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## Scalable full-cycle marine litter remediation in the Mediterranean: Robotic and participatory solutions

# SeaClear2.0

<https://www.seaclear2.eu>

### D7.2

#### Call for tender design for associated regions

WP7 – Integration, scaling, replication via associated regions

Grant Agreement no. 101093822


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Hamburg Port Authority

25.05.2024

Dissemination level: PU



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| <br><b>101093822</b> | <b>D7.2: Call for tender design for associated regions</b>           |                     |
|  | <b>WP7: Integration, scaling, replication via associated regions</b> | <b>Version: 1.1</b> |
|  | <b>Author(s): C. Hertel-ten Eikelder</b>                             | <b>Level: PU</b>    |

## Document information

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| <b>Responsible author</b>              | C. Hertel-ten Eikelder  |
| <b>Deliverable description</b>         | Objective definition for associated regions: Analysis of the critical features of maximizing robotic system usage at broader scale. Pin-pointing areas for which current demonstration and pilot sites do not provide validation of some of the critical points identified. Creation of tasks for showcasing the suitability of SeaClear2.0 system in areas that are not yet foreseen in current tests and demonstrations. This task will take results from WP2 Tasks 2.1 and 2.2 into account. |

<sup>1</sup> R = Document, report, DEM = Demonstrator, OTHER = Software, technical diagram, etc., DMP = Data Management Plan

<sup>2</sup> PU = Public, C-UE/EU-C = EU Confidential under Decision 2015/444, SEN = Sensitive



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## Document history

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## Table of Contents

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>1. Introduction .....</b>   | <b>10</b> |
| 1.1 Overall objective .....  | 10        |
| 1.2 SeaClear2.0 System description and features .....                | 12        |
| 1.3 Scale up potential .....   | 14        |
| <b>2. Open Call Structure .....</b>                                  | <b>16</b> |
| 2.1 Requirements from the SeaClear2.0 consortium .....               | 16        |
| 2.2 Benefits to the Associated Regions.....                          | 16        |
| 2.3 Challenge.....   | 17        |
| <b>3. Open Call Design .....</b>                                     | <b>18</b> |
| 3.1 Proposals ideas .....  | 18        |
| 3.1.1 AI Development .....   | 18        |
| 3.1.2 Microplastics detection and collection .....                   | 18        |
| 3.1.3 Macroplastics detection and collection .....                   | 18        |
| 3.1.4 Marine litter valorization, reuse, and recycling .....         | 19        |
| 3.1.5 Marine litter remediation .....                                | 19        |
| 3.2 Community activation, dissemination, and public engagements..... | 19        |
| 3.2.1 Roadmap .....  | 19        |
| 3.2.2 Beach clean-up.....  | 20        |
| 3.2.3 Participatory event.....                                       | 20        |
| 3.2.4 Establish a Community of Practice (CoP) .....                  | 20        |
| 3.2.5 Endorse the mission charter .....                              | 20        |
| <b>4. Final documents and actions .....</b>                          | <b>22</b> |
| 4.1 Template for application.....                                    | 22        |
| 4.2 Applicant guide .....  | 22        |
| 4.3 FAQs .....   | 23        |
| 4.4 Evaluation and scoring system.....                               | 23        |
| 4.5 Open Call Dissemination .....                                    | 24        |
| <b>5. Summary .....</b>  | <b>24</b> |
| <b>ANNEX 1 - Application Template .....</b>                          | <b>25</b> |
| <b>ANNEX 2 - Applicant Guide .....</b>                               | <b>30</b> |



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|--|--|---------------------|
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## Definitions

- **Beneficiary:** A legal entity that is signatory of the EC Grant Agreement no. 101093822.
- **Consortium:** The SeaClear2.0 Consortium, comprising the list of beneficiaries below.
- **Consortium Agreement:** Agreement concluded amongst the SeaClear2.0 beneficiaries for the implementation of the Grant Agreement.
- **Grant Agreement:** The agreement signed between the beneficiaries and the EC for the undertaking of the SeaClear2.0 project (Grant Agreement no. 101093822).


