



European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF)

Call for proposals

Improving scientific knowledge to strengthen the science-basis of
management decisions under the Common Fisheries Policy
(EMFAF-2025-PIA-FisheriesScientificAdvice)

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EUROPEAN CLIMATE, INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENVIRONMENT EXECUTIVE AGENCY (CINEA)

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

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

0. Introduction	5
1. Background	6
2. Objectives — Themes and priorities — Activities that can be funded — Expected impact	
- Indicators	7
Objectives	7
Themes and priorities (scope)	7
Activities that can be funded (scope).....	8
Expected impact.....	9
Indicators	9
3. Available budget.....	10
4. Timetable and deadlines	10
5. Admissibility and documents	10
6. Eligibility	11
Eligible participants (eligible countries).....	12
Specific cases.....	12
Consortium composition	13
Eligible activities.....	13
Duration	13
Project budget.....	13
Ethics	13
7. Financial and operational capacity and exclusion	14
Financial capacity	14
Operational capacity	14
Exclusion	15
8. Evaluation and award procedure	16
9. Award criteria.....	17
10. Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements	18
Starting date and project duration	18
Milestones and deliverables.....	18
Form of grant, funding rate and maximum grant amount.....	19
Budget categories and cost eligibility rules.....	19
Reporting and payment arrangements.....	20
Prefinancing guarantees	21
Certificates	21

Liability regime for recoveries	21
Provisions concerning the project implementation	21
Other specificities	22
Non-compliance and breach of contract	22
11. How to submit an application	22
12. Help	23
13. Important	24

0. Introduction

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

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

- Regulation [2024/2509](#) ([EU Financial Regulation](#))
- the basic act (EMFAF Regulation [2021/1139](#)¹).

The call is launched in accordance with the 2024-2025 Work Programme², [action 2.1.2. Improving scientific knowledge to strengthen the science-basis of management decisions under the CFP](#), and will be managed by the **European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency (CINEA)** ('Agency').

The call covers the following **topic**:

- **EMFAF-2025-PIA-FisheriesScienceAdvice – Improving scientific knowledge to strengthen the science-basis of fisheries management decisions under the Common Fisheries Policy**

CINEA expects to fund up to 7 projects.

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

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

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

¹ Regulation (EU) 2021/1139 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 July 2021 establishing the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (OJ L 247, 13.7.2021, p. 1).

² Commission Implementing Decision C(2023) 7584 final of 14.11.2023 on the financing of the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund and the adoption of the work programme for 2024 and 2025.

- recommendations for the preparation of the application
- the AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement contains:
 - detailed annotations on all the provisions in the Grant Agreement you will have to sign in order to obtain the grant (*including cost eligibility, payment schedule, accessory obligations, etc.*).

You are also encouraged to visit [EU Funding and Tenders Portal](#) to consult the list of projects funded previously.

1. Background

One of the main principles of good governance under the Common Fishery Policy (CFP) is *the establishment of measures in accordance with the best available scientific advice* (Article 3, CFP Basic Regulation³).

The success of the CFP relies on the availability of scientific advice for the management of fisheries and hence also on the timely availability of relevant supporting data on fisheries. To that end, EMFAF supports, through shared management, the collection and processing of data by Member States. The practical implementation of regional projects (involving more than one Member State) under shared management has proven to be challenging. EMFAF also provides the possibility of supporting an effective knowledge-based implementation of the CFP through the provision of scientific advice under direct management. This call falls under this possibility.

Other EU funds are also available for research projects that contribute to strengthen the scientific knowledge available in fisheries (e.g. Horizon Europe) and regional cooperation (e.g. Interreg). However, those projects are usually large-scale and more focused on fundamental research (not applied) and delivering long-term results. Thus, they are not always fit to provide immediate scientific advice in a targeted approach and within a shorter timeframe.

The development of scientific knowledge and advice is a continuous process, which is becoming more and more demanding as the advice is required for an increasing variety of fisheries conservation and management issues (e.g. multispecies and ecosystem assessments to implement an ecosystem approach to fisheries management (EAFM), multiannual recovery and/or management plans, management strategy evaluation, technical measures, incidental catch of vulnerable and sensitive species, effects of climate change, impacts of other human activities at sea, etc.). EU policy orientations and commitments with implications for the CFP, such as the European Green Deal, EU farm to fork strategy and EU Biodiversity strategy 2030, as well as the report on the functioning of the CFP and the evaluation/fitness check of the CFP, are likely to stimulate the need for even more targeted scientific input in support of the governance of the CFP.

This occurs in a context where the main providers of advice to the European Commission, such as STECF⁴, ICES⁵, JRC⁶, or scientific committees of RFMOs⁷ and SFPAs⁸ and the national fisheries research institutes on which they depend, experience

³ Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 on the Common Fisheries Policy, amending Council Regulations (EC) No 1954/2003 and (EC) No 1224/2009 and repealing Council Regulations (EC) No 2371/2002 and (EC) No 639/2004 and Council Decision 2004/585/EC <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32013R1380>

⁴ [Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries](#)

⁵ [International Council for the Exploration of the Sea](#)

⁶ [Joint Research Centre - European Commission](#)

⁷ [Regional Fisheries Management Organisations](#)

⁸ [Sustainable Fisheries Partnership agreements](#)

important limitations in terms of capacity and resources to improve the existing knowledge and to address the growing needs in scientific advice.

