



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL
ENVIRONMENT
Directorate C - Quality of Life
ENV.C.2 – Marine Environment & Water Industry

CALL FOR PROPOSALS “DG ENV/MSFD 2020”

MARINE STRATEGY FRAMEWORK DIRECTIVE: SUPPORT TO THE PREPARATION OF THE NEXT 6-YEAR CYCLE OF IMPLEMENTATION

1. INTRODUCTION – BACKGROUND

1.1. The legal basis and purpose of the present call

Regulation (EU) No 508/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund¹ constitutes the legal basis for this call for proposals.

In particular, Article 83 of the above-mentioned regulation states that the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (hereinafter ‘EMFF’) may support operations, such as projects, in accordance with the objectives set out in Article 82. One of these objectives is the following "to promote the protection of the marine environment, in particular its biodiversity and marine protected areas such as Natura 2000 sites, and the sustainable use of marine and coastal resources and to further define the boundaries of the sustainability of human activities that have an impact on the marine environment, in accordance with the objectives of achieving and maintaining a good environmental status as required by Directive 2008/56/EC". Directive 2008/56/EC is the so-called Marine Strategy Framework Directive (hereinafter ‘MSFD’).²

The call at foresting cooperation between Member States and eligible countries for the protection of environment in marine regions and subregions. An application should be submitted by at least two different legal entities from at least two different Member States or eligible countries. The activities to be co-financed will assist regional or subregional cooperation in the field of implementation of the MSFD. **The purpose is to finance at least 1 proposal per region or per subregion.**

A marine region is to be understood within the meaning of Article 4(1) of the MSFD. The regions as such are the Baltic Sea, North East Atlantic Ocean, Mediterranean Sea and Black Sea. The subregions are defined in Article 4 (2) of the MSFD.

¹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32014R0508&from=EN>

² <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32008L0056>

1.2. The European Maritime Fisheries Fund (EMFF) Commission Work Programmes.

Programmes for 2019 and 2020

On 13/12/2018, the Commission adopted the financing decision and work programme for 2019³ and on 17/12/2019 the financing decision and work programme for 2020⁴ for the implementation of the EMFF. These work programmes for 2019 and 2020 set out the priority areas for actions fostering the development and implementation of the Union's Integrated Maritime Policy under the EMFF.

Support should be given to support the second implementation cycle under the MSFD as indicated below:

- As a follow-up to the Commission Decision (EU) 2017/848 laying down criteria and methodology standards on good environmental status of marine waters (hereinafter GES)⁵, further efforts at (sub)regional level are needed, in particular to establish lists of relevant criteria elements to be used, threshold values for different criteria and methodological standards. These elements shall enable an assessment of the extent to which GES is being achieved. The activities to be co-financed will therefore assist regional or (sub)regional cooperation among Member States in the implementation of the MSFD.
- There are increasing examples of good practice in regional cooperation where joined-up actions in relation to monitoring are more cost-effective than countries acting on their own. Coordinated and integrated monitoring activities, including sharing information and deployment of new techniques, are also developing and improve the efficiency of monitoring. To encourage these, the present action will provide a framework for cooperation in further defining, assessing and monitoring the criteria for GES (for instance elements and (sub)regional threshold values stemming from the revised GES Decision).
- The action should support regional coordination and cooperation for the implementation of existing and new measures to be introduced, notably in the development of joint measures that address transboundary pressures on the marine environment within a marine (sub)region as identified by the MSFD.
- The action should lead to a coordinated and integrated design of programmes of measures to lessen the adverse impacts of human activities on the marine environment, while promoting sustainable uses of the sea.
- The action will support the introduction of joint and effective measures which are needed to achieve or maintain GES. It will also promote the coordination across policies and sectors dealing with or affecting the marine environment at national and international level.

1.3. Current status of the MSFD implementation process

Under the MSFD (Art 1.1), Member States shall take the necessary measures to achieve or maintain good environmental status in the marine environment by the year 2020 at the latest.

³ For 2019: C(2018) 8395

⁴ For 2020: C(2019) 8977

⁵ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32017D0848>

For that purpose (Art 1.2), marine strategies shall be developed and implemented, which must be kept up-to-date and reviewed every 6 years. The Directive is therefore implemented in a six-year cycle with three major stages:

- In 2012 and in 2018, Member States had to report on the status of their marine waters and set targets to achieve good environmental status based on the 11 'descriptors' (objectives) set by the MSFD, which cover the health of ecosystems and the human pressures and impacts affecting them.
- In 2014, Member States had to set up monitoring programmes to collect data for assessing progress in achieving good environmental status and reaching targets. An update is expected by end 2020.
- In 2016, Member States had to set up programmes of measures that would help them to deliver their objectives, and in 2018 they had to report on their progress in implementing the programmes. An update of the programme of measures is expected by 2022.

Preparatory works for the forthcoming Implementation Report under Article 20 provided a preliminary identification of critical areas for improvement of MSFD implementation, where there is a need to:

- Boost the different steps of the MSFD implementation process to reach good environmental status and sustainable uses of the seas.
- Speed up the implementation of the 2017 GES Decision to ensure the consistency of the determinations of good environmental status.
- Better take into account additional challenges which come from prevailing natural conditions, climate change, and the time lag between implementing certain measures and the recovery of the marine environment.
- Put in place effective measures that target at least the most important pressures per marine (sub)region in a coordinated manner to prevent the major causes of deterioration and, where practicable, to restore adversely affected marine ecosystems.

1.4. Overview of past EU projects specifically designed to support MSFD implementation

Since 2012, various projects have been funded by the EU to support Member States in the implementation of the MSFD:⁶

- 2018 [call for proposals](#): Marine Strategy Framework Directive – Second Cycle: Implementation of the new GES Decision and Programmes of Measures (EMFF).
- 2016 [call for proposals](#): Implementation of the Second Cycle of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive: achieving coherent, coordinated and consistent updates of the determinations of GES, initial assessments and environmental targets (EMFF).

⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/environment/marine/projects/index_en.htm

- 2014 [call for proposals](#): Best Practices for actions plans to develop integrated, regional monitoring programmes, coordinated programmes of measures and addressing data and knowledge gaps in coastal and marine waters (EMFF).
- 2012 [call for proposals](#): Open call for proposals PP/ENV/SEA 2012 in the framework of the Pilot Project "New Knowledge for an integrated management of human activities in the sea" – addressed to enhance the environmental monitoring for the MSFD (LIFE).

2. OBJECTIVE(S) – THEME(S) – PRIORITIES

2.1. Purpose

The purpose of this call for proposals is to support the preparation of the next 6-year cycle of MSFD implementation through the marine strategies. This concerns, in particular,

- the update of GES as well as the associated assessment of environmental status
- to analyse and tackle predominant pressures and impacts on marine waters
- to carry out economic and social analysis of the use of marine waters and costs of degradation of marine environment.
- to contribute to the setting up of environmental targets to be reported to the Commission by 2024.

The activities to be co-financed will therefore assist (sub)regional cooperation amongst Member States in the implementation of the MSFD.

The proposals should be very practically oriented and focus on results and concrete objectives to be achieved. These objectives should clearly contribute to implement the MSFD. The aim is that the funded proposals could assist the Member State concerned in their efforts to implement (sub)regional cooperation needed to successfully implement the MSFD.

The (funded) proposals should contribute directly to the efforts of the regional organisations, such as the Regional Sea Conventions (RSCs), as long as these are directly linked to MSFD implementation requirements. The proposals should support those (sub)regions where Member States have jointly identified certain shortcomings and are committed to address them together in a coherent manner.

