



iMERMAID Open Call #2

ANNEX 1 Guidelines for applicants

Open call #2 Extended Demonstration of the iMERMAID solutions in new associated regions

Submission deadline: 3 April 2025, 17.00 CET



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the European Union**

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The iMERMAID project

iMERMAID stands for **Innovative solutions for Mediterranean Ecosystem Remediation via Monitoring and decontamination from Chemical Pollution**. The project integrates, coordinates and synergises innovative solutions that prevent, monitor and remediate against chemical contaminants. It constructs a multidimensional framework, underpinning policymaking and altering societal perspectives. Cutting-edge sensors and remediation methods are advanced, **tackling contaminants at their source while curbing upstream pollution**. By bringing together SMEs, researchers, regulators and innovation professionals, iMERMAID aims to strengthen regulations, boost economic prospects, enhance EU residents' quality of life and, ultimately, create contaminant-free waters in the Mediterranean.

1.1.1 Ambition

The primary ambition of iMERMAID is to create **innovative, and replicable approaches to prevent, monitor, and remediate chemical pollution** to support the EU's mission to restore, protect, and preserve the health of our oceans, seas, and waters and to realise the goals of the Chemicals Strategy for Zero Chemical Pollution. Capitalising on the performance of its proposed technologies, **iMERMAID's** overarching remediation infrastructure will **streamline replication of low-cost and energy efficient demonstrators across different domains, use cases, and regions**. Within the Mediterranean Sea basin, iMERMAID will deploy and demonstrate the developed solutions in various use cases at the source (agriculture waste, pharmaceutical contaminants, heavy metals, oil, PFAS, etc), intermediary (WWTP), and destination (Mediterranean Sea), providing the basis for future scale up of the developed solutions **addressing chemical pollution from its source to its destination**.

1.1.2 Specific objectives of the iMERMAID project

- **Pollution reduction via influencing public opinion and policy making**. The goal is to deliver an integrated approach of societal actions to influence public opinion and policy making process to support the overall reduction of pollution.
- **Innovative, reproducible technologies to monitor pollution from chemicals**. iMERMAID builds and demonstrates next-generation monitoring technologies, including very sensitive target analysis using electrochemical sensors for chemicals with low predicted no-effect concentrations (PNEC).
- **Innovative, reproducible technologies to reduce and remediate water from chemicals**. iMERMAID develops innovative low-cost, energy efficient, reproducible solutions for the remediation of chemical pollutants (heavy metals, POPs, pesticides, PFAS).
- **Integrate a set of compatible techniques and technology and carry out demonstration activities in 3 different areas of the Mediterranean Sea basin**. iMERMAID has established 5 internal pilot use cases within the Mediterranean Sea basin enabling continual demonstration of the developed solutions to address chemical pollution from its source to the destination. The goal is to define solutions for pollution prevention, with elimination and remediation technologies not increasing the level of anthropogenic underwater noise and air emissions.

- Maximise project outreach by attracting and engaging with a critical mass of target stakeholders. iMERMAID will provide access to specialised technical knowledge and funding support for at least 5 ‘associated regions’ to showcase the feasibility, replicability and scale up of its solutions.

2.0 Call for Proposals

2.1 Objectives

The iMERMAID Open Call #2 “*Extended Demonstration of the iMERMAID solutions in new associated regions*” has a **total of €500 000** to fund up to five (5) projects and aims to:

- Engage local and/or regional authorities with emphasis **on new sea basins and countries**.
- Showcase the feasibility, replicability and scale up of the iMERMAID solutions.
- Replicate the iMERMAID use cases in new regions and domains that can benefit from the developed technology
- Support the participating authorities by providing them with technical assistance to build capacity and to implement freshwater ecosystem restoration solutions in their territory that contribute to achieving the Mission objectives.

Open Call #2 will enable the participation of associated regions not represented by the partners of the consortium. The awarded third parties will be engaged in further demonstration of the innovative iMERMAID solutions. Beneficiaries are required to propose their own use cases, addressing their specific challenges and objectives, aligning with the goals of iMERMAID and with the aim to identify suitable solutions coming from the iMERMAID project that will support their chemical monitoring and remediation activities. iMERMAID will provide financial support to third parties based on principles of transparency, objectivity and fairness.

2.2 Open Call Topics

Applicants can apply within any or a mix of the following topics:

- Upstream Chemical Pollution Detection: Monitoring; Mapping and Hot Spot Identification.
- Solutions against upstream water chemical pollution: Prevention, Reduction, and Remediation.

Annex 1.1 Technical Specification details the iMERMAID available solutions.

○ *Open Call 2 General Requirements and Recommendations*

Table 1 - Open Call Requirements

Open Call –Requirements

The proposed extended use case and area needs to be compatible with the iMERMAID objectives, solutions and processes. Proposals addressing the domains already tackled in the internal project use-cases can be the same but need to be executed in a different region. Proposals should include activities that will lead to the deployment, testing, and engagement of the developed iMERMAID solutions. These include for e.g

analysis, small scale tests, roadmaps, plans, projects, stakeholder engagement to prevent, eliminate and remediate chemical pollution in the relevant associated region addressing possible barriers and showing the feasibility of implementing the solutions. The attractiveness and replicability of the proposed Use Case will be prioritized.