The purpose of this Call is to target additional needs for scientific knowledge, reinforcing and complementing the actions undertaken by EU bodies that have an impact in the implementation of the CFP.

This call does not aim at supporting innovative actions to enter in the market or general marine knowledge that is not directly linked to fisheries management. Innovativeness is however highly encouraged, as understood by actions that will promote progress beyond the state of the art in science applied to fisheries management.

This call follows a first call for proposals launched in 2023. [6 projects](#) covering a range of topics were awarded funds and [kicked-off their activities](#) already.

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

Objectives

The main objective of this Call for Proposals is to develop and strengthen the scientific knowledge needed to support the science-basis for fisheries management measures.

Themes and priorities (scope)

The priorities related to this call are the reinforcement of policy-oriented fisheries science, the better use of the collected scientific data, the improved cooperation between scientists and the fisheries sector, and the support of the EU scientific community in developing and maintaining the relevant expertise to provide high quality scientific advice.

The applicants must clearly identify in their proposals which of the following theme(s) they will contribute to. Projects should focus on at least one of the themes listed below (not in any priority order):

- Improve or update the available scientific knowledge to advise the European Commission on proposing new fisheries management measures or reviewing the existing ones within the CFP context, including its external dimension.
- Adapt the scientific advice needed for the CFP to the upcoming challenges affecting fisheries management, such as climate change and related changes in ecosystems or increasing diversity of human activities at sea.
- Increase understanding of fisheries stock structures, populations, life histories, food webs and multi-species interactions.
- Further strengthen scientific knowledge to assess and monitor the impact of fisheries on the structure, function and dynamics of marine ecosystems, and their associated services.
- Increase understanding and operationalisation of an ecosystem approach to fisheries management (EAFM) to further develop capacity to provide advice using environmental, social and economic information, including through qualitative, semi-qualitative and quantitative analysis.
- Strengthen scientific and operational knowledge to monitor and assess the impact of fisheries on vulnerable and sensitive species with a view to identify biologically sensitive areas, hot-spots by-catch areas and mitigation measures to monitor and control mortalities and the most suitable management measures

for specific cases.

- Increase understanding and monitoring of the impact of other human activities and their threats on fisheries stocks or their linked ecosystems and on fishing activities.
- Optimise the collection and use of scientific data and samples collected under the Data Collection Framework or under any other data collection or monitoring initiatives at national/regional or EU level.
- Improve methodological aspects such as sampling, design, data collection and/or data management that will benefit the scientific fishery advisory process.

In addition, proposals may contribute to at least one of the following complementary theme(s).

- Support the EU scientific community, in developing and maintaining the relevant expertise to provide high-quality scientific advice to inform fisheries management.
- Support the involvement of policy stakeholders and citizens in the provision of fisheries data, the process of the inter- and trans-disciplinary production of scientific advice, and the communication and dissemination of scientific results.

Activities that can be funded (scope)

Selected projects can include the activities listed (non-exhaustive list) below:

- developing methodologies for stock identification/definition and/or evaluation including refining of stock geographical distribution and assessment parameters, including data-limited methods and those suitable providing advice on very rare sensitive species,
- modelling: development, improvement, operationalising, testing and/or validation of models (e.g. adding age error matrices, incorporating environmental, social and/or economic drivers, considering multispecies interactions, adjusting models to geographical areas, etc.),
- collection and processing of samples and/or data in the field which are outside (or go beyond) the scope of national data collection programmes (e.g. environmental samples, biological samples, social and economic data, etc.),
- harmonise and/or improve protocols of data collection, handling and management to serve the scientific advisory process,
- trials (e.g. exploring methods for improving surveys, collection of data, monitoring methods, risk assessments, etc.),
- meta-analysis, data validation and/or data preparation to feed into models,
- expanding current databases or creating new databases and link with existing initiatives with the aim of improving data quality and serving scientific advice,
- developing new advice formats or frequencies.

Activities can contribute to more than one theme.

In addition, applicants may propose other activities such as develop cooperation/networking activities between EU scientists and/or with EU fishing industry and/or managers (e.g. multidisciplinary analysis, workshops, benchmark meetings,

stakeholders' consultations, networking of existing samples, etc.).

Expected impact

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

- Improved available knowledge to the EU (and global) fisheries scientific community, thus directly improving the science-base for the fisheries management measures designed in the context of the CFP.
- Better integration of the results of the project into the scientific advice for fisheries management process and, when relevant, the possibility to use/transfer the outcomes to other countries/regions.

Applicants must describe the main target groups or forums in which their results should be considered to feed scientific advice processes for fisheries management (e.g. existing working groups of scientific bodies).