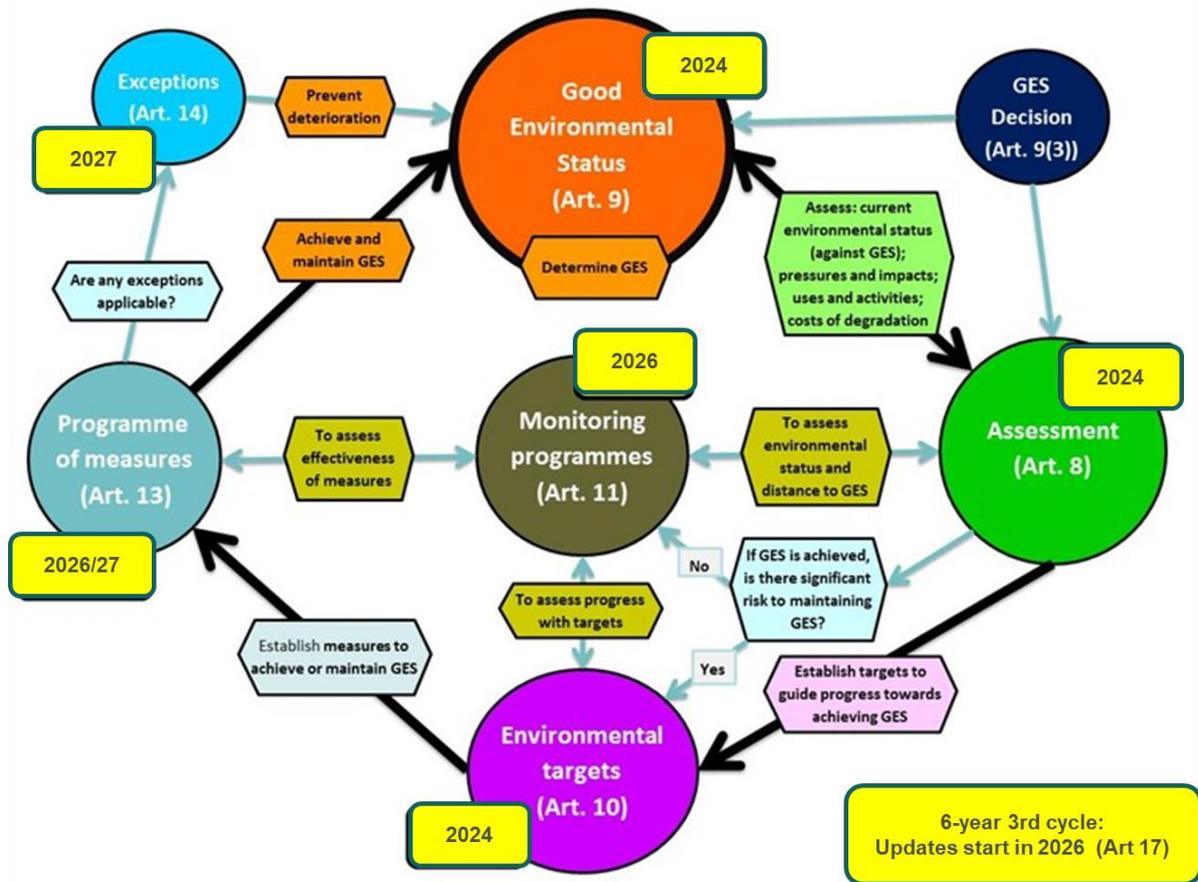
2.2. General objectives

In order to make best use of the results of the projects selected from this call in relation to the MSFD reporting cycle, the following considerations are relevant:

(1) the projects should build upon the outcomes of the 2018 updates of environmental status, GES determinations and environmental targets (Articles 8-9-10), of the 2020 monitoring programmes (Article 11) and the preparation of the updates of the programmes of measures (hereinafter ‘PoMs’), due to be reported in March 2022, and of the reports under the Maritime Spatial Planning Directive (2014/89/EU) due by 2021;

(2) the projects will run in parallel to the 2nd update of the determination of GES, associated assessments of environmental status, pressures and impacts, uses and activities

and cost of degradation, as well as the setting of environmental targets, all to be reported to the Commission by 2024, as illustrated in the figure below:



Based on the above, the three main **general objectives** for this call are:

- (1) **Support the (sub)regional assessment of the extent to which GES has been achieved**, focusing on implementation of the 2017 GES Decision, particularly through
 - a) Improving the consistency of the determinations of GES, taking into account additional challenges such as prevailing natural conditions or climate change; b) the further development and operationalisation of indicators on the state, pressures and impacts of the marine environment and the establishment of threshold values for each (sub)region, together with associated lists of elements and integration rules, which will lead to updated, improved and more complete (sub)regional assessments;
- (2) **Support the quantification (notably ex-post) of the effect of the PoMs**, including linking monitoring programmes with measures. The effect of measures should be analysed against their objective (i.e. how each measure is designed to help reaching GES and the updated environmental targets) and against their results (i.e. monitoring the effect of each measure in reducing the levels of pressures into or in the marine environment and their impacts on the marine environment), while being transparent about the methods and assumptions underlying the analysis. This work would also support quantification of environmental targets for Article 10 for 2024 reporting, as evidence suggests the 2018 targets are generally not sufficiently focused on reducing the problem (pressures) or quantified.

- (3) Support the establishment of new (sub)regionally-coordinated measures,** where needed. For instance, in relation to pressures that need consistent or coordinated action across the (sub)region in order for the measures to be effective. Another example is measures that have synergistic effects for several descriptors or that have transboundary implications. Other examples are measures that improve coordination across policies at national, regional and EU level for a better implementation of the PoMs.

Project proposals shall cover one or more of these general objectives.

2.3. Thematic and regional priorities

On the basis of the general objectives of the call, the following thematic priorities for proposals are identified, including when relevant the specific needs of (sub)regions needing most support.

- 1) **Support the (sub)regional assessment of the extent to which GES has been achieved** focusing on implementation of the 2017 GES Decision through practical delivery of Article 8 assessments (i.e. defining lists of elements, threshold values and integration rules as part of the process to prepare the assessments), for the following specific topics:
 - a. D1: Coordinated (regional) assessments, especially of highly mobile species groups (taking into account their broad distributional range) and of under-reported groups (e.g. cetaceans, sharks and other non-commercial fish species); support when relevant the work of the MSFD Expert Networks (**all regions**)
 - b. D1C6 and D6: identification of ecologically-relevant scales and areas for assessment of pelagic and benthic (broad) habitat types, taking account of work by TG Seabed⁷, EUSeaMap modelling approaches and Copernicus data (**particularly NE Atlantic Ocean and Mediterranean Sea**)
 - c. D8-D9: support the work of MSFD Expert Network on Contaminants and contribute to provide integrated assessment of chemical contaminants and their effects on the marine environment, and to the monitoring of the latter. (**Mediterranean Sea, Black Sea**)
 - d. D10: Support the work of TG Litter; promote harmonisation of regional work on monitoring protocols, indicators and threshold values with TG Litter work (**all regions**)
 - e. D11: Identification and consolidation of relevant indicators for underwater noise, in close co-ordination with the work of TG Noise and promote harmonisation of regional work on threshold values with TG Noise work (**all regions**)
 - f. Coordination and delivery of Article 8 (sub)regional assessments for specific descriptors, contributing also to UNEP/MAP's QSR 2023 and complementing the EcAp III project for South Mediterranean countries (**Mediterranean Sea**)
 - g. Coordination and delivery of Article 8 (sub)regional biodiversity thematic assessments (D1, D6), contributing also to the OSPAR QSR 2023 process (**NE Atlantic Ocean**)

⁷ [SEABED 2-2019-08](#); [SEABED 2-2019-21](#)

