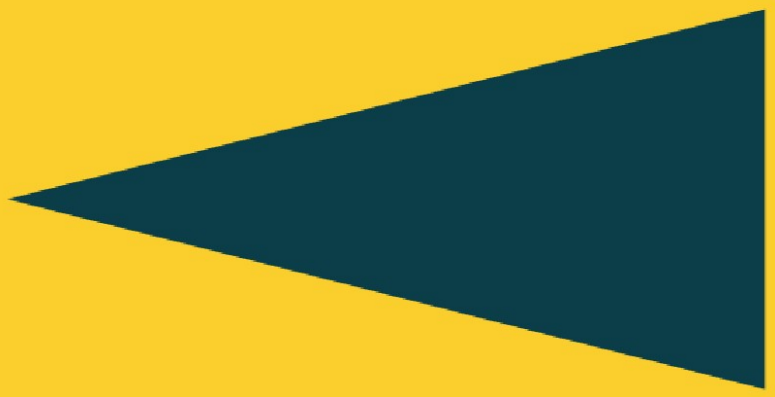
Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership

Frequently Asked Questions

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EUROPEAN PARTNERSHIP



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Frequently Asked Questions – SBEP Rolling Transnational Access Call to Research Infrastructures (2026–2028)

Flavia Cavaliere (MUR – Ministero dell’Università e della Ricerca)

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 and are evaluated at fixed cut-off dates every four months, at 11:00 Brussels time:

- 20 June 2026 (closed)
- 20 October 2026 (closed)
- 22 February 2027
- 21 June 2027
- 20 October 2027
- 21 February 2028 (last cut-off)

Where a cut-off date falls on a weekend, the deadline moves to the following Monday. Evaluation results are communicated four months after each cut-off. Projects start within six months of the results, subject to confirmation by the RI provider.

Q2: Who can apply?

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

The Project Leader (coordinating organisation) must be established in a Partnership country. Project Partners can be established in any country. The participation of organisations from third countries (neither EU Member States nor Horizon Europe Associated Countries) must be shown to be essential for the project, and access for teams in which most Partners do not work in an EU Member State or Associated Country is limited to 20% of the total units of access.

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. The availability of own resources must be declared in Part C of the application form.

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 acts as Project Leader and must be established in 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 PI of the Project Leader and the majority (>50%) of team members must be employed in a country other than the country that owns and operates the requested RI.

2. Home Country Prohibition:
You cannot request access to an RI run in your own country of employment, or to equipment provided in that country.

3. RI Provider Prohibition:
An organisation that provides an RI cannot act as Project Leader or Partner in a proposal requesting access to that same RI.

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

No. The PI of the Project Leader can coordinate only one proposal per cut-off. However, they may take part as PI or team member of a Project Partner in other proposals.

3. RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURES (RIs)

Q7: What types of Research Infrastructure are available?

The Partnership offers a portfolio of 66 RIs, 62 of which are available for the third cut-off (22 February 2027), in the following categories:

- Research Vessels
- Fixed platforms & experimental stations
- Mobile platforms (AUVs, gliders, aircraft)
- Portable equipment
- Analytical laboratories & test benches
- High Performance Computing & digital facilities
- Virtual labs / virtual access to data infrastructures

The list of RIs may change over time. Always check the latest RI Catalogue and Annex A (contact points) before preparing a proposal:
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 during the 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 is provided entirely through digital or online means, with no physical presence: databases, modelling platforms, virtual laboratories, HPC, cloud-based services, data repositories and simulation tools.

Q9: How many RIs can I request?

Each proposal requests access to one or two RIs:

- One Main RI (mandatory): necessary and essential for the core of the project
- One Auxiliary RI (optional): of a different typology, complementing the main RI; if it is not available, the project must not be substantially affected

You may also indicate an Alternative Main RI (optional), of the same typology as the main RI, to be used only if the main RI is not available.

4. TECHNICAL AND PROCEDURAL ASPECTS

Q10: How do I submit the proposal?