Where relevant, applicants must explain the added value of their proposals in relation to similar actions implemented under national EMFAF Operational Programmes (shared management), e.g. Data Collection Framework (DCF) or monitoring programmes, under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and the EU Birds Directive and Habitats Directive. This will be evaluated under Relevance.

Indicators


Applicants have to list the main results⁹ in a concrete, realistic and quantified way, as far as possible. The results should be presented in a format comparable to the relevant performance and result indicators (KPI) of EMFAF¹⁰ as per the list below (only relevant indicators should be considered):

- CR 01 - New production capacity (tonnes/annum)
- CR 03 - Businesses created (number of entities)
- CR 04 - Businesses with higher turnover (number of entities)
- CR 06 - Jobs created (number of persons)
- CR 07 - Jobs maintained (number of persons)
- CR 08 - Persons benefitting (number of persons)
- CR 09 - Area addressed by operations contributing to a good environmental status, protecting, conserving, and restoring biodiversity and ecosystems (km² or km)
- CR 10 - Actions contributing to a good environmental status, including nature restoration, conservation, protection of ecosystems, biodiversity, animal health and welfare (number of actions)

⁹ Results: capture more direct, short to medium term changes in a situation, which are achieved by the end of the project. E.g. if four FTE jobs are expected to be created by the end of the project, this will be an expected project result.

¹⁰ See Annex I of EMFAF Regulation [2021/1139](#)

- CR 11 - Entities increasing social sustainability (number of entities)
- CR 13 - Cooperation activities between stakeholders (number of actions)
- CR 14 - Innovations enabled (number of new products, services, processes, business models or methods)
- CR 16 - Entities benefitting from promotion and information activities (number of entities)
- CR 17 - Entities improving resource efficiency in production and/or processing (number of entities)
- CR 18 - Energy consumption leading to CO2 emissions reduction (kWh/tonnes or litres/h)
- CR 19 - Actions to improve governance capacity (number of actions)
- CR 20 - Investment induced (EUR)
- CR 21 - Datasets and advice made available (number)
- CR 22 - Usage of data and information platforms (number of page views)

 For more information about scientific advice under CFP, see [the EC website on scientific advice and data collection](#).

3. Available budget

The total available call budget is **EUR 2 600 000**. This budget might be increased by maximum 20%.

We expect to fund up to 7 projects.

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

4. Timetable and deadlines

Timetable and deadlines (indicative)	
Call opening:	14 November 2024
<u>Deadline for submission:</u>	<u>20 February 2025 – 17:00:00 CET</u> <u>(Brussels)</u>
Evaluation:	March-May 2025
Information on evaluation results:	May-June 2025
GA signature:	October/November 2025

5. Admissibility and documents

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

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

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

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

- Application Form Part A — contains administrative information about the participants (future coordinator, beneficiaries and affiliated entities) and the summarised budget for the project (*to be filled in directly online*)
- Application Form Part B — contains the technical description of the project (*to be downloaded from the Portal Submission System, completed and then assembled and re-uploaded*)
- **mandatory annexes and supporting documents** (*templates available to be downloaded from the Portal Submission System, completed, assembled and re-uploaded*):
 - detailed budget table: not applicable
 - CVs (short outlines) of core project team: not applicable
 - activity reports of last year: not applicable
 - list of previous projects (key projects for the last 4 years) (*template available in Part B*).

A detailed budget table is available for information on [Portal Reference Documents](#). You are NOT obliged to use it to prepare your project budget, nor upload it with your application, but you will be requested to provide it later on, if you are selected for funding.


Please note that the amounts entered into the summarised budget table (filled in directly online) must correspond to the amounts calculated in the detailed budget table. In case of discrepancies, the amounts in the online summarised budget table will prevail.

At proposal submission, you will have to confirm that you have the **mandate to act** for all applicants. Moreover, you will have to confirm that the information in the application is correct and complete and that the participants comply with the conditions for receiving EU funding (especially eligibility, financial and operational capacity, exclusion, etc). Before signing the grant, each beneficiary and affiliated entity will have to confirm this again by signing a declaration of honour (DoH). Proposals without full support will be rejected.

Your application must be **readable, accessible and printable**.

Proposals are limited to maximum **40 pages** (Part B). Evaluators will not consider any additional pages.

You may be asked at a later stage for further documents (*for legal entity validation, financial capacity check, bank account validation, etc*).

 For more information about the submission process (including IT aspects), consult the [Online Manual](#).

6. Eligibility

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

Eligible participants (eligible countries)

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

- be legal entities (public or private bodies)
- be established in one of the eligible countries, i.e.:
 - EU Member States (including overseas countries and territories (OCTs))
- be research centres, institutes, universities, foundations and scientific bodies primarily active in fisheries science or in marine science applied to fisheries management.

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

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

Specific cases

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


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

Entities without legal personality — Entities which do not have legal personality under their national law may exceptionally participate, provided that their representatives have the capacity to undertake legal obligations on their behalf, and offer guarantees for the protection of the EU financial interests equivalent to that offered by legal persons¹¹.

EU bodies — EU bodies (with the exception of the European Commission Joint Research Centre) can NOT be part of the consortium.