Applicant	Financial support to third parties may only be awarded to local and/or regional authorities from an ‘associated region’.		
Execution capacity	Applicants should have the capacity and resources to implement the proposed activities within their territories. Please note that the iMERMAID project will assign a mentor to serve as a technical advisor, but it will not provide an on-site technician for solution deployment.		
Geographical	‘Associated regions’ are understood as areas with similar ecosystems (e.g. neighbouring regions and/or regions in a different river basin) and/or less-developed regions, with the view to build capacity to implement the innovative solutions to restore freshwater ecosystems. The proposals should ensure that the associated regions are located in Member States/Associated countries other than those that are part of the project consortium. An “associated region” shall benefit from the Financial Support to Third Parties provided under this topic only once.		
EU standards compliance	Applicants should adhere to EU standards of transparency, equal treatment, conflict of interest and confidentiality. Applicants must be eligible for participation in the EC Horizon Europe Framework Programme and must ensure the following obligations of the Grant Agreement, namely Articles 12 (conflict of interest), 13 (confidentiality and security), 14 (ethics), 17.2 (visibility), 18 (specific rules for carrying out action), 19 (information) and 20 (record-keeping) ¹ . Applicants should comply with the EU restrictive measures also applicable for financial support to third parties. Please consult the EU Sanctions Map .		
Minimum deliverables required (M-month D-deliverable)	Stage 1 (M2) Use-case definition	Stage 2 (M6) Use-case implementation	Stage 3 (M9) Use-case evaluation and feedback
	D1. Individual workplan and use-case specification	D2. Technical and Progress Report on use-case implementation	D3 Final evaluation report and feedback D4: Exploitation plan, including stakeholder assessment and impact assessment"

¹ for more details refer to https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/agr-contr/general-mga_horizon-euratom_en.pdf

KPIs	Individual KPIs will be established in the Individual mentoring plan based on the proposed use-case and agreed between the applicant and the iMERMAID assigned mentor
Resources provided by iMERMAID	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Assigned mentor. ● Technical advisory services necessary to prepare project’s relevant activities such as roadmaps, plans and actions to prevent, eliminate and remediate water pollution from chemicals. ● Training on stakeholder engagement for water management projects. ● Know-how on building a successful use-case based on the iMERMAID methodology. ● Link with an iMERMAID internal use-case and an opportunity for a site visit of one of the iMERMAID pilot areas. ● Communication about use-case activities and outcomes through iMERMAID channels.
Expected outcome	final Successful use-case that will showcase the feasibility, replicability and scale up of the iMERMAID solutions.

Table 2 - Open Call - Recommendations

Open Call – Recommendations	
Standards	Compliance with standards: Proposed use -cases should adhere to relevant industrial standards ensuring data reliability and enabling comparison to previous studies across regions.
Ethics	The proposals should comply with the Do No Significant Harm (DNSH) principle. The activities should not support or carry out activities that create significant harm to any of the objectives of the European Green Deal.
Data management	The data generated as a result of the project should adhere to the Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable (FAIR) principles while sensitive data, arising from intellectual property rights and other proprietary aspects of partner technologies, should be handled with confidentiality measures.
Other	Participants can organize stakeholder event/s, attracting end-users and local support organisations showcasing iMERMAID solutions and assessing their feasibility, replicability and scale up.

3.0 Eligibility criteria

All applicants will have to abide by the following eligibility criteria described in this section to be considered eligible for iMERMAID Open Call #2:

- Submissions are made ONLY through the [F6S platform](https://www.f6s.com/imermaid-open-call-2/apply) using the following address: <https://www.f6s.com/imermaid-open-call-2/apply> . **Proposals submitted by any other means will NOT be evaluated.**
- Applicants must be local/regional authorities from associated regions located in EU Member States/Associated countries other than those that are part of the project consortium.
- An “associated region” shall benefit from the Financial Support to Third Party (FSTP) provided under the topic within the duration of the project only once.
- Proposals must showcase the use of iMERMAID technology to be replicated in new regions.
- The proposal should have a clear European dimension
- The Application as well as the requested documents are provided ONLY in English language.
- The Proposal description is submitted according to the Guidelines for Applicants and provided template (Annex 2).
- Not exceeding the maximum budget request per proposal.
- Only complete applications will be accepted. The application should include the requested administrative data, and any obligatory supporting documents specified in the call.
- Proposals need to be submitted before the Deadline.
- EU restrictive measures are also applicable for financial support to third parties².

A proposal is only considered eligible if its content corresponds specifically to the iMERMAID requirements, including the specific eligibility conditions set out in the relevant parts of this document. Applications that do not comply with those criteria will be excluded and marked as ineligible.

iMERMAID will publish the call widely and adhere to EU standards of transparency, equal treatment, conflict of interest and confidentiality. It will be published on iMERMAID’s website and in the Funding & Tenders Portal. It will remain open for at least 2 months (from January 22nd until April 3rd 2025). If the submission deadlines changes, iMERMAID will immediately announce this to the applicants. iMERMAID will publish the outcome of the calls without delay, including a description of third-party projects, the date of the award, the duration, and the legal name and country.

3.1 *Type of beneficiary (applicant)*

iMERMAID will fund projects submitted only by local and/or regional authorities located in EU Member States/Associated countries other than those that are represented by the partners of the project consortium and the ones that have been granted funding as part of Open call 1 (see eligible countries in section 3.2).

Local or regional authorities from an associated region are understood as legal entities, including bodies representing a regional/local authority (such as regional/local agencies, regional planning bodies,

² <https://www.sanctionsmap.eu/#/main>

regional/local transport authorities, etc...), whose role is significant and relevant for showcasing the feasibility, replicability and scalability of the solutions developed in the project³.