Beneficiaries of the SeaClear2.0 Consortium are referred to herein according to the following abbreviations:

- **TU Delft:** TECHNISCHE UNIVERSITEIT DELFT
- **DUNEA:** REGIONALNA AGENCIJA DUNEA
- **Fraunhofer:** FRAUNHOFER GESELLSCHAFT ZUR FORDERUNG DER ANGEWANDTEN FORSCHUNG EV
- **HPA:** HAMBURG PORT AUTHORITY
- **ISOTECH:** ISOTECH LTD
- **MDanchor:** M. DANCHOR LTD
- **Subsea Tech:** SUBSEA TECH SAS
- **TECNOSUB:** TÉCNICAS Y OBRAS SUBACUÁTICAS, SLU
- **TUM:** TECHNISCHE UNIVERSITAET MUENCHEN
- **UNIDU:** SVEUCILISTE U DUBROVNIKU
- **UTC:** UNIVERSITATEA TEHNICA CLUJ-NAPOCA
- **VEO:** VEOLIA PROPRETE
- **VLPF:** VENICE LAGOON PLASTIC FREE



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|--|--|---------------------|
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## Abbreviations

- **EC:** European Commission
- **GA:** Grant Agreement
- **WP:** Work Package
- **AR:** Associated Region
- **USV:** Unmanned Surface Vehicle
- **ROV:** Remotely Operated Vehicle
- **NGO:** Non-governmental organization
- **CSO:** Civil Society Organization
- **AI:** Artificial Intelligence
- **HR:** Hrvatska (Croatia)
- **F:** France
- **ES:** Spain
- **IT:** Italy
- **IS:** Israel
- **DE:** Germany
- **SME:** Small and Medium Enterprise
- **FSTP:** Financial Support to Third Parties
- **FAQ:** Frequently Asked Questions


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## Executive Summary


The current deliverable is part of WP7 addressing the scalability and replication of the SeaClear2.0 system. This will be achieved by involving (at least) five Associated Regions to the project offering additional environmental settings in need for solutions to tackle the marine litter challenge in their specific locations. Beside financial support, the SeaClear2.0 project will offer close cooperation and expert know-how for a successful implementation of proposals. This document summarizes the development of the Open Call for tender to attract and award respective proposals from interested Associated Regions wishing to become part of, contribute to, and benefit from the SeaClear2.0 project.

After the introduction to the project, the initial ideas from the SeaClear2.0 proposal on how to bring the Associated Regions into the project will be presented. This is followed by the refinement process during the current project implementation in reflecting on the needs, requirements, and benefits, that our consortium has, seeks, and offers regarding the involvement of the Associated regions. Based on those aspects the expected and suggested areas of potential participation are established. Most of the documents to the Open Call will be part of the Annex for further reference. The general ideas behind them as well as the challenges encountered in the process will be discussed before formally concluding the present report.



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|--|--|---------------------|
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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Overall objective

The SeaClear2.0 project is developing an integrated approach to address the full cycle of marine litter in a way that will help meet the objectives of the EU Ocean Mission. To this end the aim is to prevent and reduce marine litter pollution, particularly plastics and microplastics, in the Mediterranean via

- Community activation, citizen empowerment, and participatory practices for identifying site-specific measures for marine litter prevention and reduction, thus supporting the implementation of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) and EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD);
- Scaling up and demonstrating the SeaClear2.0 system, an innovative solution with teams of autonomous, intelligent robots for effective monitoring and collection of marine seafloor and surface litter;
- Providing solutions for the valorization of the collected marine litter through better sorting and recycling;
- Adding novel dimensions in policy making by providing evidence for new legislation and the implementation of existing regulation to achieve Good Environmental Status; and
- Accelerating the uptake of our solution by demonstrating its scalability and replicability to the Mediterranean basin and beyond.

The solution and activities are showcased in 6 demo and pilot sites in Dubrovnik (HR), Marseille (F), Tarragona (ES), Ashdod (IS), Venice (IT) and Hamburg (DE) and will be further enhanced by sharing the outcomes with and involving (at least) five Associated Regions (AR). To engage with the ARs, an open call for tender is designed to ensure a fair and transparent process of selection, defining expectations, requirements, as well as alignment with the SeaClear2.0 project's objectives. This document summarizes the genesis of the Open Call from initial idea framing to final content and documents, including evaluation scheme and dissemination approach to advertise the open call to suitable candidates.