Associations and interest groupings — Entities composed of members may participate as 'sole beneficiaries' or 'beneficiaries without legal personality'¹². ⚠ Please note that if the action will be implemented by the members, they should also participate (either as beneficiaries or as affiliated entities, otherwise their costs will NOT be eligible).

EU restrictive measures — Special rules apply for certain entities (*e.g. entities subject to [EU restrictive measures](#) under Article 29 of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU) and Article 215 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU)*¹³). Such entities are not eligible to participate in any capacity, including as beneficiaries, affiliated entities, associated partners, subcontractors or recipients of financial support to third parties (if any).

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

¹¹ See Article 200(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation [2024/2509](#).

¹² For the definitions, see Articles 190(2) and 200(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation [2024/2509](#).

¹³ Please note that the EU Official Journal contains the official list and, in case of conflict, its content prevails over that of the [EU Sanctions Map](#).

Consortium composition

Proposals must be submitted by a consortium of at least 2 applicants (beneficiaries; not affiliated entities), which complies with the following conditions:

- minimum 2 independent entities from 2 different EU Member States

The coordinator must be established in an EU Member State.

Eligible activities

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

When relevant, Projects should take into account the results of projects supported by other EU funding programmes. The complementarities must be described in the project proposals (Part B of the Application Form).

Projects must comply with EU policy interests and priorities (*such as environment, social, security, industrial and trade policy, etc*).

Financial support to third parties is not allowed.

Duration

Projects should normally range between 18 and 30 months (extensions are possible, if duly justified and through an amendment), this does not preclude the submission/selection of proposals with a different duration (i.e. below 18 months or above 30 months).

Project budget

Project budgets (maximum grant amount) are expected to range between EUR 400 000 and EUR 600 000 per project.

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

Ethics

Projects must comply with:

- highest ethical standards and
- applicable EU, international and national law (including Directive 98/58¹⁴, Regulation 1099/2009¹⁵, and Regulation (889/2008)¹⁶).

Projects must pay particular attention to the principle of proportionality, the need to ensure protection of the environment and high levels of animal welfare and human health protection.

Applicants must show in their application that they respect ethical principles and applicable regulatory framework.

Projects involving ethics issues may be made subject to specific ethics rules.

¹⁴ Council Directive 98/58/EC of 20 July 1998 concerning the protection of animals kept for farming purposes (OJ L 221, 8.8.1998, p. 23).

¹⁵ Council Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009 of 24 September 2009 on the protection of animals at the time of killing (OJ L 303, 18.11.2009, p. 1).

¹⁶ Commission Regulation (EC) No 889/2008 of 5 September 2008 laying down detailed rules for the implementation of Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007 on organic production and labelling of organic products with regard to organic production, labelling and control (OJ L 250, 18.9.2008, p. 1).

7. Financial and operational capacity and exclusion

Financial capacity

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

The financial capacity check will be carried out on the basis of the documents you will be requested to upload in the [Participant Register](#) during grant preparation (*e.g. profit and loss account and balance sheet, business plan, audit report produced by an approved external auditor, certifying the accounts for the last closed financial year, etc*). The analysis will be based on neutral financial indicators, but will also take into account other aspects, such as dependency on EU funding and deficit and revenue in previous years.

The check will normally be done for all beneficiaries, except:

- public bodies (entities established as public body under national law, including local, regional or national authorities) or international organisations
- if the individual requested grant amount is not more than EUR 60 000.

If needed, it may also be done for affiliated entities.

If we consider that your financial capacity is not satisfactory, we may require:

- further information
 - an enhanced financial responsibility regime, i.e. joint and several responsibility for all beneficiaries or joint and several liability of affiliated entities (*see below, section 10*)
 - prefinancing paid in instalments
 - (one or more) prefinancing guarantees (*see below, section 10*)
- or
- propose no prefinancing
 - request that you are replaced or, if needed, reject the entire proposal.

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

Operational capacity

Applicants must have the **know-how, qualifications** and **resources** to successfully implement the projects and contribute their share (including sufficient experience in projects of comparable size and nature).

This capacity will be assessed together with the 'Quality' award criterion, on the basis of the competence and experience of the applicants and their project teams, including operational resources (human, technical and other) or, exceptionally, the measures proposed to obtain it by the time the task implementation starts.

If the evaluation of the award criterion is positive, the applicants are considered to have sufficient operational capacity.

Applicants will have to show their capacity via the following information:

- general profiles (qualifications and experiences) of the staff responsible for managing and implementing the project
- description of the consortium participants
- list of previous projects (key projects for the last 4 years; *template available in Part B*).