- h. Coordination and delivery of Article 8 assessments between the Macaronesia subregion and the rest of the North-East Atlantic Ocean region, taking also into account the proposed integration of Macaronesia into the OSPAR maritime area, at least for those pressures that spill over from one area to the other. It should also make use of recent projects (**Macaronesia**)
- 2) Support the quantification (notably ex-post) of the effect of the PoMs**
- a. Support the OSPAR QSR 2023 process, with emphasis on specific topics such as effectiveness of measures in reducing pressures and improving state (**NE Atlantic Ocean**)
 - b. Support the ex-post assessment of programmes and measures adopted under UNEP/MAP, with a specific focus on their costs and benefits, and on cross-border aspects that involve both the EU context and the third Countries. (**Mediterranean Sea**)
- 3) Support the establishment of new (sub)regionally-coordinated measures**
- a. Support to the development of effective regional measures to reduce the levels of physical disturbance to the sea-floor from fisheries and other relevant activities, taking account of work by TG Seabed (**all regions**)
 - b. Support work on coordination of measures in TG Litter and compatibility of regional measures with this work; notably in the Black Sea, supporting with Bulgaria and Romania the implementation of the recently adopted regional plan against marine litter of the Bucharest Convention (**Black Sea**)
 - c. Support to the development of effective regional measures, taking into account the priorities set up at regional and EU level to reduce existing pressures to the Baltic and the state of play of HELCOM's Sufficiency of Measures (SOM) analysis (**Baltic Sea**)
 - d. Technical and administrative support for the joint implementation of the MSFD by the EU Black Sea Member States, and support to the Black Sea Commission for implementation of the Black Sea Action Plan actions which facilitate MSFD implementation by EU Member States and associated countries (**Black Sea**)

Project proposals shall cover one or more of these thematic and regional priorities.

2.4. Supporting tasks

When implementing the project, a number of tasks should typically be considered and/or included, in order to achieve the objectives of this call. All tasks should be in line with the implementation steps of the MSFD. The expected supporting tasks are, in particular (non-exhaustive list):

- a) set up working arrangements (e.g. schedule of meetings) to ensure that the respective national and regional cooperation processes will be able to contribute to and benefit from the envisaged work; successful implementation of projects funded under this call shall include establishing effective links to the relevant RSCs (to ensure coordination across the regions or subregions) and to Member State's national administrations (to ensure the outcomes are MSFD oriented);

- b) ensure, where possible, that any actions proposed make best use of existing approaches and solutions already developed and agreed in other (sub)regions;
- c) develop and demonstrate best practices of (sub)regional cooperation;
- d) systematically use standards stemming from EU legislation, as set out in the revised GES Decision⁸, such as the Common Fisheries Policies (CFP)⁹, the Water Framework Directive¹⁰, the Habitats¹¹ and Birds¹² Directives, the Maritime Spatial Planning Directive, as minimum requirements. If such standards do not exist, the projects should use the ones developed at regional or (sub)regional level, for instance in the framework of the RSCs, or other regional mechanisms;
- e) establish effective and efficient data and information management mechanisms, including a regular update of data and information products on line. Data should be made publicly available during the lifetime of the project following the "Recommendations for the publication of datasets under MSFD Article 19(3)", if possible becoming part of the corresponding Member State reporting.
- f) establish regular contacts with the Commission including kick-off and final meetings in Brussels and regular reporting of activities in order to allow for appropriate discussion and feedback on the project execution;
- g) organise workshops, meetings etc., inviting other relevant projects in the same region or with the same objectives as appropriate, including joint (if possible) meetings to foster (sub)regional cooperation, ensure synergies and efficiency gains, exchange of ideas and knowledge;
- h) present the progress of work at and gather input from the relevant meetings at (sub)regional level (e.g. relevant groups established under the auspices of RSCs) and EU level (e.g. MSCG, Working Groups and Technical Groups established in the context of the MSFD Common Implementation Strategy).

All working arrangements related to above supporting tasks should be detailed in the proposal. They will be further discussed at the kick-off meeting and formalised in an inception report.

Any proposal for this call should fully take into account the relevant past or ongoing work of the RSCs, in connection with indicators, Quality Status Reports and effectiveness of measures, the work carried out in ICES¹³, the results to date of other ongoing projects, such as for example the research projects financed under FP7, Horizon

⁸ Commission Decision (EU) 2017/848 of 17 May 2017 laying down criteria and methodological standards on good environmental status of marine waters and specifications and standardised methods for monitoring and assessment, and repealing Decision 2010/477/EU, (OJ L 125, 18.5.2017, p. 43)

⁹ 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.

¹⁰ Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2000 establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy, (OJ L 327, 22.12.2000 p. 1)

¹¹ Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora, (OJ L 206, 22.7.1992, p. 7)

¹² Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds, (OJ L 20, 26.1.2010, p. 7).

¹³ [http://www.ices.dk/explore-us/Action%20Areas/Pages/Marine-Strategy-Framework-Directive-\(MSFD\).aspx](http://www.ices.dk/explore-us/Action%20Areas/Pages/Marine-Strategy-Framework-Directive-(MSFD).aspx)

2020 or the support projects on the implementation of the MSFD (i.e. Mystic Seas 2 and 3¹⁴, MedCIS¹⁵, Medregion¹⁶, QuietMed 1 and 2¹⁷, IDEM¹⁸, Indicit 1 and 2¹⁹, SPICE²⁰, JMP Eunosat²¹, Helcom Action²², RAGES²³, and CeNoBS²⁴).

Furthermore, the support projects (Technical and administrative support for the joint implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive) in the Mediterranean Sea and Black Sea regions²⁵ are of particular importance and can be used and referred to when presenting a proposal.

3. TIMETABLE

	Steps	Date and time or indicative period
(a)	Publication of the call	26 June 2020
(b)	Deadline for submitting applications	30 September 2020 – 17H00
(c)	Evaluation period ²⁶	October - November 2020
(d)	Information to applicants	November 2020
	Signature of the grant agreement	December 2020

4. BUDGET AVAILABLE

The total budget earmarked for the co-financing of projects under this call for proposals is estimated at € 4 700 000.

The Commission expects to fund approximately between 5 and 10 proposals.

The grant per project is expected to amount between € 400 000 and € 1 000 000 depending on the geographical coverage of the proposal, the number of Member States involved and the relation with the general objectives and the thematic and regional priorities as defined in sections 2.2 and 2.3, respectively.

¹⁴ <http://mistic-seas.madeira.gov.pt/en>

¹⁵ <http://medcis.eu/>

¹⁶ <https://medregion.eu/>

¹⁷ <http://www.quietmed-project.eu/>

¹⁸ <http://www.msfd-idem.eu/>

¹⁹ <https://indicit-europa.eu/>

²⁰ <http://www.helcom.fi/helcom-at-work/projects/spice>

²¹ <https://www.informatiehuismarien.nl/uk/projects/algae-evaluated-from/>

²² <http://www.helcom.fi/helcom-at-work/projects/action/>

²³ <http://www.msfd.eu/rages/>

²⁴ <https://www.marenostrum.ro/content/biodiversitate/cenobs>

²⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/environment/marine/international-cooperation/regional-sea-conventions/bucharest/index_en.htm

²⁶ This is indicative as well as the information to applicants and the final date of signature of the grant agreement.

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

5. ADMISSIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

In order to be admissible, applications must be:

- sent no later than the deadline for submitting applications referred to in section 3;
- submitted in writing (see section 14), using the application form available at http://ec.europa.eu/environment/funding/grants_en.htm; and
- drafted in one of the EU official languages. Submission in English is strongly encouraged and will facilitate the evaluation process. For any proposal written in another EU official language, applicants are encouraged to provide a summary of their application in English.

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

6. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

6.1. Eligible applicants

Applicants should be non-profit organisations (private or public), public authorities (national, regional, local), international organisations, universities, educational institutions, research centres or profit making entities.