Important: Third parties that are considered private entities cannot be part of the consortium. Once awarded, the winning local/regional authority may explore other ways of collaborating with these entities, such as subcontracting

3.2 Eligible countries

iMERMAID Open Call #2 aims to enlarge the pool of available associated regions with emphasis on new water basins and countries.

Eligible countries: Eligible are all regions that are NOT located in the countries, in which the iMERMAID project partners are based (see below) and that have not been selected as a beneficiary under Open Call 1 (see below) e.g. but not excluded to Albania, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Egypt, Estonia, Hungary, Israel, Kosovo, Latvia, Lithuania, Libya, Malta, Montenegro, Morocco, Moldova, North Macedonia, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Turkey, etc.

Please check the full list of participating countries eligible for HE support: [here](#).

Non-eligible countries are all regions located in the countries, in which the iMERMAID project partners are based: Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Serbia, Spain, Tunisia, Ukraine. Please consult the list of project partners [here](#).

Non-eligible are as well the associated regions where beneficiaries selected under Open Call 1 are based:

1. Project name: BRIDGEWAT/BRIDGing Communities for Sustainable WATers
Leading organization: Institute for Protection and Ecology of the Republic of Srpska
City: Banja Luka
Region: Bosanska Krajina
2. Project name: IMRHCSR/Integrated Monitoring and Remediation for Heavy Metal Contamination in Seyhan River
Leading organization: Yüreğir Municipality
City: Yüreğir
Region: Adana Province
3. Project name: PPRRRCM/ Pesticide Prevention, Reduction and Remediation Roadmap for Cimişlia, Moldova
Leading organization: The Municipality of Cimişlia
City: Cimişlia
Region: Cimişlia district

³ The iMERMAID consortium reserves the right to request a document proving the status of the entity as an authority in case of any doubts.

3.3 *Activities eligible for funding*

The type of activities that will be considered for funding under the current open call are:

- Activities to remove contaminants
- Pollutants monitoring actions
- Remediation actions for specific pollutants
- Definition of regional pollutants and required actions for remediation
- Dissemination and Communication of the activities and results.

3.4 *Deadline*

Only proposals submitted before the deadline will be accepted. After the call closure, no additions or changes to the received proposals will be considered. Submission to the iMERMAID Open Call #2 is open between the **22nd of January 2025 and the 3rd of April 2025 at 17:00 CEST** (Brussels time). Proposals must be submitted before the deadline. **The deadline hour of submission is not flexible.**

3.5 *Language*

English is the official language for iMERMAID Open Call. Submissions done in any other language will be disregarded and not evaluated. English is also the only official language during the whole execution of the iMERMAID programme. This means that it is mandatory that the submission of deliverables is done in English to be eligible.

3.6 *Conflict of interest*

IMPORTANT: To avoid conflicts of interest, applications will not be accepted from persons or organisations who are partners in the iMERMAID consortium or who are formally linked in any way to partners of the consortium. Please check the list of partners at <https://imermaid.eu/meet-the-partners/>

Applicants shall not have any actual or/and potential conflict of interest with the iMERMAID selection process and during the whole project. The winning applicants will be required to declare that they know of no such potential conflicts of interest by submitting ANNEX 3 - iMERMAID Declaration of Honour during the contracting phase.

All suspected cases of conflict of interest will be assessed case by case. In particular, applicants must take all measures to prevent any situation where the impartial and objective implementation of the project is compromised for reasons involving economic interest, political or national affinity, family or emotional ties or any other shared interest ('conflict of interests').

4.0 *How to apply*

The submission will be done through the F6S platform using the following link: <https://www.f6s.com/imermaid-open-call-2/apply>. The applicants are required to register a profile at F6S to submit a proposal. The templates to the Open Call 2 documents are available here. <https://imermaid.eu/open-call-2/#documents>.

These are:

- Annex 1 Guidelines for applicants (the current document)
- Annex 1.1 Technical Specification
- Annex 2 Proposal template: a document to be submitted in a pdf format containing the project proposal and uploaded as part of the application form on the F6S platform.

NOTE: Please note that after application submission, editing is not possible. If the applicant discovers an error in the proposal and provided the call deadline has not passed, the applicant may request the Open Call iMERMAID team to re-submit the proposal. To request a resubmission, you are required to send an email to opencall@imermaid.eu a message titled: RESUBMISSION REQUEST. However, iMERMAID does not guarantee that a resubmission is feasible in case the request for resubmission is not received by the Open Call iMERMAID team at least 48 hours before the call deadline.

5.0 Evaluation process

The evaluation process is shown in Figure 2.