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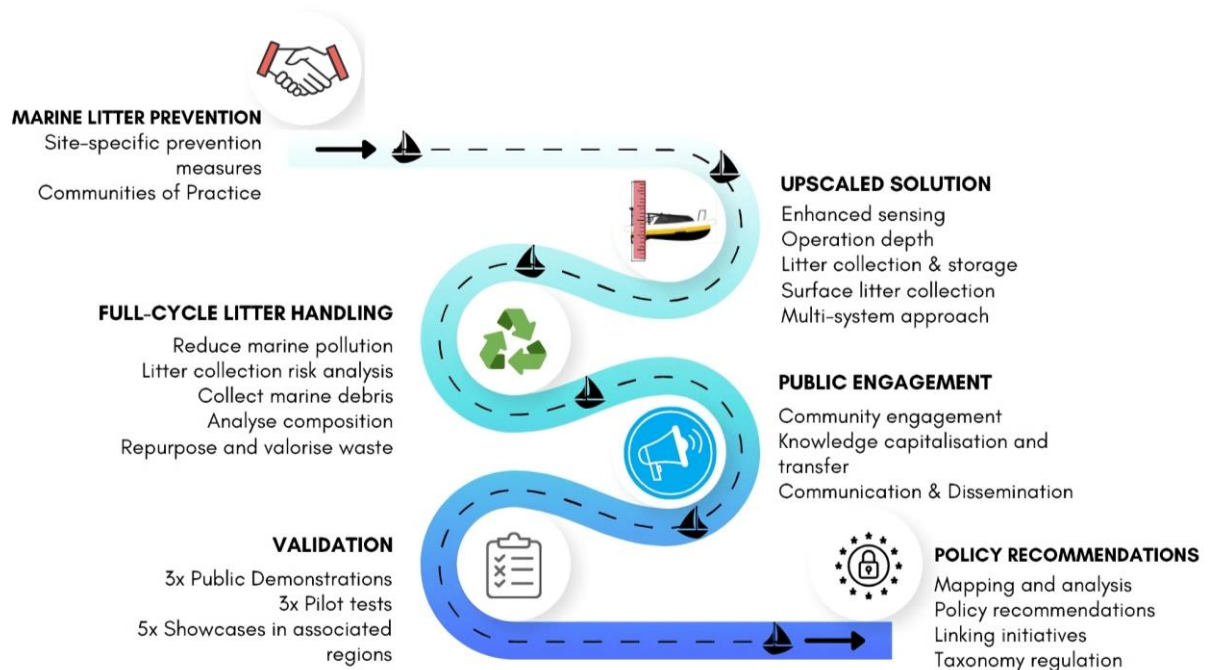



Figure 1: The SeaClear2.0 approach at a glance (read from top-left to bottom-right)



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## 1.2 SeaClear2.0 System description and features

The SeaClear2.0 system consists of a team of collaborative, heterogeneous robots for in-situ mapping, detection, classification, and collection of marine litter from the seafloor and sea surface. It builds on the system that was developed in the EU-funded SeaClear project but strives to develop a more advanced system of autonomous robots. The SeaClear2.0 system will have enhanced sensing with the ability to collect heavier litter items from greater depths, and with greater autonomy and accuracy. This takes challenges and their remediation from the previous system into account.

Table 1: Comparison of the SeaClear2.0 and SeaClear1.0 system properties and features.