In particular, applications involving public authorities competent for the implementation of the MSFD in the selected areas, are encouraged²⁷.

Natural persons are not eligible for the present call.

The coordinators must be entities or bodies registered in an EU Member State, or international organisations.

The UK has withdrawn from the EU and becomes a third party as of 1st February 2020. The EU and the UK have concluded an EU-UK Withdrawal Agreement²⁸ which provides for a transitionary period until 31 December 2020. UK applicants are eligible for the present call since covers the present Multiannual Financial Framework, including after the transitionary period. This applies to existing grants, ongoing procedures and calls for proposals submitted after 2020 even if the grant is signed after 31 December 2020.

The potential co-beneficiaries or partners of the grant must either be registered in an EU Member State or be an international organisation, or fulfil the following condition:

- Partners from non-EU countries which are a Contracting Party to one of the four European Regional Sea Conventions²⁹ can be associated to the action on a no-cost

²⁷ According to this provision the Member States had to designate the authority or authorities competent to implement the Framework Directive.

²⁸ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1580206007232&uri=CELEX%3A12019W/TXT%2802%29>

²⁹ The four European Regional Sea Conventions are:

1. The Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment in the North-East Atlantic of 1992 (further to earlier versions of 1972 and 1974) – the OSPAR Convention (OSPAR)
2. The Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment in the Baltic Sea Area of 1992 (further to the earlier version of 1974) – the Helsinki Convention (HELCOM)

basis or at a maximum of 10% of the total cost for the action for each third country partner and a maximum total of 20% for all non-EU country partners together, if this is necessary for the implementation of the action.

- Legal entities having a legal or capital link with applicants, which is neither limited to the action nor established for the sole purpose of its implementation (e.g. networks, federations, trade unions), may take part in the action as **affiliated entities** and may declare eligible costs as specified in section 11.1. For that purpose, applicants shall identify such affiliated entities in the application form. These affiliated entities have to fulfil the eligibility and exclusion criteria and therefore provide the appropriate supporting documents.

Proposals from applicants in candidate or associated countries may be eligible provided that, on the date of award, agreements have entered into force setting out the arrangements for the participation of those countries in the programme.

Examples:

Consortium requirements

- In order to be eligible, a proposal must be submitted by a consortium composed of at least 2 different legal entities;
- The two legal entities should be established in at least two eligible countries.

Supporting documents

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

- **private entity:** extract from the official journal, copy of articles of association, extract of trade or association register, certificate of liability to VAT (if, as in certain countries, the trade register number and VAT number are identical, only one of these documents is required);
- **public entity:** copy of the resolution, decision or other official document establishing the public-law entity ;

6.2. Eligible activities

The following conditions will be applied to proposals:

- a) Proposals should cover as a minimum one marine subregion (as established according to article 4.2 of MSFD);
- b) Proposals *should match* at least one of the general objectives of this call and one of the thematic and regional priorities;
- c) Joint proposals from different regions and subregions are eligible;
- d) Proposals should ensure a reasonable geographic balance across the regions and subregions.

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3. The Convention for the Protection of Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean of 1995 (further to the earlier version of 1976) – the Barcelona Convention (UNEP-MAP)
 4. The Convention for the Protection of the Black Sea of 1992 – the Bucharest Convention.

The activities eligible under this call will be applicable to the marine waters of Member States as defined in Article 3.1 of the MSFD, but may also encompass marine waters of non-EU countries within the marine regions defined in Art. 4 of the MSFD, provided that such efforts are at no additional or minimal cost to the projects (see eligibility rules).

Types of activities carried out by the beneficiary which are eligible under this call for proposals include:

- design, implementation, co-ordination and management of the project;
- awareness-raising, training and dissemination activities;
- mechanisms for monitoring data gathering and campaigns;
- organisation of workshops, meetings, conferences, seminars, that contribute to the project objectives;
- cost of travel for meetings (including kick-off and final project meetings);
- actions aiming at the creation and improving of networks, exchanges of good practices;
- studies, analyses, action plans and mapping activities directly related to the project;
- research activities, in particular relating to data gathering.
- establishment of data and information management, including regular update of data and information products online.

Implementation period

The implementation period of activities **will be between 12 months and 24 months**. The starting date would be between January and June 2021,

Applications for projects scheduled to run for a longer period than that specified in this call for proposals will not be accepted, unless there are duly exceptional circumstances allowing an extension

7. EXCLUSION CRITERIA

7.1. Exclusion

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

- (i) the applicant is bankrupt, subject to insolvency or winding-up procedures, its assets are being administered by a liquidator or by a court, it is in an arrangement with creditors, its business activities are suspended, or it is in any analogous situation arising from a similar procedure provided for under EU or national laws or regulations;

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

liquidated damages or other contractual penalties, or which has been discovered following checks, audits or investigations by an authorising officer, OLAF or the Court of Auditors;

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

7.2. Remedial measures

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

7.3. Rejection from the call for proposals

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

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

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

The same exclusion criteria apply to affiliated entities.

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

7.4. Supporting documents

Applicants and affiliated entities must provide a declaration on their honour certifying that they are not in one of the situations referred to in Articles 136(1) and 141 FR, by filling in the relevant form attached to the application form accompanying the call for proposals and available at http://ec.europa.eu/environment/funding/grants_en.htm.

This obligation may be fulfilled in one of the following ways:

- the coordinator of a consortium signs a declaration on behalf of all applicants and their affiliated entities; OR
- each applicant in the consortium signs a declaration in its name and on behalf of its affiliated entities; OR
- each applicant in the consortium and the affiliated entities each sign a separate declaration in their own name.

8. SELECTION CRITERIA

8.1. Financial capacity

Applicants must have stable and sufficient sources of funding to maintain their activity throughout the duration of the grant and to participate in its funding. The applicants' financial capacity will be assessed on the basis of the following supporting documents to be submitted with the application:

a) Grants > EUR 60 000:

- a declaration on their honour, and

EITHER

- the profit and loss account as well as the balance sheet for the last 2 financial year for which the accounts were closed;
- for newly created entities: the business plan might replace the above documents;

OR

- the table provided for in the application form, filled in with the relevant statutory accounting figures, in order to calculate the ratios as detailed in the form.

b) Grants for an action > EUR 750 000:

- (i) the information and supporting documents mentioned in point b) above, and
- (ii) **an audit report** produced by an approved external auditor certifying the accounts for the last financial year available where such an audit report is available or whenever a statutory report is required by law.

If the audit report is not available AND a statutory report is not required by law, a self-declaration signed by the applicant's authorised representative certifying the validity of its accounts for the last financial year available must be provided.

In the event of an application grouping several applicants (consortium), the above thresholds apply to each applicant.

On the basis of the documents submitted, if the Commission considers that financial capacity is weak, s/he may:

- request further information;
- decide not to give pre-financing;
- decide to give pre-financing paid in instalments;
- decide to give pre-financing covered by a financial guarantee (see section 11.7. below);
- where applicable, require the joint and several financial liability of all the co-beneficiaries.

If the RAO considered that the financial capacity is insufficient, s/he will reject the application.

Verification of financial capacity shall not apply to public entities including international organisations.

8.2. Operational capacity

Applicants must have the professional competencies as well as appropriate qualifications necessary to complete the proposed action. In this respect, applicants have to submit a declaration on their honour, and the following supporting documents:

- description of the profile of the people primarily responsible (maximum one page) for managing and implementing the operation (accompanied where appropriate, like in the field of research and education, by a list of relevant publications);
- the organisation's activity reports;
- a list of the five most relevant previous projects and activities performed and connected to the policy field of a given call or to the actions to be carried out;

9. AWARD CRITERIA

Eligible applications/projects will be assessed on the basis of the following criteria:

- **Relevance and added value:** Relevance of the proposal and its expected results to achieve the objectives of the action; Added value of the proposal in terms of innovation, originality,

synergies, geographical coverage, capacity to involve and promote dialogue and cooperation with relevant stakeholders.