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

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

Exclusion

Applicants which are subject to an **EU exclusion decision** or in one of the following **exclusion situations** that bar them from receiving EU funding can NOT participate¹⁷:

- bankruptcy, winding up, affairs administered by the courts, arrangement with creditors, suspended business activities or other similar procedures (including procedures for persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts)
- in breach of social security or tax obligations (including if done by persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts)
- guilty of grave professional misconduct¹⁸ (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- committed fraud, corruption, links to a criminal organisation, money laundering, terrorism-related crimes (including terrorism financing), child labour or human trafficking (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners, affiliated entities or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- shown significant deficiencies in complying with main obligations under an EU procurement contract, grant agreement, prize, expert contract, or similar (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners, affiliated entities or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- guilty of irregularities within the meaning of Article 1(2) of EU Regulation [2988/95](#) (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners, affiliated entities or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- created under a different jurisdiction with the intent to circumvent fiscal, social or other legal obligations in the country of origin or created another entity with this purpose (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners, affiliated entities or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)

¹⁷ See Articles 138 and 143 of EU Financial Regulation [2024/2509](#).

¹⁸ Professional misconduct includes: violation of ethical standards of the profession, wrongful conduct with impact on professional credibility, false declarations/misrepresentation of information, participation in a cartel or other agreement distorting competition, violation of IPR, attempting to influence decision-making processes, obtain confidential information from public authorities to gain advantage or incitement to discrimination, hatred and violence.

- failed to cooperate with the authorising officer or any European investigative bodies.

Applicants will also be rejected if it turns out that¹⁹:

- during the award procedure they misrepresented information required as a condition for participating or failed to supply that information
- they were previously involved in the preparation of the call and this entails a distortion of competition that cannot be remedied otherwise (conflict of interest)
- have professional conflicting interests which may negatively affect the performance of the contract
- they are subject to a decision prohibiting the award of the contract for having received foreign subsidies distorting the internal market.

8. Evaluation and award procedure

The proposals will have to follow the **standard submission and evaluation procedure** (one-stage submission + one-step evaluation).

An **evaluation committee** will assess all applications. Proposals will first be checked for formal requirements (admissibility, and eligibility, see *sections 5 and 6*). Proposals found admissible and eligible will be evaluated (for each topic) against the operational capacity and award criteria (see *sections 7 and 9*) and then ranked according to their score.


For proposals with the same score (within a topic or budget envelope) a **priority order** will be determined according to the following approach:

Successively for every group of *ex aequo* proposals, starting with the highest scored group, and continuing in descending order:

- 1) Projects focusing on a theme and/or priority (as indicated in section 2) that is not otherwise covered by higher ranked projects will be considered to have the highest priority.
- 2) The *ex aequo* proposals within the same topic will be prioritised according to the scores they have been awarded for the award criterion 'Relevance'. When these scores are equal, priority will be based on their scores for the criterion 'Impact'.
- 3) If this does not allow to determine the priority, a further prioritisation can be done by considering the overall project portfolio and the creation of positive synergies between projects, or other factors related to the objectives of the call. These factors will be documented in the panel report.
- 4) After that, the remainder of the available call budget will be used to fund projects across the different topics in order to ensure a balanced spread of the geographical and thematic coverage and while respecting to the maximum possible extent the order of merit based on the evaluation of the award criteria.

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

¹⁹ See Article 143 EU Financial Regulation [2024/2509](#).

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

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

If you believe that the evaluation procedure was flawed, you can submit a **complaint** (following the deadlines and procedures set out in the evaluation result letter). Please note that notifications which have not been opened within 10 days after sending will be considered to have been accessed and that deadlines will be counted from opening/access (see also [Funding & Tenders Portal Terms and Conditions](#)). Please also be aware that for complaints submitted electronically, there may be character limitations.

9. Award criteria

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

1. Relevance:

- clarity and consistency of project, objectives and planning; extent to which they match the themes and priorities, and objectives of the call in relation to the improvement of the knowledge needed for scientific advice to fisheries management under the CFP; contribution to the EU strategic and legislative context, including, where relevant, to the objectives of the Common Fisheries Policy²⁰
- identification of specific needs/challenges of the policy domains/sea basins/areas targeted in the call; European/trans-national dimension
- extent to which the proposal differentiates from other initiatives in the field and provides added value; quality of proposed coordination and support measures; potential to develop mutual trust/cross-border cooperation.

2. Quality:

- quality and effectiveness of the methodology for implementing the project (concept and methodology, management, procedures, timetable, risks and risk management, monitoring and evaluation);
- feasibility of the project within the proposed time frame;
- cost effectiveness (sufficient/appropriate budget for proper implementation; best value for money);
- quality of the consortium (if applicable) and project teams; appropriate procedures and problem-solving mechanisms for cooperating within the project teams and consortium (if applicable).

²⁰ For Common Fisheries Policy and other relevant information, see [EC sustainable fisheries website](#)

3. Impact:

- extent to which the outputs of the project contribute to each of the expected impacts of the call; suitability and quality of the measures to maximise expected outcomes and impacts;
- appropriateness of the dissemination and exploitation plan, including communication, cooperation/networking activities and, if applicable, measures linked to intellectual property and knowledge protection and regulatory issues; sustainability of results after EU funding ends;
- ambition and expected long-term impact of results on target groups/general public.

Award criteria	Minimum pass score	Maximum score
Relevance	6	10
Quality	6	10
Impact	6	10
Overall (pass) scores	21	30

Maximum points: 30 points.

Individual thresholds per criterion: 6/10, 6/10 and 6/10 points.