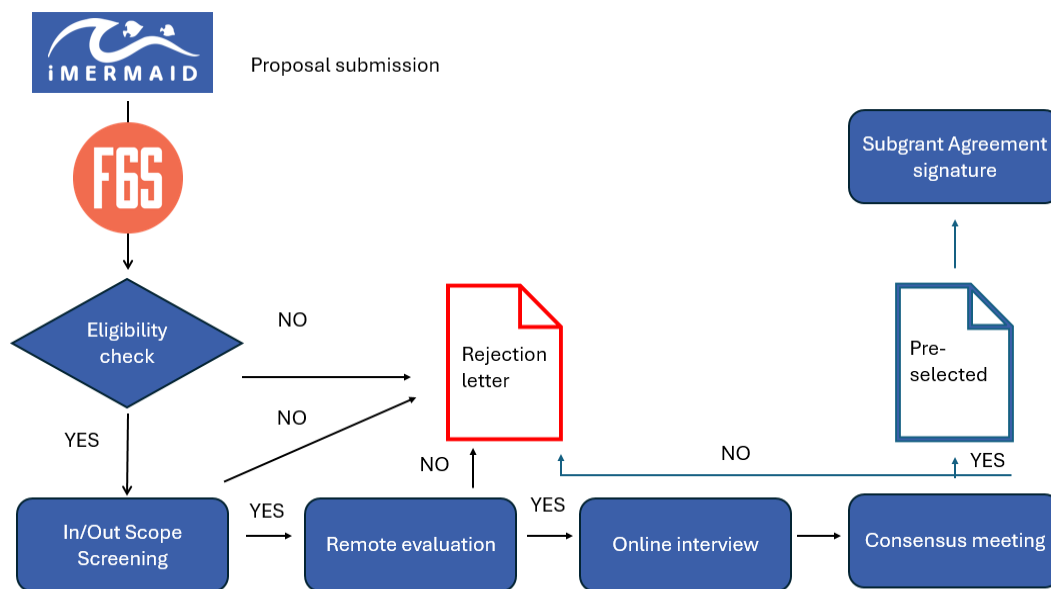


Figure 1 iMERMAID Evaluation Process Scheme

5.1 Step 1 Eligibility Check

Eligibility to participate in the funding programme is initially verified against several eligibility criteria. This process is carried out by the iMERMAID team. A proposal may be declared ineligible or inadmissible at any stage.

The check will verify:

- Proposals reception: via F6S platform and by the defined deadline.
- Existence of a legal entity in an eligible country, the uniqueness of the Proposal, the existence of the same entity in other proposals, the alignment with iMERMAID call for Proposals, and any conflict of interest.
- Type of third party: The applying entity is only a local or regional authority.
- Established in Member State/Associated Country other than those that are part of the project consortium.
- All entities are eligible for EC funding under the rules of Horizon Europe [Y/N]
- The Proposal is written in English [Y/N]
- All required documentation is submitted correctly [Y/N]
- The Proposal does not exceed the maximum available funding [Y/N]
- The proposal is submitted prior to the deadline

At this stage, the eligibility criteria are checked against the self-declarations included in the application form. Later, during the evaluation process, the above criteria will be verified and if an applicant is not compliant with any of them, it will be excluded. The eligible Proposals will move to the next stage “**In/Out Scope screening**”. The non-eligible applicants will be informed by email. No additional feedback will be given.

5.2 Step 2 In/Out Scope Screening

The In/Out Scope Screening will be done by the iMERMAID Selection Committee. The overall summary/general objectives of all proposals included in the ‘List of Eligible Applications’ will be reviewed to evaluate the following items:

- **Scope.** The objectives of the proposal must fit within the scope of the iMERMAID project as it is described in Annex 1 Guidelines for Applicants (GfA).
- For the Funding Instruments, it should be clear that applicants are going to suggest use-cases that will lead to the use of solutions developed by the iMERMAID partners.
- **European Dimension.** The project should have a European dimension as it is described in Annex 1 Guidelines for Applicants (GfA).

Proposals that comply with the above-mentioned will move to the next stage “**External remote evaluation**”. Proposals that do not comply with the abovementioned will be informed by email. No additional feedback will be given.

5.3 Step 3 External remote evaluation

Proposals passing the screening in Step 2 will move on to the external remote evaluation phase. The external evaluation will be done remotely by expert evaluators. Evaluators will be selected from a pool of experts that will be established through a call for expressions of interest. The experts will be evaluated and selected based on their knowledge of the iMERMAID challenges and topics and general experience in the evaluation of proposals (e.g., Horizon 2020, HE, FSTP programmes).

The evaluators will perform evaluations on an individual basis, not as representatives of their employer, their country, or any other entity. They are required to be independent, impartial, and objective. All evaluators are required to sign a contract, which includes a declaration of confidentiality and the absence of conflicts of interest. Evaluators will also be bound by strict confidentiality regarding the evaluation process and during the evaluation process.

At least two external evaluators will evaluate each proposal and will be distributed across the proposals based on their expertise and, whenever possible, country of origin.

5.3.1 Evaluation criteria

The evaluators will follow the 3 evaluation criteria listed in Table 5.

The independent experts will score each award criterion on a scale from 0 to 5 (decimal point scores may be given):

0 = Fail: The proposal fails to address the criterion or cannot be judged due to missing or incomplete information.

1 = Poor: criterion is inadequately addressed or there are serious inherent weaknesses.

2 = Fair: proposal broadly addresses the criterion, but there are significant weaknesses.

3 = Good: proposal addresses the criterion well, but a few shortcomings are present.

4 = Very good: proposal addresses the criterion very well, but a small number of shortcomings are present.

5 = Excellent: proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion. Any shortcomings are minor.

Each evaluator will score the three criteria from 0 to 5 and produce an Individual Evaluation Report. The threshold for individual criteria is 3. The overall threshold, applied to the sum of the three individual scores, will be 10. The final score will be calculated as an average of the individual assessments provided by the Evaluators. If a proposal scores less than 3 in any criterion or an overall score less than 10, the proposal is automatically rejected. Each evaluator will record their individual assessment of each proposal using an Individual Evaluation Report (IER). A single Evaluation Summary Report (ESR) will be then prepared by the Evaluation Panel, representing opinions and scores on which the evaluators assessing the application agree.