- **Project implementation:** Effectiveness and coherence of the work plan. Feasibility in terms of activities and timetable. Appropriate and balanced allocation of tasks and human resources. Appropriate project management set-up. Adequate risk management.

- **Cost-effectiveness:** Clearly presented and appropriate budget involving a cost-effective allocation of financial resources in relation to the expected results and the planned activities and outputs.

- **Impact:** Dissemination, sustainability and transferability of the expected results.

The award criteria and certain indicative aspects which will be considered for the evaluation of each criterion are provided in the table below.

Award Criteria	<i>Indicative aspects</i>
<p>Relevance and added value (max points: 30, min points: 15)</p>	<p>Scope of the project, relevance of the proposal and credibility as to the expected results to achieve the objectives, themes and priorities of the call</p> <p>Direct contribution to the implementation of the MSFD, the 2017 GES Decision and the regional or subregional cooperation needs of Member States</p> <p>Added value of the proposal in terms of innovation, demonstration, and capacity to involve and promote dialogue and cooperation with relevant stakeholders (i.e. key national and regional organisations, such as Regional Sea Conventions and national implementation leads for MSFD)</p> <p>Strategy for increasing synergies and avoiding overlaps with major relevant international projects and activities</p>
<p>Project implementation (max points: 40, min points: 20)</p>	<p>Quality of the description of work; coverage of the supporting tasks of the call; proposals should be clear, detailed, coherent, realistic and feasible in terms of actions and timetable</p> <p>Identification and understanding of the issues involved and the specific needs of the proposal</p> <p>Identification of distinct, relevant and realistic results and deliverables</p> <p>Effectiveness and rationality of the proposed methodology, organisation and management structure (including timetable and monitoring of progress)</p> <p>Proposed assessment mechanisms (quality control and risk management)</p>

Cost-effectiveness (max points: 20, min points: 10)	<p>Consistency of the budget with the technical proposal, feasibility of proposed project in terms of availability of resources and coherence with timetables</p> <p>Quality and clarity of the budget</p> <p>Relevance and quality of the means of implementation and the resources deployed in relation to the objectives envisaged.</p> <p>Cost-effectiveness (allocation of resources in relation to the expected outputs)</p>
Impact (including Geographic coverage) (max points: 10, min points: 5)	<p>Geographic coverage</p> <p>Expected impact (multiplying effect) demonstrated by actual dissemination of results and best practices and potential for transferability and sustainability of the approaches and results to other (sub)regions</p> <p>Potential outreach to non-EU countries, in particular those being contracting parties of one of the four Regional Sea Conventions</p>

The maximum points that can be attributed to a proposal are 100. Proposals have to reach the minimum quality threshold (50 % of the maximum possible score) for each criterion, as indicated above. Moreover, proposals that, following the evaluation process, do not reach a global score of at least 65 points will not be considered for co-funding. Applications should elaborate on all points addressed by this call for proposals in order to score as many points as possible.

Financial contribution shall be awarded to the highest ranked proposals provided that they have passed the minimum quality threshold and they are above 65 points. The intention is to award at least one grant per region provided that they have obtained the needed quality score..

10. LEGAL COMMITMENTS

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

11. FINANCIAL PROVISIONS

11.1. Form of the grant

11.1.1 Reimbursement of costs actually incurred

The grant will be defined by applying a maximum co-financing rate of 80 % of the eligible costs actually incurred and declared by the beneficiary and its affiliated entities.

For details on eligibility of costs, please refer to section 11.2.

The grant will be defined by applying a maximum co-financing rate of 80 % to the eligible costs declared by the beneficiary and its affiliated entities on the basis of:

Conditions for compliance of the beneficiary's usual cost accounting practices

The beneficiary must ensure that the cost accounting practices used for the purpose of declaring eligible costs are in compliance with the following conditions:

- (i) the cost accounting practices that are used must constitute the usual cost accounting practices of the beneficiary. The beneficiary must apply those practices in a consistent manner, based on objective criteria irrespective of the source of funding (EU financing or other);
- (ii) the costs declared can be directly reconciled with the amounts recorded in its general accounts; and
- (iii) the categories of costs used for the purpose of determining the costs declared do not include any ineligible costs or costs already covered by other forms of grant.

11.2. Eligible costs

Eligible costs shall meet all the following criteria:

- they are incurred by the beneficiary;
- they are incurred during the duration of the action, with the exception of costs relating to final reports and audit certificates;
 - The period of eligibility of costs will start as specified in the grant agreement.
 - If a beneficiary can demonstrate the need to start the action before the agreement is signed, the costs eligibility period may start before that signature. Under no circumstances can the eligibility period start before the date of submission of the grant application.
- they are indicated in the estimated budget of the action;
- they are necessary for the implementation of the action which is the subject of the grant;
- they are identifiable and verifiable, in particular being recorded in the accounting records of the beneficiary and determined according to the applicable accounting standards of the country where the beneficiary is established and according to the usual cost accounting practices of the beneficiary;
- they comply with the requirements of applicable tax and social legislation;
- they are reasonable, justified, and comply with the principle of sound financial management, in particular regarding economy and efficiency.

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

The same criteria apply to costs incurred by the affiliated entities.

Eligible costs may be direct or indirect.

11.2.1. Eligible direct costs

The eligible direct costs for the action are those costs which:

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

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

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

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

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

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

- (b) *costs of travel and related subsistence allowances, provided that these costs are in line with the beneficiary's usual practices on travel;*
- (c) *the depreciation costs of equipment or other assets (new or second-hand) as recorded in the beneficiary's accounting statements, provided that the asset:*
- (i) is written off in accordance with the international accounting standards and the beneficiary's usual accounting practices; and*
 - (ii) has been purchased in accordance with the rules on implementation contracts laid down in the grant agreement, if the purchase occurred within the implementation period;*

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

Only the portion of the equipment's depreciation, rental or lease costs corresponding to the implementation period and the rate of actual use for the purposes of the action may be taken into account when determining the eligible costs. By way of exception, the full cost of purchase of equipment may be eligible under the Special Conditions, if this is justified by the nature of the action and the context of the use of the equipment or assets;

- (d) costs of consumables and supplies, provided that they:
 - (i) are purchased in accordance with the rules on implementation contracts laid down in the grant agreement; and*
 - (ii) are directly assigned to the action;**
- (e) costs arising directly from requirements imposed by the Agreement (dissemination of information, specific evaluation of the action, audits, translations, reproduction), including the costs of requested financial guarantees, provided that the corresponding services are purchased in accordance with the rules on implementation contracts laid down in the grant agreement;*
- (f) costs derived from subcontracts, provided that specific conditions on subcontracting as laid down in the grant agreement are met;*
- (g) costs of financial support to third parties, provided that the conditions laid down in the grant agreement are met;*
- (h) duties, taxes and charges paid by the beneficiary, notably value added tax (VAT), provided that they are included in eligible direct costs, and unless specified otherwise in the grant agreement.*

N.B. Applicants must include in their budget proposal the costs for participation of maximum 2 representatives of the consortium (including at least one representative of the coordinating organisation) in up to three project meetings organised at EU level during the project lifetime.

11.2.2. Eligible indirect costs (overheads)

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

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

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

Applicants' attention is drawn to the fact that if they are receiving an operating grant financed by the EU or Euratom budget, they may not declare indirect costs for the period(s) covered by the operating grant, unless they can demonstrate that the operating grant does not cover any costs of the action.