| Features                                | SeaClear2.0 system  | SeaClear1.0 system   |
|---|---|--|
| Surface vessel                          | <b>SeaCat USV</b> fueled with <b>hydrogen</b> , supplying <b>power and computation</b> , and serving as docking station to additional vehicles  | <b>SeaCat USV</b> fueled with <b>diesel</b> , performing bathymetry scans, and serving as (transportation) hub to additional vehicles by supplying <b>power and computation</b>              |
| Litter search & Identification in water | <b>Mini-Tortuga – Observation ROV</b> equipped with sonar and video sensors for litter <b>detection and localization</b>  | <b>Mini-Tortuga – Observation ROV</b> equipped with sonar and video sensors for litter <b>detection and localization</b>   |
| Litter search & Identification from air | <b>Aerial drone</b> tethered to the SeaCat to assist with <b>localization of waterborne vehicles</b> as well as <b>identification of litter patches</b> on the ground and water surface                             | <b>Aerial drone</b> tethered to the SeaCat to assist with <b>localization of waterborne vehicles</b> as well as <b>identification of litter patches</b> on the ground and water surface      |
| Collection of seafloor litter           | <b>Smart grapple</b> with own propulsion system, fixed to and lowered from the SeaCat with collection <b>capacity</b> of up to <b>250 kg</b> and items like bikes, scooters, household appliances (washing machine) | <b>Tortuga Collection ROV</b> equipped <b>with gripper</b> – suction device for litter items no larger than 1,5 l bottles, cans, and others, weight limitation at <b>~10 kg</b>              |
| Collection of floating surface litter   | <b>Autonomous surface vehicles</b> with individual propulsion to collect <b>floating litter</b> from the water surface  | Not targeted   |
| Litter disposal                         | <b>Autonomous tender shuttle</b> docking to the SeaCat for litter disposal, transport capacity of up to <b>350 kg</b>   | Marine litter <b>basket tethered</b> and lowered from the SeaCat USV, with funnel application for safe litter disposal from Tortuga-gripper, collection capacity <b>of ~ 1 m<sup>3</sup></b> |
| Operational depth                       | Aimed at operation in up to <b>100m</b> deep waters   | Operated in coastal and shallow waters of up to <b>20m</b>   |



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Table 1 summarizes the major differences in the robotic system components regarding their tasks to search, identify, and collect marine litter.

SeaClear1.0 mainly focused on seafloor litter and items such as beverage holders, food packaging, as well as fractions in the size of e.g., personal items like clothing, shoes, and remains of household debris. But it didn't supply a solution for large and bulky litter like tires, fishing gear and nets, household appliances, scooters, and bikes other than mapping them.

SeaClear2.0 takes on this challenge by introducing a smart grapple and an autonomous tender shuttle able to collect and respectively hold even large debris found in waters as well. Additionally, smaller surface vehicles collect floating litter pieces from the water surface.

Both systems operate an aerial drone to localize waterborne vehicles and identify litter accumulations from above. They also have the Mini-Tortuga ROV in common, which is tethered to the SeaCat USV, scanning the seafloor for litter fractions with the help of an Artificial Intelligence (AI) that facilitates distinguishing of wildlife from litter and classification of the latter.

Figure 2 displays both systems operating next to each other with the SeaClear2.0 on the left comprised of the USV tender, the USV for surface collection and the SeaCat2.0 USV equipped with smart grapple, tethered drone, and mini-Tortuga observation ROV. On the right the SeaClear1.0 robotic system comprising of the SeaCat1.0 USV with all other applications tethered to it, namely the aerial drone, the Tortuga Collection ROV, the mini-Tortuga Observation ROV and the collection basket.