Proposals must be submitted exclusively through the EPSS online platform:
https://epss.proposals.ee/sustainable-blue/1

Submission procedure:

- Create an EPSS account (PI of the Project Leader)
- Complete the proposal in 4 parts (A, B, C, D)
- Upload Part B as a PDF file (max 8 pages)
- Declare the availability of own resources (Part C)
- Confirm the RI Provider's consent on feasibility (Part D) — MANDATORY
- Submit the proposal before the cut-off deadline (11:00 Brussels time)

Only the latest version submitted before the cut-off is considered, and complete proposals are submitted automatically at the cut-off. Proposals submitted after the deadline fall into the next cut-off.

Technical support: epss.sbep@proposals.ee

Q11: What is the maximum project duration?

Projects last up to 18 months from the start of access. All projects must be completed by October 2029, so the maximum duration is shorter for projects selected in the last cut-offs.

Q12: What must I include in the proposal?

The proposal consists of 4 parts:

▶️ Part A — filled in EPSS:
General information: title, acronym, SRIA pillar(s), requested RIs and type of access, geographical area, duration and preferred start date, number of accesses, costs and own funding, previous access under Horizon Europe INFRA schemes, abstract and keywords.

▶️ Part B — PDF upload (max 8 pages, including work plan and Gantt chart):

- Excellence (up to 3 pages): scientific background, objectives, innovation, methodology
- Impact (up to 2 pages): outcomes, dissemination, stakeholder engagement, data management
- Implementation (up to 3 pages): work plan, team, resources, risks

▶️ Part C — filled in EPSS:
Details of each Partner's PI and organisation, CV of the Project Leader's PI, declaration on the availability of own resources.

▶️ Part D — filled in EPSS:
Exclusion of potential reviewers (optional), ethics self-assessment and Do No Significant Harm (DNSH) principle, disclaimer on the use of data, RI Provider consent, 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 threshold are not selected.

Q14: What are the eligibility criteria for the proposal?

The proposal must satisfy all 13 general eligibility criteria of the Call Text (Section 4.6). Failure on even one criterion results in ineligibility:

▶️ Scope (3 criteria):

- Address at least 1 SRIA pillar
- Request access to 1–2 RIs
- Address at least 1 geographical area (Mediterranean Sea, Black Sea, Baltic Sea, North Sea, Atlantic Ocean)

▶️ Feasibility (1 criterion):

- Own resources declared and RI Provider consent on feasibility confirmed

▶️ Team composition (3 criteria):

- Minimum 2 Partners from 2 different countries
- PI and majority (>50%) of the team employed in a country other than the RI's country
- Not a provider of the requested RI

▶️ Project Leader (2 criteria):

- One entity acts as Project Leader
- One PI can coordinate only 1 proposal per cut-off

▶️ Duration of access (1 criterion):

- Access starts within 6 months of the results and ends within 18 months of the start date

▶️ Submission (3 criteria):

- Written in English
- Submitted via EPSS before the deadline
- Complete and respecting page limits and the proposal form (Annex C)

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

Projects must be carried out within the indicative access window of the cut-off used:

Cut-off Date	Access Window	Max Duration
20 June 2026	Dec 2026 – Jun 2028	18 months
20 October 2026	Apr 2027 – Oct 2028	18 months
22 February 2027	Aug 2027 – Feb 2029	18 months
21 June 2027	Dec 2027 – Jun 2029	18 months
20 October 2027	Apr 2028 – Oct 2029	Ending by Oct 2029
21 February 2028	Aug 2028 – Oct 2029	Ending by Oct 2029

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

USEFUL CONTACTS & LINKS

Partnership Website & RI Catalogue	https://www.bluepartnership.eu/transnational-access-call-research-infrastructures
EPSS Submission Platform	https://epss.proposals.ee/sustainable-blue/1
Call Secretariat	sbepcallresearchinfra@mur.gov.it
EPSS Technical Support	epss.sbep@proposals.ee

CONTACT

WWW.BLUEPARTNERSHIP.EU

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