Overall threshold: 21 points.

Proposals that pass the individual thresholds AND the overall threshold will be considered for funding — within the limits of the available budget (i.e. up to the budget ceiling). Other proposals will be rejected.

10. Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements

If you pass evaluation, your project will be invited for grant preparation, where you will be asked to prepare the Grant Agreement together with the EU Project Officer.

This Grant Agreement will set the framework for your grant and its terms and conditions, in particular concerning deliverables, reporting and payments.

The Model Grant Agreement that will be used (and all other relevant templates and guidance documents) can be found on [Portal Reference Documents](#).

Starting date and project duration

The project starting date and duration will be fixed in the Grant Agreement (*Data Sheet, point 1*). Normally the starting date will be after grant signature. A retroactive starting date can be granted exceptionally for duly justified reasons — but never earlier than the proposal submission date.

Project duration: *see section 6 above*.

Milestones and deliverables

The milestones and deliverables for each project will be managed through the Portal Grant Management System and will be reflected in Annex 1 of the Grant Agreement.

The following deliverables will be mandatory for all projects:

- a policy brief at the end of each reporting period
- a project factsheet at the beginning of the project, including an update once the project is finished.

Form of grant, funding rate and maximum grant amount

The grant parameters (*maximum grant amount, funding rate, total eligible costs, etc*) will be fixed in the Grant Agreement (*Data Sheet, point 3 and art 5*).

Project budget (maximum grant amount): *see section 6 above*.

The grant will be a budget-based mixed actual cost grant (actual costs, with unit cost and flat-rate elements). This means that it will reimburse ONLY certain types of costs (eligible costs) and costs that were *actually* incurred for your project (NOT the *budgeted* costs). For unit costs and flat-rates, you can charge the amounts calculated as explained in the Grant Agreement (*see art 6 and Annex 2 and 2a*).

The costs will be reimbursed at the funding rate fixed in the Grant Agreement (**80%**).

Grants may NOT produce a profit (i.e. surplus of revenues + EU grant over costs). For-profit organisations must declare their revenues and, if there is a profit, we will deduct it from the final grant amount (*see art 22.3*).

Moreover, please be aware that the final grant amount may be reduced in case of non-compliance with the Grant Agreement (*e.g. improper implementation, breach of obligations, etc*).

Budget categories and cost eligibility rules

The budget categories and cost eligibility rules are fixed in the Grant Agreement (*Data Sheet, point 3 and art 6*).

Budget categories for this call:

- A. Personnel costs
 - A.1 Employees, A.2 Natural persons under direct contract, A.3 Seconded persons
 - A.4 SME owners and natural person beneficiaries
- B. Subcontracting costs
- C. Purchase costs
 - C.1 Travel and subsistence
 - C.2 Equipment
 - C.3 Other goods, works and services
- D. Other cost categories
 - D.1 Financial support to third parties
- E. Indirect costs

Specific cost eligibility conditions for this call:

- personnel costs:

- SME owner/natural person unit cost²¹: Yes
- travel and subsistence unit cost²²: Yes
- equipment costs: depreciation
- other cost categories:
 - costs for financial support to third parties: not allowed
- indirect cost flat-rate: 7% of the eligible direct costs (categories A-D, except volunteers costs and exempted specific cost categories, if any)
- VAT: non-deductible VAT is eligible (but please note that since 2013 VAT paid by beneficiaries that are public bodies acting as public authority is NOT eligible)
- other:
 - in-kind contributions for free are allowed, but cost-neutral, i.e. they cannot be declared as cost
 - kick-off meeting: costs for kick-off meeting organised by the granting authority are eligible (travel costs for maximum 2 persons, return ticket to Brussels and accommodation for one night) only if the meeting takes place after the project starting date set out in the Grant Agreement; the starting date can be changed through an amendment, if needed
 - project websites: communication costs for presenting the project on the participants' websites or social media accounts are eligible; costs for *separate* project websites are not eligible
 - other ineligible costs: see article 6.3 of the Grant Agreement.

Reporting and payment arrangements


The reporting and payment arrangements are fixed in the Grant Agreement (*Data Sheet, point 4 and art 21 and 22*).

After grant signature, you will normally receive a **prefinancing** to start working on the project (float of normally **40%** of the maximum grant amount; exceptionally less or no prefinancing). The prefinancing will be paid 30 days from entry into force/financial guarantee (if required) — whichever is the latest.

There will be one or more **interim payments** if applicable (with detailed cost reporting).

Payment of the balance: At the end of the project, we will calculate your final grant amount. If the total of earlier payments is higher than the final grant amount, we will ask you (your coordinator) to pay back the difference (recovery).

All payments will be made to the coordinator.

 Please be aware that payments will be automatically lowered if one of your consortium members has outstanding debts towards the EU (granting authority or other EU bodies). Such debts will be offset by us — in line with the conditions set out in the Grant Agreement (*see art 22*).

²¹ Commission [Decision](#) of 20 October 2020 authorising the use of unit costs for the personnel costs of the owners of small and medium-sized enterprises and beneficiaries that are natural persons not receiving a salary for the work carried out by themselves under an action or work programme (C(2020)7115).