In order to demonstrate this, in principle, the beneficiary should:

- a. use *analytical cost accounting that allows to separate all costs (including overheads)* attributable to the operating grant and the action grant. For that purpose the beneficiary should use *reliable accounting codes and allocation keys* ensuring that *the allocation* of the costs is done in a *fair, objective and realistic way*.
- b. *record separately*:
 - all costs incurred for the operating grants (i.e. personnel, general running costs and other operating costs linked to the part of its usual annual activities), and
 - all costs incurred for the action grants (including the actual indirect costs linked to the action)

If the operating grant covers the entire usual annual activity and budget of the beneficiary, the latter is not entitled to receive any indirect costs under the action grant.

11.3. Ineligible costs

The following items are not considered as eligible costs:

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

11.4. Balanced budget

The budget must be drawn up in euros.

Applicants for whom costs will not be incurred in euros should use the exchange rate published on the Infor-euro website available at:

http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts_grants/info_contracts/inforeuro/inforeuro_en.cfm

The applicant must ensure that the resources which are necessary to carry out the action are not entirely provided by the EU grant.

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

- the beneficiary's own resources,

- income generated by the action or work programme,
- financial contributions from third parties.

Overall co-financing may also include in-kind contributions from third parties, i.e. non-financial resources made available free of charge by third parties to the beneficiary or to the consortium. The corresponding costs of third parties are not eligible under the grant, e.g. providing a meeting room or equipment for free, etc.

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

11.5. Calculation of the final grant amount

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

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

The amount under step 1 is obtained by applying the reimbursement rate specified in section 11.1.1 to the eligible costs actually incurred and accepted by the Commission,

Step 2 — Limit to the maximum amount of the grant

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

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

Step 3 — Reduction due to the no-profit rule

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

11.6. Reporting and payment arrangements

11.6.1 Payment arrangements

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

Payment request	Accompanying documents
A pre-financing payment corresponding to 30 % of the maximum grant amount	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • if applicable financial guarantee (see section 11.7)
A second pre-financing payment for projects with duration above 12 months corresponding to 30% of the maximum grant amount.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • technical report on progress • statement on the use of the previous pre-financing instalment • if applicable financial guarantee (see section 11.7)
<p>Payment of the balance</p> <p>The Commission will establish the amount of this payment on the basis of the calculation of the final grant amount (see section 11.5 above). If the total of earlier payments is higher than the final grant amount, the beneficiary will be required to reimburse the amount paid in excess by the Commission through a recovery order.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • final technical report • final financial statement • summary financial statement aggregating the financial statements already submitted previously and indicating the receipts • a certificate on the financial statements and underlying accounts

In case of a weak financial capacity, section 8.1 above applies.

11.6.2 Reporting requirements

Deliverable*	Indicative date in months after signing the grant Duration 12 Months	Indicative date in months after signing the grant Duration 12-24 months
Inception report (IR) specifying the proposed methodology for the tasks of the project	During the 1 st month	During the 1 st month
Progress report (PR) (linked to the second pre-financing payment for projects with a duration above 12 months), including the tasks performed against the work plan, an updated Gant chart with milestones and deliverables, preliminary conclusions (if available), and justification for any identified deviation or risk (10 pages maximum)	Month 6	Between 6 and 12 months
Final report (FR) which describes clearly the executed tasks and results covering the complete reporting period, including all the products and deliverables produced in the context of this project, the impact of the project results into the authorities' implementation cycles and an executive summary A presentation of maximum of 20 slides summarising in a pedagogic way the main results	Month 12 Final report covering the full duration (months 1 to 12) To be submitted within 60 calendar days following the end of the actions	Month 24 Final report covering the full duration (months 1 to 24) To be submitted within 60 calendar days following the end of the actions

All deliverables should include an executive summary or be reflected in a policy brief.

11.6.3 Reporting format

A progress report shall be submitted to DG ENV in electronic format, preferably in Word or pdf format for text-based reports and in Excel if appropriate. It shall explain the progress made on the milestones provided for by the grant agreement. Progress report is requested for project monitoring purposes. Deliverables due for the corresponding period should be submitted with the progress reports.

The final report shall be sent to DG ENV both electronically as well as in paper form and include an executive summary of maximum 10 pages and shall detail all the actions undertaken, the outputs delivered and the final results achieved, as well the budget implementation during the reporting period. All final deliverables should be submitted with the final report.

Reports must be submitted by the coordinator in English, using the available reporting templates.

11.7. Pre-financing guarantee

A pre-financing guarantee for up to the same amount as the pre-financing may be requested in order to limit the financial risks linked to the pre-financing payment.

The financial guarantee, in euro, shall be provided by an approved bank or financial institution established in one of the EU Member States. When the beneficiary is established in a third country, the Commission may agree that a bank or financial institution established in that third country may provide the guarantee if it considers that the bank or financial institution offers equivalent security and characteristics as those offered by a bank or financial institution established in a Member State. Amounts blocked in bank accounts shall not be accepted as financial guarantees.

The guarantee may be replaced by:

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

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

11.8. Other financial conditions

a) Non-cumulative award

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

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

b) Non-retroactivity

No grant may be awarded retrospectively for actions already completed.

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

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

c) Implementation contracts/subcontracting

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

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

Entities acting in their capacity as contracting authorities within the meaning of Directive 2014/24/EU or contracting entities within the meaning of Directive 2014/25/EU³⁰ must comply with the applicable national public procurement rules.

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

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

12. PUBLICITY

12.1. By the beneficiaries

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

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

To do this they must use the text, the emblem and the disclaimer available at http://europa.eu/about-eu/basic-information/symbols/flag/index_en.htm.

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

³⁰ Directive 2014/25/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 February 2014 on procurement by entities operating in the water, energy, transport and postal services sectors and repealing Directive 2004/17/EC (OJ L 94, 28.3.2014, p. 243-374)

Beneficiaries must include the following disclaimer in the publications and deliverables produced by the grant: "The information and views set out in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the official opinion of the European Union. Neither the European Union institutions and bodies nor any person acting on their behalf may be held responsible for the use which may be made of the information contained therein".

12.2. By the Commission

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

The Commission will publish the following information:

- name of the beneficiary;
- address of the beneficiary when the latter is a legal person, region when the beneficiary is a natural person, as defined on NUTS 2 level³¹ if he/she is domiciled within the EU or equivalent if domiciled outside the EU;
- subject of the grant;
- amount awarded.

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

13. PROCESSING OF PERSONAL DATA

The reply to any call for proposals involves the recording and processing of personal data (such as name, address and CV). Such data will be processed pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 2018/1725 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data by Union institutions.³² Unless indicated otherwise, the questions and any personal data requested that are required to evaluate the application in accordance with the call for proposal will be processed solely for that purpose by Director of ENV.A.

Personal data may be registered in the Early Detection and Exclusion System by the Commission, should the beneficiary be in one of the situations mentioned in Articles 136

³¹ Commission Regulation (EC) No 105/2007 of 1 February 2007 amending the annexes to Regulation (EC) No 1059/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of a common classification of territorial units for statistics (NUTS), OJ L39, 10.2.2007, p.1.

³² Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 of 23 October 2018 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data by the Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 and Decision No 1247/2002/EC, OJ L 295/39, 21.11.2018, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32018R1725&from=EN>

and 141 of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046³³. For more information see the Privacy Statement on:

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

14. PROCEDURE FOR THE SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

Proposals must be submitted by the deadline set out under section 3.

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

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

Application forms are available at

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/funding/grants_en.htm.

Due to the exceptional situation that has developed from the COVID-19 spread, the Commission will encourage the electronic submission of the applications.

Applications should be sent in full at the functional mailbox ENV-MARINE-ENVIRONMENT@ec.europa.eu, making clear in the title of the message "DG ENV/MSFD 2020 call" that it concerns a submission of an application. The submission should be sent and received within the deadline indicated above.

Please allow sometime to submit, in particular if documents are voluminous.