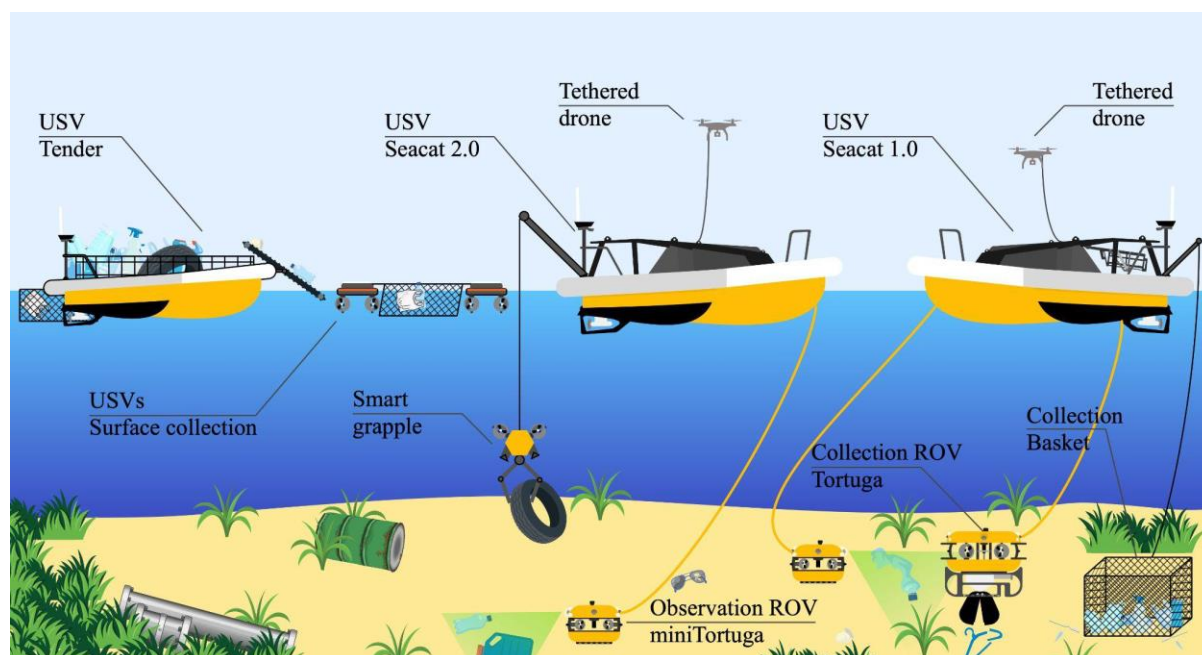



Figure 2: Concept of the SeaClear2.0 robotic system (left + middle) working alongside the SeaClear1.0 system (right)

Beside the hardware developments software enhancements and efficient sensory equipment will enable advanced perception for robot positioning, self-localization, accurate mapping, and litter detection. The robotic control is overhauled in terms of coordinated multi-robot operation, and further developed in terms of tender sensing and smart grapple operations.

|  |  |                     |
|--|--|---------------------|
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### 1.3 Scale up potential

Apart from the technological features, the SeaClear2.0 project follows its full cycle approach by also addressing litter valorization, policy shaping, and, with great emphasis, community activation and awareness raising tactics. Extensive system demonstrations in six locations allow for replication of the SeaClear2.0 system in different natural environments and varying use cases. Except for Hamburg Port, all demos will be hosted in the Mediterranean Sea.

By inviting Associated Regions to the project, we are pursuing the purpose of replicating the SeaClear2.0 approach and seek to encounter further and more particular waste challenges characteristic to those areas. Therefore, an initial outline of potential target domains, desired locations, and use cases to integrate Associated Regions has been established when applying for funding for the SeaClear2.0 project. Table 2 gives an overview on those primary ideas.

*Table 2: Summary of targeted domains, locations, and use cases to get engaged as associated regions.*


| Domain  | Location   | Use case  |
|---|--|---|
| <b>Tourism</b> on coasts and freshwater lakes | <b>Mediterranean Sea</b> , or nearby lakes (e.g., Greece, Turkey, Tunisia, Montenegro) | <b>Marine Litter Removal</b> in protected habitats  |
| <b>Fisheries / Aquaculture</b>                | <b>Scandinavia</b> (e.g., Norway) or the <b>UK</b>                                     | <b>Lost fishing gear</b> and equipment recovery   |
| <b>Nature reserve</b>                         | Portugal- Azores, Scotland Faroe Islands   | <b>Natura 2000</b> environment, deep sea  |
| <b>Port Industry</b>                          | <b>Mediterranean Sea / Northern Africa</b> – Tunisia, Morocco                          | Removal of <b>bulky debris</b> exceeding human lifting capacity   |
| <b>River / Urban Channel</b>                  | <b>Mediterranean Sea / Northern Europe</b>   | <b>Strong exposure</b> to small- and large-scale <b>litter</b> , highly frequented with public and touristic <b>boats</b> |
| Coastline and beaches ( <b>land based</b> )   | Mediterranean Sea or Northern Europe (e.g., <b>Balkan, Baltic Sea</b> )                | Land based <b>litter conveyed by rivers</b> and <b>beach litter</b>   |

Starting from the demo and pilot site partnering in the SeaClear2.0 project we clustered the main characteristics of the marine environment into so-called domains, acknowledging that in most cases



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more domains apply to one location (e.g., Croatia, where the coast serves a touristic use but is labeled nature reserve at the same time).