²² Commission [Decision](#) of 12 January 2021 authorising the use of unit costs for travel, accommodation and subsistence costs under an action or work programme under the 2021-2027 multi-annual financial framework (C(2021)35).

Please also note that you are responsible for keeping records on all the work done and the costs declared.

Prefinancing guarantees

If a prefinancing guarantee is required, it will be fixed in the Grant Agreement (*Data Sheet, point 4*). The amount will be set during grant preparation and it will normally be equal or lower than the prefinancing for your grant.

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

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

Prefinancing guarantees are normally requested from the coordinator, for the consortium. They must be provided during grant preparation, in time to make the prefinancing (scanned copy via Portal AND original by post).

If agreed with us, the bank guarantee may be replaced by a guarantee from a third party.

The guarantee will be released at the end of the grant, in accordance with the conditions laid down in the Grant Agreement (*art 23*).

Certificates

Depending on the type of action, size of grant amount and type of beneficiaries, you may be requested to submit different certificates. The types, schedules and thresholds for each certificate are fixed in the Grant Agreement (*Data Sheet, point 4 and art 24*).

Liability regime for recoveries

The liability regime for recoveries will be fixed in the Grant Agreement (*Data Sheet point 4.4 and art 22*).

For beneficiaries, it is one of the following:

- limited joint and several liability with individual ceilings — *each beneficiary up to their maximum grant amount*
 - unconditional joint and several liability — *each beneficiary up to the maximum grant amount for the action*
- or
- individual financial responsibility — *each beneficiary only for their own debts*.

In addition, the granting authority may require joint and several liability of affiliated entities (with their beneficiary).

Provisions concerning the project implementation

Security rules: *see Model Grant Agreement (art 13 and Annex 5)*

Ethics rules: *see Model Grant Agreement (art 14 and Annex 5)*

IPR rules: *see Model Grant Agreement (art 16 and Annex 5):*

- rights of use on results: Yes

Communication, dissemination and visibility of funding: *see Model Grant Agreement (art 17 and Annex 5):*

- communication and dissemination plan: Yes
- additional communication and dissemination activities: Yes

Specific rules for carrying out the action: *see Model Grant Agreement (art 18 and Annex 5)*:

- specific rules for blending operations: No

Other specificities

n/a

Non-compliance and breach of contract

The Grant Agreement (chapter 5) provides for the measures we may take in case of breach of contract (and other non-compliance issues).

 For more information, see [AGA – Annotated Grant Agreement](#).

11. How to submit an application

All proposals must be submitted directly online via the Funding & Tenders Portal Electronic Submission System. Paper applications are NOT accepted.

Submission is a **2-step process**:

a) create a user account and register your organisation

To use the Submission System (the only way to apply), all participants need to [create an EU Login user account](#).

Once you have an EU Login account, you can [register your organisation](#) in the Participant Register. When your registration is finalised, you will receive a 9-digit participant identification code (PIC).

b) submit the proposal

Access the Electronic Submission System via the Topic page in the [Search Funding & Tenders](#) section (or, for calls sent by invitation to submit a proposal, through the link provided in the invitation letter).

Submit your proposal in 3 parts, as follows:

- Part A includes administrative information about the applicant organisations (future coordinator, beneficiaries, affiliated entities and associated partners) and the summarised budget for the proposal. Fill it in directly online
- Part B (description of the action) covers the technical content of the proposal. Download the mandatory word template from the Submission System, fill it in and upload it as a PDF file
- Annexes (*see section 5*). Upload them as PDF file (single or multiple depending on the slots). Excel upload is sometimes possible, depending on the file type.

The proposal must keep to the **page limits** (*see section 5*); excess pages will be disregarded.

Documents must be uploaded to the **right category** in the Submission System otherwise the proposal might be considered incomplete and thus inadmissible.

The proposal must be submitted **before the call deadline** (see *section 4*). After this deadline, the system is closed and proposals can no longer be submitted.

Once the proposal is submitted, you will receive a **confirmation e-mail** (with date and time of your application). If you do not receive this confirmation e-mail, it means your proposal has NOT been submitted. If you believe this is due to a fault in the Submission System, you should immediately file a complaint via the [IT Helpdesk webform](#), explaining the circumstances and attaching a copy of the proposal (and, if possible, screenshots to show what happened).

Details on processes and procedures are described in the [Online Manual](#). The Online Manual also contains the links to FAQs and detailed instructions regarding the Portal Electronic Exchange System.

12. Help

As far as possible, ***please try to find the answers you need yourself***, in this and the other documentation (we have limited resources for handling direct enquiries):

- [Online Manual](#)
- Topic Q&A on the Topic page (for call-specific questions in open calls; not applicable for actions by invitation)
- [Portal FAQ](#) (for general questions).

Please also consult the Topic page regularly since we will use it to publish call updates. (For invitations, we will contact you directly in case of a call update).

Contact

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

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

Please indicate clearly the reference of the call and topic to which your question relates (see *cover page*).

