Sustainable Blue
Economy Partnership
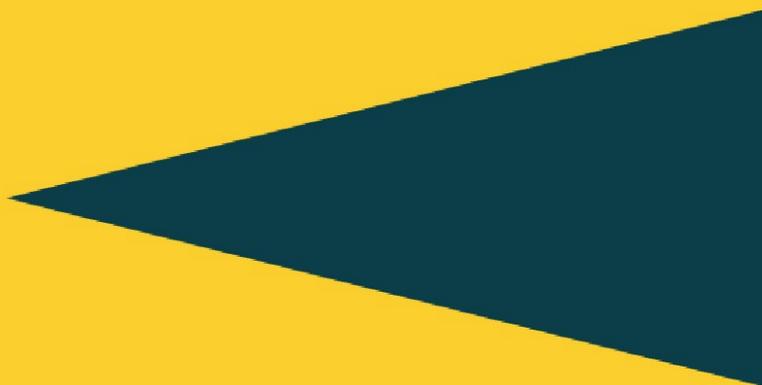
Frequently Asked Questions

Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
SBEP Rolling Transnational Access Call to Research Infrastructures (2026–2028)

1. GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE CALL

Q1: When does the call open and what are the deadlines?

The call is open in rolling mode from 20 February 2026 to 29 February 2028. Proposals can be submitted at any time but are evaluated according to fixed cut-off dates every 4 months:

- 20 June 2026
- 20 October 2026
- 20 February 2027
- 20 June 2027
- 20 October 2027
- 20 February 2028

Evaluation results will be communicated within 4 months after each cut-off. Projects will start within 6 months of the results communication.

Q2: Who can apply?

The call is open to: research institutions, universities, SMEs, companies, non-profit organisations, public authorities, and civil society organisations.

Applicants can come from any country worldwide. However, the Project Leader (Coordinator entity) must be affiliated with an organisation in a Partnership country. Project Partners can come from any country.

Q3: What does the Partnership offer — is there funding?

The Partnership does NOT provide direct funding for project activities. It offers exclusively free access to Partners' Research Infrastructures (RIs).

All project costs (personnel, travel, equipment transport, materials, etc.) — other than the RI access cost itself — must be self-funded by the partners. Financial feasibility must be declared at submission time through a mandatory declaration.

2. PROJECT STRUCTURE AND COMPOSITION

Q4: How many partners must a project proposal have?

The proposal must involve at least 2 partners from 2 different countries. One partner must serve as the Project Leader (Coordinator entity) from a Partnership country. There is no maximum number of partners.

Q5: What are the rules on team composition (firewall measures)?

Three mandatory firewall rules apply:

1. The 50% Rule – Different Country Requirement:

The Project Leader and the majority (>50%) of team members must be employed in a country different from the country where the requested RI operates.

2. Home Country Prohibition:

You cannot request access to an RI located in your own country of employment.

3. RI Provider Prohibition:

An organisation that is a provider of an RI cannot act as Coordinator or Partner in a proposal requesting access to that same RI.

Q6: Can I coordinate multiple proposals in the same cut-off?

No. The Project Leader's PI can coordinate only one proposal per cut-off. However, they may participate as a team member (Partner) in other proposals within the same cut-off.

3. RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURES (RIS)

Q7: What types of Research Infrastructure are available?

The Partnership makes available 50 RI services across the following categories:
- Research Vessels
- Fixed platforms, auxiliary devices, and experimental stations
- Mobile platforms (AUVs, gliders, aircraft)
- Portable equipment
- Analytical labs and test benches (pressure chambers, pools, calibration benches, sample analysis)
- Digital facilities (HPC, data centres, satellite communication stations)

The complete RI Catalogue is available at:

https://www.bluepartnership.eu/transnational-access-call-research-infrastructures

Q8: What are the access modalities to RIs?

Three access modalities are available:

• Physical (in-person/hands-on):

The presence of the user team is required or recommended at the facility location during the entire operational period.

• Remote:

The facility is operated by the provider's staff and the user team's physical presence is not required. Some providers may enable partially remote access where on-site presence is required at specific stages.

• Virtual:

Access provided entirely through digital or online means, with no physical presence. This includes: databases, modelling platforms, virtual laboratories, HPC, cloud-based services, data repositories, and simulation tools.

Q9: Can I request access to 2 different RIs?