Table 3 Open Call #2 Evaluation Criteria

iMERMAID Open Call #2 evaluation criteria		
Remote Evaluation Criteria	Scope of evaluation	Threshold
EXCELLENCE	Ambition: The applicants have to demonstrate to what extent the proposed third party(ies) project contribute	3/5

	<p>to the project scope, have a European dimension and are beyond the State of the Art. The third party(ies) project has to describe the innovative approach behind it (e.g. ground-breaking objectives, novel concepts and approaches, new products, services or business and organisational models). They must demonstrate how they will contribute to the take-up of the iMERMAID technology, through deploying and validating relevant technology.</p> <p>Problem description and motivation: Applicants should provide description of the end user problem or the necessity that a certain region where the solution will be piloted requires to be addressed by the iMERMAID solution.</p> <p>Soundness of the approach and credibility of the proposed methodology.</p>	
<p>IMPACT</p>	<p>Solution uptake and exploitation Strategy: Applicants should provide information about the business model that should highlight the sustainability aspect and the potential common commercial exploitation between the iMERMAID technology provider and the third-party applicant(s).</p> <p>The applicants have to demonstrate how to exploit, sustain, and/ or commercialise the solution in a specific sector/process/etc.</p> <p>Environmental and social impact: The applicants have to demonstrate the project contribution towards environmental, social and economic impacts to contribute to sustainable development, Green Deal and other European policies - e.g., Green Deal, the EU Zero Pollution Action Plan, the Convention for the protection of the Mediterranean sea against pollution, the Chemical Strategy for Sustainability, Water Framework Directive, Marine Strategy Framework Directive.</p>	<p>3/5</p>
<p>IMPLEMENTATION</p>	<p>Team: The applicants have to demonstrate their management and leadership qualities, their ability to take a concept from ideas to system deployment their capacity to carry through their ideas. They should</p>	<p>3/5</p>

	<p>comprise a cross functional team, with a strong background and skills base and taking into account gender balance. The attractiveness and replicability of the Use Case will be prioritized.</p> <p>Resources: Demonstrate the quality and effectiveness of the resources assigned in order to get the objectives/deliverables proposed.</p>	
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5.4 Step 4 - Intermediate ranking of proposals

At the end of the external evaluation process (Step 3), all proposals will be ranked based on their overall average score (summary of criterion 1 to 3).

Ties will be solved using the following criteria.

The criteria in order of priority are:

- The highest score in the Excellence Section.
- The highest score in the Implementation Section
- The highest score in the Impact Section
- Gender balance among the personnel responsible for carrying out the activities.

As a result of the Independent Evaluation, a 'Ranking List' will be produced.

5.5 Step 5 - Online Interviews

The applicants that are in the ranking list will be invited to an online interview. The objective of the interview is to better understand the proposal, particularly its quality and excellence, the expected impact and exploitation potential, quality of the workplan, and quality of the applicant(s). Any complementary material that can support the presentation of the project is acceptable during the interview. Interviews will be carried out by a selection of the iMERMAID Selection Committee. Members of the iMERMAID team directly involved in the selected topic that each Proposal is addressing will participate in the interview and respective evaluation process. Interviews are expected to last approximately 30-45 min. The Applicants are expected to prepare and present a presentation (approximately 15 minutes) and answer any questions regarding their proposal from the internal evaluators. If at any time during the interview the applicants do not commit to what was included in the submitted proposal, the proposal will be automatically disqualified. If after the interview process the evaluators still have questions, the applicant may be requested to provide additional information in writing.

5.6 Step 6 - Consensus meeting

The iMERMAID Selection Committee -including 3 external experts who participated in the Independent Evaluation will decide, at this stage, 'List of finalists' and 'Reserve List'. Whilst normally the highest ranked proposals will be selected for funding, the Selection Committee might have fair reasons for objecting to a specific third party, like the alignment with iMERMAID goals and scope, the ability to achieve the highest impact possible, competition, as well as the existence of significant ethical concerns or a potential conflict of interest. In this case, the choice may pass to the next-ranked proposal. The exact number of proposals approved will be decided based on the overall quality of the proposals with a maximum number of 4 proposals to be funded under Open Call #2. Applicants may be requested to provide additional information in writing, in case of any doubts that need to be clarified prior to the final selection.

5.7 Step 7 - Final ranking and Selection

Selected proposals will be notified and will be invited for a sub-grant agreement signature. All Proposals that have passed to Stage 6 will receive an acceptance or rejection letter together with the results of the external remote evaluation (Evaluation Summary Report (ESR)).

5.8 Redress process

An applicant may submit a request for redress if they believe the results of the eligibility checks have not been correctly applied, or if they feel that there has been a shortcoming in the application of the rules of the iMERMAID - Open Call #2. Requests for redress must:

- Be received within three (3) working days from the reception of (1) a rejection letter considering the proposal as non-eligible or (2) the ESR information letter.
- Indicate the subject of the complaint and clearly describe it, with arguments/ evidence that sustain the complaint.
- Be sent by the entity's legal representative that has also submitted the proposal. In case a request for redress is received, the Selection Committee of iMERMAID will examine the applicant's complaint. The committee will review the complaint and recommend an appropriate course of action. If there is clear evidence of a shortcoming that could affect the eventual funding decision, it is possible that all or part of the proposal will be re-evaluated.

Please note:

- This procedure is concerned only with the eligibility/ evaluation organisation process. The committee will not question the scientific or technical judgement of the expert evaluators applied in evaluating the proposals. A re-evaluation will only be carried out if there is evidence of a shortcoming that affects the final decision on whether to fund the proposal or not.
- The evaluation score following any re-evaluation will be regarded as definitive. It may be lower than the original score.
- Anonymous or incomplete complaints will not be considered.
- Only one request for redress per Proposal will be considered by the committee.

