) - Are the expected results or the knowledge acquired of importance for economic/ societal sectors and economic development? - Is there a clear communication plan? **The added value of European transnational cooperation and networking** - Does the proposal	their objectives and deliverables? **Capacity and role of each participant, and the extent to which the consortium brings together the necessary expertise.** - Are participants in the proposal well-suited to the tasks assigned to them (necessary expertise)? - Is their role well-defined and do they complement each other well? - Are tasks well balanced among partners? **Appropriateness of the partners and justification of the resources to be committed (budget, staff, equipment …)** - Is the estimated effort/allocation of resources appropriate? - Is it ensured that all

appropriate consideration of the ethical issues according to the EU "Do no significant harm" principle (DNSH), gender dimension in research and innovation content, and the quality of open science practices, including sharing and management of research outputs and engagement of citizens, civil society and end users where appropriate.	identify the right actors to make successful use of the results possible? - Is there are clear plan for interactions with /exchange and transfer of results within the consortium, to stakeholders or society?	participants have a valid role and adequate resources in the project to fulfil that role? - Do the work and financial plans plus the schedule show prospects for success? - Is there a balance of scientific and financial contributions from respective countries' partners?

Individual scores will be attributed only to the three main criteria, even though the IEC experts will evaluate all sub-criteria described in Table 3.

Each criterion will be scored out of 5 (no half marks allowed) based on the following scoring system. The threshold for each criterion is 3 out of 5.

Any project with a lower score for one of the criteria or an overall score lower than 10 at Stage 2 will not be considered for funding.

Evaluators will identify strengths and weaknesses (if any) and provide context for their comments based on the application, *i.e.*, evaluators will be asked to score (pre-) proposals as they were submitted, rather than on their potential if certain changes were to be made. When an evaluator identifies substantial shortcomings, he/she must reflect this by awarding a lower score for the criterion concerned. There should be consistency between the numerical scores and written comments.

Table 4 – Scoring system

0 – LIMITED - The (pre) proposal fails to address the criterion or cannot be assessed due to missing or incomplete information.

1 – POOR - The criterion is inadequately addressed, or there are serious inherent weaknesses.

2 - FAIR - The (pre-)proposal broadly addresses the criterion, but there are significant weaknesses.

3 – GOOD - The (pre-)proposal addresses the criterion well, but several shortcomings are present.

4 – VERY GOOD - The (pre-)proposal addresses the criterion very well, but a small number of shortcomings are present.

5 – EXCELLENT - The (pre-)proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion. Any shortcomings are minor.

7.4 Funding decision

The choice of transnational projects to be funded will then be taken by the CSC strictly following the ranking list and in accordance with budgetary considerations.

Final funding decisions are made by the participating Funding organisations.

7.5 Redress procedure

Applicants can challenge the evaluation outcome if they suspect a breach in the application of the evaluation and selection procedures. This redress procedure only covers the procedural aspects of the evaluation and/or eligibility checks, including the national eligibility checks. The redress will not call into question the scientific or technical judgement of appropriately qualified experts.

In this case, they shall submit their request for redress to the Joint Call Secretariat (sbep.call-secretariat@agencerecherche.fr) via email, up to 14 calendar days after the date of dispatch of the evaluation outcome email by the joint call secretariat at the end of each stage (first or second stage). The (pre-)proposal outcome email containing the

results of the evaluation will give information on the redress procedure, which is described below.

Admissibility of requests for redress

For a request for redress to be admissible the following conditions must be met:

- *The request for redress must be submitted by the coordinator of the (pre-)proposal to which the request for redress relates*
- *Only one request for redress per (pre-)proposal will be considered*
- *The request for redress must be addressed to the IEC Chair*
- *The request for redress must be submitted via email within the 14 calendar days deadline. The request for redress must contain the following minimum information:*
    - *The name of the call for (pre-)proposals;*
    - *The (pre-)proposal number;*
    - *The title of the (pre-)proposal;*
    - *A description of the alleged shortcomings of the evaluation procedure.*

The request for redress must demonstrate a procedural irregularity, factual error, manifest error of assessment, misuse of powers, or a conflict of interests. Requests for redress that do not meet the above conditions do not deal with the evaluation of a specific (pre-)proposal or express mere disagreement with the result or the reasoning of the evaluation might be judged as not suitable for redress.

Procedure

Upon receipt of a request for redress, an acknowledgement of receipt will be sent by the joint call secretariat within 7 calendar days. The acknowledgement shall report the redress process and the anticipated date by which a decision on the request for redress will be communicated to the coordinator of the (pre-)proposal.

All requests for redress received by the 14 calendar days deadline will be processed together and the decision will be communicated to the coordinator of the (pre-)proposal within 14 calendar days from the deadline for submitting the requests for redress.

The IEC Chair will establish an internal redress committee chaired by the IEC Chair and comprised of the Independent Observer, and one representative of the consortium. The role of the redress committee is to evaluate the requests for redress according to the

procedure, ensuring fair and equal treatment of applicants, with the support of the JCS (or the Chair of the Call Steering Committee) and one representative per research funding organisation concerned by the proposals requesting a redress procedure, if needed. The Committee will provide its opinion on the implementation of the evaluation procedure, based on the available information related to the proposal and its evaluation, and will make a recommendation to the IEC Chair, who is in charge of deciding, except for national eligibility.

