Interreg Co-funded by the European Union

Italy – Croatia

SEAS

# CALL FOR SMALL PROJECT PROPOSALS

## 1. Objective of the Call

SEAS Project provides grant support to SMEs and start-ups to stimulate their innovation and cross-border cooperation in key Blue Economy sectors.

The objective of this Call is to improve SMEs businesses, fosters growth and generate new jobs, increases competitiveness and access to foreign markets focusing on either development of innovative products/services (form TRL 5[1] onward) or bringing to the market already developed innovative products/services, taking into account sustainability and green transition in the border area.

Support will be given to SMEs for:

- the development and adaptation of business models, products, services and processes with a strong focus on product and process innovation;
- developing pilot actions and new business solutions;
- enhancing cross-border business cooperation.

## 2. Total Financial Allocation available under the Call

The total amount of the grant funding available under this Call is **2.050.000,00 EUR**, of which 1.640.000,00 EUR is ERDF funding and 410.000,00 EUR national and FdR funding.

## 3. Available funding and co-financing rate

The total budget of the Small Project includes the Grant contribution (up to 80%) and the Final Recipient's private co-financing (20%).

[1] Technology Readiness Level (TRL) is a standardized scale used to assess the maturity of a technology, from basic scientific research to a fully operational commercial system.

| | Grant contribution (80%)[2] | Private co-financing (20%) | TOTAL SP budget |
|---|---|---|---|
| Minimum per SP | 80.000,00 EUR | 20.000,00 EUR | 100.000,00 EUR |
| Maximum per SP | 125.000,00 EUR | 31.250,00 EUR | 156.250,00 EUR |

The admissible maximum Grant contribution to each participating SME is 62.500,00 EUR, with 15.625,00 EUR private co-financing, for a total 78.125,00 EUR per project partner.

The Programme contribution is up to 80% of the total eligible expenditure and is awarded as a grant under General Block Exemption Regulation (GBER). The remaining 20% should be covered by the Final Recipients as their private co-financing.

The recipient's private co-financing must not contain any element of State aid and can be composed of any kind of financial resources (e.g. money in the bank account, a bank loan, other donors) except for grants requested from the European Union or from National co-financing resources. Double financing of the same eligible costs from different sources containing State aid is not allowed.

## 4. Partnership requirements

The partnership must consist of at least two (2) partners, one from Croatia and one from Italy, both of which must operate in Programme area. The maximum number of Final Recipients is three (3).

The minimum amount of the budget of each Final Recipient in Small Project is 20% of the total Small Project budget.

*Details on the partnership requirements, including the definition of the Programme area, are provided in Sections 2.1. and 2.3. of the GfA.*

[2] The Grant contribution is co-financed up to 80 % by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and for the rest by HAMAG-BICRO in Croatia and by the Fondo di Rotazione in Italy, in other words Small Projects are co-financed 64% by the ERDF and 16% by the LP/PP co-financing.

## 5. Eligible Applicants

Eligible Final Recipients must meet the following requirements:

1) Final Recipients should fall into the category of micro, small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) stipulated in 651/2014/EU Regulation, Annex 1 or start-up;
2) Final Recipients (and/or its owner company having more than 50% of ownership rights over the FRs, and/or its linked enterprises through a natural person, cumulatively) is a SME (small and medium sized enterprise) or start-up;
3) Final Recipients must be legally established and registered in the Programme area in Croatia or Italy or have branch office registered as autonomous legal entity in the Programme area;
4) Final Recipients must have at least one closed business year for seat and/ or branch in the Programme area;
5) Final Recipients must employ at least one full-time employee based on working hours (1 FTE) in its last closed business year in the Programme area;
6) Final Recipient's equity is positive for the last closed business year for seat and/or branch in the Programme area.

*All eligibility requirements and conditions for Final Recipients are provided in Section 2 of the GfA.*

## 6. Eligible activities

Eligible economic activities of SP business cooperation should belong to the following target economic sectors of SEAS:

- Marine living resources: Processing and distribution of fish and aquaculture products
- Marine non-living Resources: Desalination
- Marine renewable energy
- Marine mineral resources
- Blue biotechnology
- Maritime Infrastructure and Robotics
- Port activities: Cargo and warehousing and Port and water projects
- Sustainable maritime transport
- Coastal tourism.

Small Projects must demonstrate clear contribution to relevant EUSAIR flagships.

## 7. Eligible costs

| Cost category | Form of reimbursement |
|---|---|
| **Preparation costs** | Lump sum |
| **Staff costs** | 20 % flat rate of direct costs (real costs) |
| **Office and administrative costs** | 15 % flat rate of staff costs |
| **Travel and accommodation costs** | 15% flat rate of staff costs |
| **External expertise and services costs** | Real costs |
| **Equipment costs** | Real costs |

In line with GBER scheme, value added tax (VAT) is not eligible if it is recoverable under national legislation. Otherwise, if eligible, VAT must be planned in Small Project budget.

*All details regarding the eligibility of costs are provided in Section 6.2. of the GfA.*

## 8. Small Project duration

The duration of the Small Projects is 6-12 months and must be completed by the end of March 2028 at the latest.

## 9. Application procedure

The Call has an open application process with multiple assessment cut-off dates. Application received by each cut-off date will be assessed in the corresponding assessment round. Following each assessment round, the remaining Call allocation will be reviewed. If the available budget is fully allocated, the Call will be closed, and the remaining cut-off dates will not take place. If the available budget is not allocated after first three cut-off dates, additional cut-off dates may be announced. The final deadline for the submission of applications is the date on which the last application fulfilling all eligibility and quality requirements is approved, at which point the available financial allocation has been fully allocated.

| | |
|---|---|
| Call opening | **8 October 2026** |
| Cut-off dates | • 1st cut-off **9 November 2026 (23:59 CEST)**<br>• 2nd cut-off **8 January 2027 (23:59 CEST)**<br>• 3rd cut-off **8 March 2027 (23:59 CEST)**<br><br>**Cut-off dates/deadlines (except for the 1st one may be subject to adjustments that will be timely communicated)* |

Small Project Applicants must use the SEAS platform to create a Small Project Application and submit it.

*The list of documents required for the application submission, together with other relevant information, is provided in Section 7 of the GfA.*

Each Final Recipient can apply only for one Small Project per Call.

## 10. Administrative information

Detailed information can be found in the **Guidelines for SMEs as Final Recipients (GfA)**. Additional information, contact details and all documentation required for the application process can be found on SEAS platform. For any further questions, please contact seas@hamagbicro.hr

This call is a joint call. Consequently, it is published both by the Lead Partner and Project Partner of the SEAS project, who bear shared responsibility for the publication and the selection of the final recipient SMEs. The joint procedures are the basis for the Lead Partner's and Project Partner's grant awards and contracts to the respective SMEs, located in their own country.