All requests for redress will be treated in confidence and must be sent to iMERMAID at: opencall@imermaid.eu

6.0 Contracting

6.1 Sub-granted project negotiation and onboarding

At the end of the evaluation phase, up to five proposals will be selected and invited to sub-grant project negotiation. In case one or more of the selected proposals fails to sign the sub-grant agreement the proposals with the highest rank from the reserve list will be invited.

6.2 Contract preparation

After the Open Call evaluation conclusion and project selection, the iMERMAID coordinator will start the contract preparation in collaboration with the selected proposals' coordinators. Contract preparation considers an administrative and financial checking (and potentially into technical or ethical/security negotiations) based on evaluators' comments.

The objective of the contract preparation is fulfilling the legal requirements between the iMERMAID Consortium and every beneficiary of the call.

The items covered will be:

- Inclusion of the comments (if any) in the ESR of the Proposals and mapping to the Sub-grant agreement (Contract).
- Validation of the legal documents.

Each third-party project will sign the SubGrant Agreement (SGA) under a 'lump sum model'. This will imply that iMERMAID will provide the financial support to the third parties upon delivery of the expected output. The SGA will include, as an annex, the Individual Work Plan (DEL 1) for each project. This document establishes, among others, the KPIs and Deliverables that will be taken into account when evaluating the grantees' performance at the milestones review, at the end of each stage of the iMERMAID programme for third parties, as well as the budget for the project.

To guarantee that the lump sum is aligned with the Beneficiary's underlying actual costs, each 'Individual Work Plan' shall include an outline of dedication of resources and a detailed cost estimate. This cost estimate, which will be verified from the implementation point of view, shall:

- (1) include only costs that would be eligible for an actual-costs grant and must exclude costs that are ineligible under the Horizon Europe rules;
- (2) be clearly connected with the action task and the Deliverables/KPIs to be achieved stated in the Individual Work Plan.

Finally, FSTP grantees must ensure, according to Article 9.4 in the [General Model Grant Agreement](#), that they will be compliant with contractual obligations under Articles 12 (conflict of interest), 13 (confidentiality and security), 14 (ethics), 17.2 (visibility), 18 (specific rules for carrying out action), 19 (information) and 20 (record-keeping).

Third parties should be aware that they carry the same accountability towards the budget spend as the iMERMAID consortium. The granting authority and auditing bodies such as OLAF, Court of Auditors (ECA), etc. can exercise their rights towards them. The SGA will include provisions to formalise this.

The contract as provided to the sub-grantee is final and may not be changed.

The request, by the iMERMAID Consortium, for the above documentation will be done within predefined deadlines. In general, the sub-project negotiation should be concluded within 2 weeks. An additional week may be provided by the iMERMAID coordinator in case of significant reasoning. In case contracting has not been concluded within the above period, the Proposal is automatically rejected and the next proposal on the reserve list is invited.

6.3 *Contract Signature*

At the end of the contracting phase, the sub-grantee funding agreement will be signed between the iMERMAID Consortium represented by its coordinator (ITCL), and the selected beneficiary, represented by its leader. In case of applying consortia, the consortium leader and the other consortium partners are responsible to make an agreement that shall cover the rights and obligations between them.

7.0 Activities during the funded programme

7.1 *iMERMAID third parties programme specifications*

The programme is with a total duration of 9 months and is divided into 3 stages.

Stage 1 “Use case definition” is associated with the starting point of each project and will have a maximum duration of 2 months (see table 6 below). Within this stage, the beneficiary with the support of their assigned mentor will develop an Individual Mentoring Plan (IMP) and Use case specification, elaborating the milestones, KPIs and deliverables which will be delivered during the programme and which will be evaluated at the end of each stage. During this stage, beneficiaries, in collaboration with their mentors, should identify which internal iMERMAID project use-case (pilot) is most suitable to follow as an example. They should evaluate the compatibility of the project activities with this chosen pilot and develop a learning plan, potentially including a site visit at the most appropriate time within any of the three stages. The Individual Mentoring Plan, including the use-case specification will be an integral part of the Subgrant agreement and will be included as an ANNEX at the end of Stage 1. The Document must include a publishable summary of the results obtained at this stage.

Stage 2 “Use case implementation” involves the actual implementation of the activities described in the IMP. The duration of this stage is four months during which third parties will execute all implementation tasks to demonstrate the feasibility of adopting the selected iMERMAID solution/s at the specified location. Depending on the chosen use case, activities such as preliminary work, roadmaps, plans, field tests, sampling, proof of concept and projects to prevent, eliminate and remediate pollution in the associated regions addressing possible barriers and showing the feasibility of implementing innovative solutions will be conducted. At the end of this stage the Beneficiary(ies) will have to deliver a Report on the Use case implementation and other deliverables (if any) as agreed in the IMP as a means of verification of work performed. It must include a publishable summary of the results obtained. During this stage, beneficiaries can conduct stakeholder meetings and workshops with relevant groups, such as potential end-users and the wider public, to assess the feasibility of the selected solutions.

Stage 3 “Use case Evaluation and Feedback” is critical to leverage the results of the previous stage. The aim is to evaluate the potential for the take-up of the iMERMAID solution and to deliver an exploitation plan highlighting technology adoption roadmap, impact and feedback assessment, sustainability aspect and the potential common exploitation between the iMERMAID technology provider and the third-party applicant(s).

Additionally, in Stage 3 third parties can conduct a final stakeholder event, inviting pertinent industry representatives, expert groups, and, if applicable, civil organizations and citizens. The event should showcase achieved results, iMERMAID solutions and initiate dialogue on water monitoring, remediation, and the prevention of CoEC. Stakeholder engagement and mapping methods will be provided by the iMERMAID consortium experts.