In the next step we roughly matched locations with presumably similar features within the Mediterranean Sea basin and beyond. This included the countries at Atlantic Coast, North and Baltic Sea. Lastly, the identified use cases for the SeaClear2.0 system were listed covering a broad range of challenges in terms of the debris characteristic and its location in water and on land, the natural and operational environment as well as regulations specific to sites. Here as well, some of the conditions are characteristic to the SeaClear2.0 demo locations and/ or put the technology to an extra test due to the difficulties coming along with it. This refers to large, abandoned fishing nets or litter in protected areas that require extra careful handling during collection.


In particular, the aim was to identify commonalities between the SeaClear2.0 demo sites and Associated Regions, but also find out about clear enhancements in the current set up of the SeaClear2.0 technology and approach to be compensated by the AR participation.



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| <br><b>101093822</b> | <b>D7.2: Call for tender design for associated regions</b>           |                     |
|  | <b>WP7: Integration, scaling, replication via associated regions</b> | <b>Version: 1.1</b> |
|  | <b>Author(s): C. Hertel-ten Eikelder</b>                             | <b>Level: PU</b>    |

## 2. Open Call Structure

The SeaClear2.0 project and its full cycle approach offer multiple aspects to get engaged in as AR. When designing the Open Call, we took the strategic fit to the setup of the SeaClear2.0 objectives and our initial considerations toward the scale up potential with the AR into account. Primarily, it became evident, that the importance of community activation and citizen empowerment needed to be an integral part, but technology as key feature of the SeaClear2.0 project should be reflected to a similar extend in desired proposals. Secondly, with took this Open Call as opportunity to strive for cooperations that build on equal rights and obligations with outputs benefitting both parties involved correspondingly.

### 2.1 Requirements from the SeaClear2.0 consortium

In the concept development of the Open Call, two main topics were agreed upon within the SeaClear2.0 consortium to be completed by involved ARs: (1) proposing a practical (technical) solution or methodology contributing to solving the local marine litter challenge and (2) activating the community in the AR to act towards litter collection and prevention. In team effort relevant requirements were outlined.

Since marine litter is such a pressing and worldwide issue, any technical solution to generally support the collection of all kinds of marine litter through technology implementation is of obvious value. This includes items ranging from microplastic to macro litter recovered from the water surface, seafloor, water column, or shorelines of coastal areas or riverbanks. A second aspect falling in the practical (technical) approach is litter detection. Within the SeaClear2.0 project, AI will be developed to facilitate and enable litter recognition from sonar and video images. In order to properly train the AI data sets containing different litter, items are need from changing environmental conditions to develop a robust neural network applicable in varying underwater settings. Therefore, a contribution to establish training data sets is considered a possible task to be completed in the ARs. Making sure, that the full cycle approach of the SeaClear2.0 project is also stimulated in the possible AR involvement, valorization and litter reuse possibilities are added to the list of potential contributions.

Apart from the previously mentioned technical aspects to proposals, strategies, and events to involve the local community to help educate, monitor, prevent and clean up existing pollution in the ARs are required. With that, multiple stakeholders need to be addressed composing of the public, society, residents, NGOs, CSOs, and tourists but also industry like seafood and shellfish production, fishermen, food processors, packaging industry alongside administrative, governmental bodies and scientific institutions. The aim is to raise awareness, educate on impact, develop joint approaches to remediate, reduce and prevent marine litter, exchange knowledge and best practices. To achieve this formally, the organization of workshops, participatory events like beach clean ups, social media communication, art events, contests and the like are measures to include in proposals.

### 2.2 Benefits to the Associated Regions


The open call is directed toward organizations in the EU member states and associated countries to the EU, that are facing an environmental challenge involving marine litter. The SeaClear2.0 project seeks to involve (at least) five selected regions to solve this challenge through financial support, know



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| <br><b>101093822</b> | <b>D7.2: Call for tender design for associated regions</b>           |                     |
|  | <b>WP7: Integration, scaling, replication via associated regions</b> | <b>Version: 1.1</b> |
|  | <b>Author(s): C. Hertel-ten Eikelder</b>                             | <b>Level: PU</b>    |

how transfer and dissemination approaches to help the AR develop solutions, implement technology, and reach out to local stakeholders.