A negative national eligibility check of a research funding organization cannot be overruled by the IEC Chair. Requests for redress on national eligibility decisions will be assessed by the RFO responsible for the national eligibility check, which will justify its decision to the Chair, to prove that national funding rules listed in the call text have been applied correctly.

For Stage 1: Pre-proposals which were originally considered ineligible or not admissible to submit a full proposal, but which the IEC Chair found to be eligible will be allowed to participate in Stage 2. This will not lead to a change in the deadline for the full proposal submission.

For Stage 2: The redress procedure may lead to a re-evaluation of all or part of the proposal by independent experts not involved in the previous evaluation or to the confirmation of the initial evaluation.

A re-evaluation will only be carried out if the request for redress shows that the selection procedure was flawed by a breach which affects the evaluation outcome and the final decision on whether to fund a proposal. This means, for example, that a problem relating to one evaluation criterion will not lead to a re-evaluation if the proposal has failed anyway on another criterion or if even by adding the maximum points for this criterion, the final score remains below the funding threshold.

The score following any re-evaluation will be regarded as definitive. It may be lower than the original score.

All requests for redress will be treated in confidence and will not prejudice future applications.

8.0 PROJECT FUNDING AND REPORT

8.1 Contractual relationships

This Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership call is a collaboration between funding organisations with the aim of establishing transnational research collaboration. The contracts with project partners are in the responsibility of the national/regional funding organisations.

Because of the fragmented nature of the funding, care will be taken to ensure that the individual contracts are synchronised both in time and content so that the project consortium can deliver transnational outputs as described in the project proposal. The national/regional research funding organisations must ensure that common Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership conditions are met (*e.g.*, the common start date of a given project, reporting requirements etc.).

For the whole duration of the contract, it is the responsibility of the Project Coordinator to inform the Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership consortium about any changes in the project, *i.e.*, modifications of the work plan, the project consortium, or the contract. The communication should be transmitted through the Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership Monitoring Group and approved by the JCS.

Any financial issue is under the responsibility of each national/regional funding organisation involved in the approved project.

8.2 Consortium Agreement

All project partners are required to sign a Consortium Agreement (CA) before the official project start or in any case no later than three months after the project start. The CA should address matters on the management of project activities, finances, Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) and how to avoid and solve disputes which might be detrimental to the completion of the project. It will be the responsibility of the project coordinators to draw up a CA suitable for their own group.

Upon request, the CA must be made available to the national or regional research funding organisation(s), together with any other information required by national or regional regulations. Funding organisations might require the CA to release the funds.

Support for the preparation of a consortium agreement can be found on the DESCA webpage http://www.desca-2020-eu.

8.3 Project monitoring and reporting

Funded projects will be required to submit via the project coordinator a mid-term report and a final report on research and activity progress (submission procedure will be specified at the kick-off of the projects). Some research funding rganisations may request additional specific reports.

The funded projects must be completed within a maximum of three years and are considered to be part of an international research programme (Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership) for which some joint activities will be organised, in particular:

- a Kick-Off meeting, at the beginning of the funding period (approx. Spring 2024), to explain objectives and expected results;

- a mid-term meeting (approx. Autumn 2025) to present and discuss the mid-term reports, preliminary results, and future work;

- a final meeting (approx. Spring 2027), to present and disseminate the project results and main outcomes.

The coordinators (at least) of the funded projects are expected to actively engage to these three joint activities. Accordingly, the cost for attendance to the physical meetings should be foreseen in their proposals´ budget.

The objectives of these joint activities are the monitoring of the projects funded through the Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership and the provision of networking and future collaboration opportunities. When possible, the meetings will be organised back-to-back with other relevant workshops/events.

Besides this, on behalf of the consortium, the project coordinator will be required to submit two written progress reports (mid-term and final). All consortium partners will have

to deliver input for these reports. the Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership will provide a template for this task.

Funding recipients must ensure that all outcomes (publications, etc.) of transnational Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership projects include a proper acknowledgement of the Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership. All the publications resulting from funded projects must be published in adherence to the EC Open Science Policy (see Annex F).

8.4 Dissemination requirements

Dissemination of project outputs is obligatory and is the responsibility of the funded project partners. Detailed plans for dissemination of the results must be described in the proposals and are considered in the evaluation procedure. This can be organised in the form of various communication routes such as scientific papers, posters, course or training material, web-based tools, stakeholder involvement, workshops, or direct intervention towards end users. Dissemination to national end-users is necessary for all partner countries. A dissemination plan will be requested for the full proposal and should specify how the planned activities will contribute to the impact of the project.

Further, the project partners must acknowledge the transnational funding of the Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership under Horizon Europe and the individual national/regional funding organisations in any document that is published (in written, oral, or electronic form) within the research project.

9.0 LIST OF ANNEXES

9.1 ANNEX A – Theory of change

9.2 ANNEX B – National Contact Points (NCP) and national/regional funding regulations

9.3 ANNEX C - List of the beneficiaries of the Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership allowed to participate in R&I projects' consortia

9.4 ANNEX D_Pre-Proposal form

9.5 ANNEX E_Full proposal form

9.6 ANNEX F_Open Access and Fair Data

CONTACT

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WWW.BLUEPARTNERSHIP.EU

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