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

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

➤ **Contacts**

All questions related to the call may be sent exclusively by e-mail no later than **10 working days before the deadline for the submission of proposals** to the address listed below, indicating clearly in the message that it refers to a question and the reference of the call for proposals "DG ENV/MSFD 2020 call".

E-mail address: ENV-MARINE-ENVIRONMENT@ec.europa.eu

Replies will be given **no later than 5 days before the deadline for the submission of proposals**.

In the interest of equal treatment of applicants, the European Commission cannot give a prior opinion on the proposal. Questions that may be relevant to other applicants, together with the answers, will be published on the internet at the website: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/funding/grants_en.htm

In addition, important information for the applicants may, if need be, be published on this website. Applicants are thus strongly recommended to consult this website regularly.

³³ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32018R1046>

ANNEXES

Annex A – **Grant Application Form** including **Declaration of Honour**

Annex B – **Financial Application Form** including **Financial Capacity Form**

Annex C – **Legal Entity Form**, available at the following address:

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

Annex D – **Bank Account Form**, available at the following address:

http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts_grants/info_contracts/financial_id/financial-id_en.cfm

Other documents:

Annex E – **Model Grant Agreement for an Action with Multiple Beneficiaries**

Annex F - **Mandate**

Annex G – **Travel and Subsistence Allowances**

Annex H - **Reporting templates**

Financial reporting

Audit certificate

Appendix I

HOW TO COMPLETE THE FINANCIAL GRANT APPLICATION FORM (ANNEX B + FINANCIAL CAPACITY FORM)

The financial application form consists of **10 forms/sheets**. It is available for download as an Excel file.

All forms should be completed, printed out and inserted into the application. The cells marked in yellow contain formulas and therefore should not be completed.

General remarks

The project's budget should be prepared in consideration of the General Conditions of the **Model Grant Agreement**. For information on the different cost categories and on ineligible costs, please refer to Sections **11.1 of the Call for Proposals**. The EU contribution will be calculated on the basis of **incurred** eligible costs. Only costs incurred during the lifetime of the action should be included.

The coordinating beneficiary and associated beneficiaries and/or affiliated companies which are part of the same groups or holdings, cannot act as sub-contractors.

All amounts, where applicable, should be exclusive of VAT, for the activities which fall within one of the following categories:

taxed activities or exempt activities with right of deduction. For those activities, VAT is deductible, hence ineligible;

activities engaged in as a public authority by the beneficiary where it is a State, regional or local government authority or another body governed by public law.

In the case where the applicant and/or relevant partner are unable to recover VAT the amount should be inclusive of VAT. All costs should be in Euro (€) and the amounts rounded to the nearest whole Euro (€).

Indirect costs/overheads (communication costs, costs related to buildings (and general administrative expenses) are eligible as a **flat rate of maximum 7%** of the total direct eligible costs. They are **not eligible** for organisations that, at the same time, benefit from an operating grant.

Cover page

Please fill in the acronym of your proposal.

Form F0 – Budget of the action

The form is filled in automatically, based on the data provided in forms F1, F3 to F7, except for the **Requested EU contribution**: Please specify the amount of financial contribution requested from the European Commission, which shall not exceed **80% of total eligible costs**.

Form F1 – Project funding breakdown

This form describes the funding of the project by the beneficiaries and/or co-financier(s), as well as the EU contribution requested per beneficiary.

Beneficiary country: the applicant's place of establishment or registration

Beneficiaries' short name (Acronym): As in the Grant Application form.

Total costs of the actions in €: Indicate the total costs of the actions undertaken by the beneficiaries as in the Grant Application form. The sum of beneficiaries' "total costs of the actions" must equal the total costs of the project as shown in Form F0.

Coordinating beneficiary/applicant contribution: specify the amount of financial contribution provided by the applicant, as indicated in the Grant Application form. This amount cannot include contributions by third parties.

Associated beneficiary/partner contribution: Indicate the financial contribution from each partner, as indicated in the Grant Application form. This amount cannot include contributions by third parties.

External funding - third party name: Same as in the Grant Application form.

Amount of co-financing in €: Indicate the financial contribution of each third-party as in the Grant Application form.

Expected direct revenues: Revenues generated from the action. Provide description.

Form F2 – Budget breakdown per activities

Please provide for every action described in the technical forms, a detailed breakdown of costs per cost category should be provided in form **F2**. Please use the same numbers and names for the actions as in the Grant Application form.

Particular attention should be given to the coherence of the presented costs. In particular, please make sure that totals for each cost category are the same as those calculated in forms **F3 to F7**.

Depending on the number activities, rows may have to be added on these tables. Information should be consistent with the contents of the Grant Application form.

Notes common to Forms F3 to F7

It is required for all reported budget items to provide the beneficiaries' short name and a reference to the activities according to the Grant Application form. Should a budget item refer to more than one action, please indicate each one of them.

Form F3 – Personnel costs (only direct costs)

General: *Before filling in this sheet read the Appendix provided below.* The salary costs of personnel of public administration may be considered only to the extent that they relate to the cost of activities which the relevant public authority would not carry out if the project concerned were not undertaken.

Type of contract: Please indicate the exact legal name of the type of contract (permanent staff, temporary, etc.). Service contracts with individuals ("in-house consultants") may be charged to this category on the condition that the individual concerned works in the

beneficiary/ partner's premises and is under its supervision, provided that such practice complies with the relevant national legislation. The time that each individual spends working on the project shall be recorded using time-sheets or an equivalent time registration system established and certified by each of the project beneficiaries.

Category: Please identify each professional category or grade in a clear and unambiguous manner to enable the European Commission to monitor the labour resources allocated to the project, analyse cost claims and carry out audits. Examples of staff categories are: project manager, senior engineer, technician/worker, etc. Where known, please indicate the name of the person. In this case you should use one line per person

Annual gross salary: Please indicate the gross salary or wages plus obligatory social charges but excluding any other costs. The salary for a category may be based on indicative average rates if they fairly reflect the grades working on the project. In either case, the average must reasonably reflect the personnel cost of the project. Please remember that, should your proposal be financed by the European Commission, only the real costs (e.g. actual salaries) will be considered as eligible costs of the project.

Annual number of working days: The total number of person-days should be calculated on the basis of the annual number of working days according to national legislation, collective agreements, employment contracts, etc. An example for determining the total productive days per year could be as follows (provided what is established in the appropriate legislation):

Days/year	365 days
Less 52 weekends	104 days
Less annual holidays	21 days
Less statutory holidays	15 days
Less illness/other	<u>10 days</u>
= Total productive days	<u>215 days</u>

Daily rate: Is calculated automatically.

The **number of working days assigned to the project** reflects the number of days needed to carry out the project.

If temporary staff is employed, the methodology set out above may not be applicable. In this case, the methodology should be explained and the possible detail on the calculation of the budgeted costs should be provided in the form.

Form F4 – Travel and subsistence costs

Note: Under this budget category applicants should foresee the travel costs for 2 persons from the project to attend a regional kick-off meeting with the Commission representatives.

General: Only costs for travel and subsistence must be included here. Costs related to the attendance of conferences, such as conference fees, should be reported under other costs. The cost of participation in a conference is only considered eligible if the project is presented at the conference. The number of participants in conferences is limited to those for whose attendance there is a valid technical justification.

Destination (From / To): Identify the origin and destination of the trips. Specify the country and city name, if already known.

Reason for travel and duration: The purpose of travel must be clearly described, in order to allow an assessment of the costs in relation to the objectives of the project (examples: ‘dissemination event’, ‘technical co-ordination meeting’). Estimate the duration of the travel in days.

You may use more than one line to describe the reason for travel, if necessary, but costs may be presented collectively: e.g. for the total of all technical co-ordination meetings. Please indicate whether the persons travelling are personnel of the coordinator/partner(s)/ affiliated entity, or other persons (e.g. members of a steering committee, experts, people taking part in exercises etc.).