At the end of Stage 3, Beneficiary(ies) will have to deliver the assigned deliverables:

1. Final evaluation report and feedback.
2. Exploitation plan, including stakeholder assessment and impact assessment - it must focus on use case validation, understanding internal processes, system integration, risk management and should include a roadmap for uptake of a selected iMERMAID solution.

Table 3 iMERMAID FSTP programme Stages and payment

iMERMAID Extended demonstration			
	Stage duration (months)	Mandatory Deliverables	Fixed Lump Sum
Stage 1: Use case definition	2	Individual Work Plan and Use case specification	Up to 17 000 EUR
Stage 2: Use case implementation	4	Report on Use case implementation	Up to 58 000 EUR
Stage 3: Use case evaluation and feedback	3	Final evaluation report and feedback Exploitation plan, including stakeholder assessment and impact assessment	Up to 25 000 EUR
TOTAL	9 months		Up to 100 000 EUR

7.2 iMERMAID third parties programme evaluation

The selected grantees will define and elaborate their deliverables, KPIs and milestones in their 'Individual Work Plan', at the beginning of the support programme, together with their allocated mentors. The outputs will be evaluated at the end of each stage during a remote review done via a teleconference platform. The Beneficiary will make a presentation of the work done, analyse the progress and answer questions from the iMERMAID experts. After the review, the Beneficiary will receive a review report, including comments and potential recommendations. The report will also state if the deliverables and KPIs are accepted or not. On acceptance of the deliverables, payments will be released no later than thirty (30) natural days after the notification by the Contractor.

The 'Mentors' will evaluate the grantees' performance, according to the following criteria.

- **Deliverables' quality.** To be scored by the Mentors based on the Deliverables established in the 'Individual Mentoring Plan'.
- **Technical performance indicators.** To be scored by the Technical Mentors based on the KPIs established in the 'Individual Mentoring Plan'.

- **Deadline Compliance.** To be scored by the Mentors.

Each criterion will be scored from 0 to 10 and the weight of each one of these criteria, in the final score, will be as follows:

- Deliverable quality (30%).
- Technical performance indicators (60%).
- Deadline Compliance (10%).

According with the received final score:

- 1) **Beneficiaries over threshold** (which is 7 points) will successfully receive the next payment and become candidates to continue in the program.
- 2) **Beneficiaries under threshold** will be proposed, by the ‘Mentors’, as candidates to leave the Program. If this decision is ratified by the ‘Selection Committee’, they will have to leave the Program and won’t receive the payment due.

The ‘Selection Committee’ will review and validate the ‘Mentors’ proposal, putting special attention to the ‘under threshold’ cases, if any, by taking into consideration all possible objective reasons for underperformance (i.e. external factors which might have influenced the beneficiaries’ performance). The Selection Committee will consider if a short extension can be conceded to invite a project to update and resubmit deliverables, hence qualifying for its payment, if and when said deliverable is approved. The ‘Selection Committee’ will take the final decision and approve the payments.

7.3 Participation in events

During the three Stages, the selected Beneficiary(ies) participate in various types of events (audio calls, video calls, webinars, online training, virtual conferences, etc.) organized or suggested by the iMERMAID Consortium, to follow closely the project and its demonstration activities and to build capacity to implement the innovative solutions to prevent, eliminate and remediate chemical pollution, addressing possible barriers and showing the feasibility of implementation.

To this end applicants can as well allocate resources for one travel to an iMERMAID demonstration site, which will be agreed during Stage 1 and will be incorporated in the Individual Mentoring Plan of the selected applicant. Third parties are as well welcomed to allocate resources for showcasing their involvement and use-case in relevant events, for e.g. organised by the Commission and the Mission Oceans’ team.

8.0 Resources and tailored support provided within iMERMAID FSTP programme

Within the duration of the programme for each Beneficiary iMERMAID will appoint a mentor, a technical mentor and an open call manager acting as an administrative contact point. The mentor is an individual, from the iMERMAID consortium with expertise in the topics and solutions being addressed within the project.

The mentors will be responsible for supporting, providing feedback, motivating, and evaluating the Beneficiary.

Specifically, the mentors will:

- Organise regular calls with the assigned project (e.g., once every month or as agreed with the mentor) and recorded in the Individual Mentoring Plan.
- Assist to ensure that the work plan, deliverables and project reports are delivered on time.
- Follow the project's progress towards achievement of defined KPIs and results (sub-granted project progress).
- Provide a technical evaluation of the deliverables and reports submitted by the Beneficiary, including approval, rejection, or request for improvements.
- Engage with other iMERMAID partners to discuss needs from the sub-granted project.

The open call manager acts as an administrative contact during the implementation of the project. They will liaise with the sub-granted project's assigned mentor to ensure its successful implementation.

Specifically, the open call manager will:

- Monitor the progress of the project with the support of a monthly survey.
- Liaise with the project's mentor about the progress of the respective project and discuss any issues arising in the monthly survey.
- Collect the deliverables and reports from the beneficiary and share them with the respective mentor for evaluation.
- Organize the reviews at the end of each Stage.
- Report to the iMERMAID coordination with progress for reporting purposes.

In addition to the mentoring, iMERMAID will also provide the projects with tailored support with the objective of maximising the exploitation potential of the projects.