With a total budget of € 500.000 (at least) five selected ARs will be equipped with up to € 100.000 each to finance the proposed ideas and apply the approaches outlined with the appropriate staff and tools. By supplying the funding, we hope to offer the opportunity to implement first steps or further actions to address local challenges, that marine litter poses.

ARs will be guided by the experts from the SeaClear2.0 consortium in technical and organizational aspects to maximise their involvement and to achieve a long-term impact in the local environment and community.

In order to disseminate the work done in the ARs with the proposed activities as well as the SeaClear2.0 project, we encourage vice versa communication via established channels and formats to reach a wide spread of the efforts made towards the mission ocean and the marine litter topic. We offer to include notifications, news, and updates from the AR on our social media (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, X, YouTube), website and newsletter and will help to do so on the AR channels respectively. This may also include jointly prepared articles and press releases.

## 2.3 Challenge


As large parts of the systems technology will only be developed throughout the project duration, an exposure to the AR environments in form of a system demonstration is not feasible, neither as full system nor limited to components. Only very few applications are available to a demo approach like the litter app or the mini-Tortuga, which is already manufactured and in operation. But the design and assembly of equipment like e.g., the tender shuttle, the grapple or the surface collection drones have only been started at the beginning of the SeaClear2.0 project and aren't scheduled to be ready for external use by the time the AR involvement is foreseen. Iterative testing and validation are on a tight schedule. Additionally, the planned demonstration activities and connected logistics in the projects six demo locations take up a lot of the time and budget. The same basically applies for valorization aspects, that are meant to be developed in the project only without explicitly claiming to be ready for application in the ARs. Scaling and replication offer broad opportunities evolving around litter detection, collection, valorization, and prevention.

Therefore, contributions made by the AR ideally enhance and complement the work conducted in Seaclear2.0 but also giving the consortium access to alternative ways to tackle marine litter and reaching more European citizens. Keeping the balance between raising the desired scale up potential for the SeaClear2.0 project and making sure that the ARs reach their full potential by participating and implementing their proposed solutions is of utmost importance. With the design and nature of the Open Call, the SeaClear2.0 project is seeking for proposals that align with the overall project goals and [EC Mission Ocean](#). Providing the needed guidance and support to the AR to help them fulfill requirements and receive the benefits is key.



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| <br><b>101093822</b> | <b>D7.2: Call for tender design for associated regions</b>           |                     |
|  | <b>WP7: Integration, scaling, replication via associated regions</b> | <b>Version: 1.1</b> |
|  | <b>Author(s): C. Hertel-ten Eikelder</b>                             | <b>Level: PU</b>    |

### 3. Open Call Design

The engagement of the Associated Regions follows a two-way approach to encourage a technical / practical solution and foster community activation to create a large impact. The implementation will be guided by the SeaClear2.0 consortium, especially the call administrators, namely TUD and HPA, with support by ISOTECH, and applicable specialists from the consortium matching the suggested proposal ideas. This is achieved through mentorship, expert knowledge provision, supplied guidelines and templates to follow.

#### 3.1 Proposals ideas

The SeaClear2.0 project is developing an integrated approach to address the full cycle of marine litter. Proposal ideas shall be reflecting on the areas which have been outlined in section 2.1, targeting litter detection, collection, and valorization. A direct contribution to the project's objectives, its scalability, and enhancement is expected. Enlarging the overall impact toward the mission ocean is the goal. Therefore, we are aiming to engage ARs complying to the SeaClear2.0 idea by choosing activities that contribute to the project and help to cope with a prevalent local challenge.

##### 3.1.1 AI Development

Within the SeaClear2.0 project, AI will be developed to enable and facilitate litter detection and classification. A distinction will be made between living organisms and waste fractions. (The latter will be further differentiated by materials.) In order to develop and train the neural network data from the six demo sites in the SeaClear2.0 project will be used composing of databases of video and sonar images, to be able to operate in clear and turbid water.

Previous experiences in AI development and operation especially in real time environments have shown, that a robust AI requires extensive training to operate properly in changing environmental conditions and locations. To help create such an efficient AI, lots of data is needed.

Consequently, one of the topics to propose in revolves around the data base creation of either video and/or sonar images of underwater litter of various categories, shapes, sizes etc. in the AR.