13. Important



IMPORTANT

- **Don't wait until the end** — Complete your application sufficiently in advance of the deadline to avoid any last minute **technical problems**. Problems due to last minute submissions (*e.g. congestion, etc*) will be entirely at your risk. Call deadlines can NOT be extended.
- **Consult** the Portal Topic page regularly. We will use it to publish updates and additional information on the call (call and topic updates).
- **Funding & Tenders Portal Electronic Exchange System** — By submitting the application, all participants **accept** to use the electronic exchange system in accordance with the [Portal Terms & Conditions](#).
- **Registration** — Before submitting the application, all beneficiaries, affiliated entities and associated partners must be registered in the [Participant Register](#). The participant identification code (PIC) (one per participant) is mandatory for the Application Form.
- **Consortium roles** — When setting up your consortium, you should think of organisations that help you reach objectives and solve problems.

The roles should be attributed according to the level of participation in the project. Main participants should participate as **beneficiaries** or **affiliated entities**; other entities can participate as associated partners, subcontractors, third parties giving in-kind contributions. **Associated partners** and third parties giving in-kind contributions should bear their own costs (they will not become formal recipients of EU funding). **Subcontracting** should normally constitute a limited part and must be performed by third parties (not by one of the beneficiaries/affiliated entities). Subcontracting going beyond 30% of the total eligible costs must be justified in the application.

- **Coordinator** — In multi-beneficiary grants, the beneficiaries participate as consortium (group of beneficiaries). They will have to choose a coordinator, who will take care of the project management and coordination and will represent the consortium towards the granting authority. In mono-beneficiary grants, the single beneficiary will automatically be coordinator.
- **Affiliated entities** — Applicants may participate with affiliated entities (i.e. entities linked to a beneficiary which participate in the action with similar rights and obligations as the beneficiaries, but do not sign the grant and therefore do not become beneficiaries themselves). They will get a part of the grant money and must therefore comply with all the call conditions and be validated (just like beneficiaries); but they do not count towards the minimum eligibility criteria for consortium composition (if any).
- **Associated partners** — Applicants may participate with associated partners (i.e. partner organisations which participate in the action but without the right to get grant money). They participate without funding and therefore do not need to be validated.
- **Consortium agreement** — For practical and legal reasons it is recommended to set up internal arrangements that allow you to deal with exceptional or unforeseen circumstances (in all cases, even if not mandatory under the Grant Agreement). The consortium agreement also gives you the possibility to redistribute the grant money according to your own consortium-internal principles and parameters (for instance, one beneficiary can reattribute its grant money to another beneficiary). The consortium agreement thus allows you to customise the EU grant to the needs inside your consortium and can also help to protect you in case of disputes.

- **Balanced project budget** — Grant applications must ensure a balanced project budget and sufficient other resources to implement the project successfully (*e.g. own contributions, income generated by the action, financial contributions from third parties, etc*). You may be requested to lower your estimated costs, if they are ineligible (including excessive).
- **Completed/ongoing projects** — Proposals for projects that have already been completed will be rejected; proposals for projects that have already started will be assessed on a case-by-case basis (in this case, no costs can be reimbursed for activities that took place before the project starting date/proposal submission).
- **No-profit rule** — Grants may NOT give a profit (i.e. surplus of revenues + EU grant over costs). This will be checked by us at the end of the project.
- **No cumulation of funding/no double funding** — It is strictly prohibited to cumulate funding from the EU budget (except under 'EU Synergies actions'). Outside such Synergies actions, any given action may receive only ONE grant from the EU budget and cost items may under NO circumstances be declared under two EU grants. If you would like to nonetheless benefit from different EU funding opportunities, projects must be designed as different actions, clearly delineated and separated for each grant (without overlaps).
- **Combination with EU operating grants** — Combination with EU operating grants is possible, if the project remains outside the operating grant work programme and you make sure that cost items are clearly separated in your accounting and NOT declared twice (*see [AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement, art 6.2.E](#)*).
- **Multiple proposals** — Applicants may submit more than one proposal for *different* projects under the same call (and be awarded funding for them).
Organisations may participate in several proposals.
BUT: if there are several proposals for *very similar* projects, only one application will be accepted and evaluated; the applicants will be asked to withdraw the others (or they will be rejected).
- **Resubmission** — Proposals may be changed and re-submitted until the deadline for submission.
- **Rejection** — By submitting the application, all applicants accept the call conditions set out in this this Call Document (and the documents it refers to). Proposals that do not comply with all the call conditions will be **rejected**. This applies also to applicants: All applicants need to fulfil the criteria; if any one of them doesn't, they must be replaced or the entire proposal will be rejected.
- **Cancellation** — There may be circumstances which may require the cancellation of the call. In this case, you will be informed via a call or topic update. Please note that cancellations are without entitlement to compensation.
- **Language** — You can submit your proposal in any official EU language (project abstract/summary should however always be in English). For reasons of efficiency, we strongly advise you to use English for the entire application. If you need the call documentation in another official EU language, please submit a request within 10 days after call publication (for the contact information, *see section 12*).