9.0 FINANCIAL SUPPORT PROVIDED

Grants to third parties are provided under a fixed lump sum per FSTP recipient in EUR. For accessing the funding, the third-party projects deployment needs to demonstrate and present proofs of their progress and achievements and the deliverables presented must be assessed positively in each of the stages. In case of the above missing, the third parties may not be paid and may be requested to not participate any longer in the iMERMAID project.

The grant received by the third parties is to finance:

- Activities to remove contaminants
- Pollutants monitoring actions
- Remediation actions for specific pollutants
- Definition of regional pollutants and required actions for remediation
- Investment in software/ hardware (only the value associated with its depreciation)
- Travels associated with the project deployment or iMERMAID activities.
- Dissemination and Communication of the activities and results.
- Exploitation and impact assessment-related activities in given region(s) addressing local directives and regulations
- **Minor (<30%) subcontracting of non-key domain expertise is allowed but must be justified.**

Payments will be done in 3 instalments (17% + 58% + 25%) based on concrete results, deliverables, and review of each Stage. Detailed payment schedule and payment conditions will be settled in the Sub-grant (Beneficiary) Agreement (Annex 4).

Note: Minor subcontracting that is directly linked to the action implementation and can therefore be attributed to it directly is eligible. Subcontracting costs for the action should be calculated on the basis of the costs actually incurred, fulfil the general eligibility conditions and are awarded using the beneficiary's usual purchasing practices — provided these ensure subcontracts with best value for money (or if appropriate the lowest price) and that there is no conflict of interests. The selection of the subcontractor has to be fully documented and included in the annex of the final report (in case of audits from the EC) and should be implemented strictly in compliance with the public procurement legislation applicable to the organization submitting the proposal in this OC (i.e. national procedures for tendering and national public procurement rules apply). It is the responsibility of the OC2 beneficiaries to avoid conflict of interest when awarding subcontracts. iMERMAID partner organizations cannot be subcontractors in any of the project proposals submitted in OC2, as they cannot benefit from the OC grant, directly or indirectly. Last but not least subcontracted activities should be executed within the 9 months time-frame of the iMERMAID FSTP programme.

10.0 Responsibility of the beneficiaries

The selected third parties are indirect Beneficiaries of the EC funding. As such, they are responsible for the proper use of the funding and ensure that the recipients comply with obligations under Horizon Europe specific requirements as described in Horizon Europe.

10.1 Data protection and confidentiality

During the implementation of Open Call 2 activities and up to five years after the end of the programme activities, the Beneficiary(ies) must keep confidential any data, documents, or other material (in any form) that is identified as confidential at sub-contract signature ('confidential information'). The selected Beneficiary(ies) may disclose confidential information to the iMERMAID Consortium and to the selected reviewers, who will be bound by a specific Non-Disclosure Agreement.

10.2 Promoting actions and giving visibility to the EU funding

The selected Beneficiary(ies) must promote the programme activities, the iMERMAID project and its results, by providing targeted information to multiple audiences (including the media and the public) in a strategic and effective manner and to highlight the financial support of the EC. Detailed requirements will be listed in the sub-grant Agreement (Contract).

Unless the European Commission or the iMERMAID coordinator requests or agrees otherwise any communication activity related to the action (including in electronic form, via social media, etc.), any publicity, including at a conference or seminar or any type of information or promotional material (brochure, leaflet, poster, presentation etc.), and any infrastructure, equipment and major results funded by the grant must:

- display the EU emblem
- display the Mission Ocean logo
- display the iMERMAID logo

- include the following text: For communication activities: “This project has indirectly received funding from the European Union under the Horizon Europe programme: iMERMAID (GA no 101112824)”, linked with <https://imermaid.eu/the-project/>.

Any publicity made by selected third-party in respect of the project, in whatever form and or by whatever medium, must specify that it reflects only the author’s views and that the EC or iMERMAID project is not liable for any use that may be made of the information contained therein.

11.0 Contact

The iMERMAID Consortium provides the following support:

- F6S Online Q&A: <https://www.f6s.com/imermaid-open-call-2/discuss>
- F6S support team (for any technical issues with the F6S platform): support@f6s.com
- Open Call #2 Documents: <https://imermaid.eu/open-call-2/#documents>
- More info at: <https://imermaid.eu/open-calls/>

For extraordinary communication needs, please contact the Help Desk: opencall@imermaid.eu

The Mediterranean Sea and its surrounding regions support a diverse variety of essential socioeconomic activities. It is one of the highly exploited water ways and the influence of anthropogenic activities on its marine habitats and ecosystems has grown significantly since the industrial revolution. Because of this, the Mediterranean Sea basin is very vulnerable to chemical contamination and build-up. To safeguard the Mediterranean Sea basin from contaminants for emerging concerns (CoEC), iMERMAID will integrate, coordinate, and synergize innovative preventive, monitoring, and remediation solutions. iMERMAID will build an evidence-based multidimensional framework that will guide policymaking and transform societal perceptions to reduce CoEC usage, emissions, and pollution. Furthermore, next generation sensor and remediation solutions will be developed within iMERMAID to monitor and remove prioritized chemicals from its source while reducing upstream pollution. iMERMAID builds an ideal interdisciplinary team by bringing together prominent SMEs, researchers, regulators, and innovation professionals who have been essential in improving the knowledge and awareness of CoEC. Beyond state-of-the-art techniques, iMERMAID will strive to strengthen regulations against CoEC, expand economic possibilities and competitiveness, improve the standard of living for EU residents, while preventing the accumulation of chemical pollution in the Mediterranean Sea basin. iMERMAID will empower the efforts to create a zero pollution, contaminant free waters by enabling the Chemical Strategy's goals to become a practical reality.



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