Yes. You may request access to:
- One Main RI (mandatory): necessary and essential for the core of your project
- Plus one Alternative RI (optional): same typology as the main RI, if the main RI is unavailable
- Or one Auxiliary RI (optional): a different typology, complementing the main RI

Maximum total: 2 RIs per proposal.

4. TECHNICAL AND PROCEDURAL ASPECTS

Q10: How do I submit the proposal?

Proposals must be submitted exclusively through the EPSS online platform:
https://proposals.etag.ee/sustainable-blue/

Submission procedure:
- Create an EPSS account (Coordinator / Project Leader PI)
- Complete the proposal in 4 parts (A, B, C, D)
- Upload Part B as a PDF file (max 12 pages)
- Declare availability of financial resources
- Obtain and confirm consensus from the RI Provider(s) — MANDATORY
- Submit the final proposal before the cut-off deadline (11:00 CEST)

Technical support: epss.sbep-ris@g.etag.ee

Q11: What is the maximum project duration?

The maximum duration allowed is 18 months from the official access start date to project completion.

Exception: for projects admitted in the February 2028 cut-off, duration is limited to 16 months to align with Partnership closure.

Q12: What must I include in the proposal?

The proposal consists of 4 parts:

▶ Part A — filled in EPSS:

General information: title, acronym, duration, start date, costs, SRIA objectives, requested RIs, geographical focus, abstract, and keywords.

▶ Part B — PDF upload (max 12 pages):
- ◦ Excellence: scientific background, objectives, innovation, methodology
- ◦ Impact: outcomes, dissemination, stakeholder engagement, complementarity
- ◦ Implementation: work plan, team, resources, data management

▶ Part C — filled in EPSS:

Partner details (PIs, affiliations), budget availability declaration, Project Leader CV.

▶ Part D — filled in EPSS:

Ethics assessment, Do No Significant Harm (DNSH) principle, EU Taxonomy, RI Provider consensus declaration, final declarations.

5. EVALUATION AND SELECTION CRITERIA

Q13: How are proposals evaluated?

Eligible proposals are evaluated by an International Evaluation Panel (IEP) of independent international experts. The IEP scores proposals on three criteria, each worth a maximum of 5 points:
- Excellence: scientific quality, innovation, relevance to SRIA objectives, methodology
- Impact: expected outcomes, beneficiaries, dissemination, capacity building, European added value
- Implementation: feasibility, work plan, team capacity, data management, risk mitigation

Minimum threshold: 3/5 per criterion and 10/15 overall. Proposals below any single threshold are not funded.

Q14: What are the eligibility criteria for the proposal?

The proposal must satisfy 14 mandatory criteria. Failure on even one criterion results in automatic ineligibility:

▶ Scope (3 criteria):
  - Address at least 1 SRIA objective
  - Request access to 1–2 RIs
  - Cover at least 1 European geographical area

▶ Team (5 criteria):
  - Minimum 2 partners from 2 different countries
  - Project Leader from a Partnership country
  - PI and majority (>50%) from a different country than the RI owner
  - Not a provider of the requested RI
  - One PI can coordinate only 1 proposal per cut-off

▶ Duration & Access (2 criteria):
  - Access starts within 6 months of results communication
  - Project completion within 18 months (16 months for Window 6)

▶ Submission (4 criteria):
  - Written in English
  - Submitted via EPSS
  - Complete and respecting page limits
  - RI Provider consensus declared (mandatory)

Q15: When does my project start and what are the access windows?

Projects must start within one of the indicative access windows below, depending on the cut-off used:

Cut-off Date	Access Window	Max Duration
20 June 2026	Nov 2026 – Apr 2028	18 months
20 October 2026	Mar 2027 – Aug 2028	18 months
20 February 2027	Jul 2027 – Feb 2029	18 months
20 June 2027	Nov 2027 – Apr 2029	18 months
20 October 2027	Mar 2028 – Aug 2029	18 months
20 February 2028	Jul 2028 – Oct 2029	16 months

Indicate the preferred start date in YYYY-MM-DD format; it must fall within the window corresponding to your chosen cut-off.

USEFUL CONTACTS & LINKS

Partnership Website & RI Catalogue	https://www.bluepartnership.eu/transnational-access-call-research-infrastructures

EPSS Submission Platform	https://proposals.etag.ee/sustainable-blue/
Call Secretariat	sbepcallresearchinfra@mur.gov.it
EPSS Technical Support	epss.sbep-ris@g.etag.ee

CONTACT

WWW.BLUEPARTNERSHIP.EU

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