Number of people: Indicate the number of people who will be travelling.

Travel unit costs: Travel costs shall be charged in accordance with the internal rules of the beneficiary. Beneficiaries shall endeavour to travel in the most economical and environmentally friendly way (video conferencing must be considered as an alternative). Please indicate travel unit costs. For this purpose you may also refer to data from previous experience or to quotes from a travel agent. **Travel costs** will be calculated automatically.

Subsistence unit costs: Subsistence costs shall be charged in accordance with the internal rules of the beneficiary (daily allowances or direct payment of meals, hotel costs, local transportation etc.). Make sure that meals related to travel/meetings of the beneficiaries are not included if subsistence costs are already budgeted as per diem allowances. If there is no such rule, the subsistence costs must not exceed the scales approved annually by the European Commission (see Annex G - Travel and Subsistence Allowances).

Subsistence costs will be calculated automatically.

Important: *Subscription fees for conferences or events should be declared under “Other direct costs”.*

Form F5 – Equipment costs (rental or depreciation)

General: Please list in this category the costs related to items that according to the accounting rules of the beneficiary in question are treated as durable goods. Please be informed that items which are fully depreciated in the year of purchase, but which are recorded in any registry of durable goods for the purpose of this application should also be listed under this cost category. This often apply to low value electrical consumer goods, such as laptop computers, smart phones, tablets, photo equipment, gps equipment, etc.

Procedure: Specify the procedure foreseen to sub-contract the work, e.g. ‘public tender’, ‘direct treaty’, ‘framework contract’, etc. Subcontracts must be awarded in accordance

with articles II.10 and II.11 of the General Conditions of the Model Grant Agreement. Please be aware that you should be ready to explain why a 'direct treaty' has been used in particular observing the principles of sound financial management.

Description: Provide a clear description of each item, e.g. 'laptop computer', 'database software (off-the-shelf or developed under sub-contract)', etc.

Purchase/rental cost: Full cost of the equipment without applying any depreciation.

Depreciation: Total value of the depreciation in the accounts of the beneficiaries at the end of the project. You need to indicate the actual cost as well as the value of depreciation, in accordance with the General Conditions of the Model Grant Agreement. Only the depreciation is an eligible cost for the project and the EU co-financing will be calculated on the basis of this amount.

For the purpose of establishing the budget proposal, the beneficiaries should estimate as precisely as possible the amount of depreciation for each item, from the date of entry into the accounts (if relevant) until the end of the project. This estimation is based on their internal accounting rules and/or in accordance with national accounting rules. This amount represents the eligible cost.

Form F6 – Sub-contracting / external assistance costs

General: External assistance costs refer to sub-contracting costs: i.e. services/works carried out by external companies or persons, as well as to renting of equipment. Please justify in detail if the proposed costs of External assistance is above **35%** of the total budget.

For example, the creation of a logo, establishment of a dissemination plan, design of dissemination products, translation services, publication of a book or renting of material should be included in external assistance. Costs related to the purchase or leasing (as opposed to renting) of equipment supplied under subcontract should be budgeted under equipment and not under external assistance.

Provider / procedure: Specify the legal name of the service provider (if already known). Specify the procedure followed or planned to sub-contract to the provider, e.g. 'public tender', 'direct treaty', 'framework agreement', etc. Sub-contracts by a "public" beneficiary/partner must be awarded in accordance with the applicable rules on public tendering and in conformity with EU Directives on public tendering procedures.

The "private" beneficiary/partner shall invite competitive tenders from potential sub-contractors and award the contract to the bid offering best value for money; in doing so they shall observe the principles of transparency and equal treatment of potential sub-contractors and shall take care to avoid any conflicts of interest.

Description: Give a clear description of the subject of the sub-contract/ service to be provided. For example: 'conducting of impact assessment', 'maintenance of ...', 'renting of ...', 'consultancy on ...', 'web page development', 'intra-muros assistance', 'organisation of dissemination event', etc. You may use more than one line for the description of the subcontract if necessary.

Important: beneficiary/partner/affiliated entity cannot sub-contract to one another or internally (e.g. between departments or subsidiaries).

Form F7 – Other direct costs

General: Direct costs which do not fall in any other cost category should be placed here. Costs for bank charges, conference fees, insurance costs when these costs originate solely from the project implementation, etc. should be placed here. Also the costs related to the audit report should be classified under this cost category. Consumables, costs which may relate to the purchase, manufacture, repair or use of items, may also be declared here. For example: materials for dissemination, substantial mailing, photocopying, or other communication forms which are not already covered by overheads.

Catering costs/meals/coffees related to dissemination activities, such as presentations of the project, workshops or conferences should be reported here. However, please note that if the whole organisation of the conference is subcontracted, the corresponding cost should all be budgeted under external assistance. Catering costs for normal meeting activities should be covered by the 7% overhead charges.

Supplier / procedure: Specify the procedure foreseen to sub-contract the work, e.g. 'public tender', 'direct treaty', 'framework contract', etc. Subcontracts must be awarded in accordance with articles II.10 and II.11 of the General Conditions of the Model Grant Agreement.

Description: Give a clear description of the other costs, e.g. type of consumable and supplies, costs arising directly from requirements linked to the action, etc. Costs for **translation** of reports, if needed, must always be reported in this category.

Financial guarantee: the European Commission may require the beneficiary to lodge a guarantee in advance in order to limit the financial risks connected with the payment of pre-financing. This does not apply to public sector bodies and International organisations. This guarantee may be replaced by a joint and several guarantee by a third party or by a joint guarantee of the beneficiary and its partners. The guarantee shall be denominated in Euro.

Auditor costs related to the auditing of the project's financial reports (required under the agreement) should always be placed under this budget category. These costs will always be incurred solely by the Coordinating beneficiary. The auditor shall also certify that all costs incurred comply with the provisions set in the Grant Agreement. (NB: For public bodies, the financial audit can be conducted by the appropriate internal audit services of the institution.)

Financial Capacity Form (Form FR09)

The Simplified balance sheet and profit and loss account has to be completed by **private (commercial and non-commercial) entities only**. Applicants considered as public entities or international organisations do not have to complete this form. Private entities must indicate if they are a profit or a non-profit making company/organisation.

Country code: the applicant's place of establishment or registration

Grant amount (€): represents the amount requested from the Commission in this application

External Co-funding (€) represents the sum up of all external financial sources, i.e. membership fees, co-financing from member organisations, other sources of co-financing, other revenues:

Co-financing of the applicant (€) represents the amount of the beneficiary own contribution

t-0 represents the last certified historical balance sheet and profit and loss account.

t-1 is the balance sheet prior to the last certified one.

Closing date t0 is the closing date of the last certified historical balance sheet.

Closing date t-1 is the closing date of the balance sheet prior to the last one.

Duration t0 is the number of months covered by the last historical balance sheet.

Duration t-1 is the number of months covered by the penultimate certified historical balance sheet.

- Balance sheet must be filled in in Euros.

- Closing date must be for the last two financial years.

- Total assets in t0 must be equal to total liabilities in t0 (the same for t-1)

Appendix II
Specific conditions for direct personnel costs

1. Calculation

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

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

a) for persons working exclusively on the action:

{ monthly rate for the person

multiplied by

number of actual months worked on the action }

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

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

{ annual personnel costs for the person

divided by 12 }

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

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

b) for persons working part time on the action

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

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

multiplied by

number of actual months worked on the action }

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

The monthly rate is calculated as above.

(ii) In other cases:

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

or

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

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

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

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

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

minus

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

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

{annual personnel costs for the person

divided by

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

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

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

2. Documentation to support personnel costs declared as actual costs

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

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

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

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