##### 3.1.2 Microplastics detection and collection

SeaClear2.0 aims to recover litter from the seafloor, water column and surface focusing especially large, medium, and small sized litter. Ideally it is recovered before it further decomposes into smaller fractions or even worse microplastics. However, microplastic particles are verifiable in worldwide waters and suitable measures need to be taken to cope with this challenge.

The second topic to take on as AR to the SeaClear2.0 project covers microplastics handling. Suggested proposals may include detection and collection strategies and methodological approaches to remediate microplastics impact. The development and implementation of technical solutions to recover such particles from the water column is equally appreciated.


##### 3.1.3 Macroplastics detection and collection

SeaClear2.0 is an autonomous robotic solutions complementing the work of human divers but capable of operating in deeper waters at overall longer working hours. As the system is currently being developed, and due to the ever-increasing amount of marine litter more and different approaches to identify and salvage the items from the environment are needed.



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| <br><b>101093822</b> | <b>D7.2: Call for tender design for associated regions</b>           |                     |
|  | <b>WP7: Integration, scaling, replication via associated regions</b> | <b>Version: 1.1</b> |
|  | <b>Author(s): C. Hertel-ten Eikelder</b>                             | <b>Level: PU</b>    |

Integrating alternative solutions to fight marine litter in the ARs can involve respective measures targeting the collection of medium sized litter like machine parts, scooters and the like as well as fishing gear and (ghost) nets. Installing and implementing marine litter collection systems from the seafloor, water column and surface are actions to suggest in the proposals. At last, especially technology based or automated beach clean-up solutions are suitable enhancements to the SeaClear2.0 system.

### 3.1.4 Marine litter valorization, reuse, and recycling

Contributing towards a circular economy, SeaClear2.0 seeks for valorization potential in litter, that is recovered from the marine environment. The recycling potential is as diverse as the litter itself. Therefore, alternative ways to treat, reuse and valorize litter in general or specific to the ARs can be proposed. This can start from return-to-shore strategies for fishing gear and nets, upcycling, and recycling of these as well other litter fractions, but also involve art projects to raise awareness to the overall challenge.

### 3.1.5 Marine litter remediation

Lastly, the SeaClear2.0 project presents a technology approach to identify and recover marine litter from the environment. With that, only the symptoms are taken on, but a solution to the cause still needs to be identified. One way to find out more about litter origin are feasibility studies and suitable mitigation plans that can be derived. Other approaches may include the strategy development and installation of tools and technologies to catch marine litter at the source to prevent floating towards open water. Finally, innovative educational campaigns and citizen involvement activities to bring the marine litter challenge to people's attention could be proposed.

All the above suggestions are just examples on how to practically connect and create a benefit to the SeaClear2.0 efforts in the ARs while contributing to the overall Mission Ocean. As far as the proposals align with and targeted restoring of the health of oceans and waters alternative ideas are welcome.

## 3.2 Community activation, dissemination, and public engagements

Apart from the previously described practical and technology-based solutions, community activation marks the second part of commitments expected from ARs, that help to disseminate the efforts towards ocean and waters conservancy, but also enable community activation and participating. Four mandatory actions have been identified to create the most impact possible. All those specific actions will be guided and supported by the SeaClear2.0 team through the supply of templates and manuals.

### 3.2.1 Roadmap

It is expected that the local challenges in regard to marine litter differ widely in the ARs due to specific natural conditions, like currents carrying lots of litter and releasing them in bays and coastal landmarks. Besides, urban centers, freshwater lakes, aquacultural sites, rivers and open water will likely expose litter (fractions) of varying size and type ranging from fishing gear and nets, medium sized litter from e.g., food containers, plastic items, and cloth or household machines, bikes, scooters.


Also, local standards to deploy and operate autonomous vehicles in those areas may fall under specific regulatory requirements.

To minimize the impacts marine litter imposes on the ARs marine environments, ARs are requested to supply a roadmap on how to operate the full SeaClear2.0 system or components in those changing



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| <br><b>101093822</b> | <b>D7.2: Call for tender design for associated regions</b>           |                     |
|  | <b>WP7: Integration, scaling, replication via associated regions</b> | <b>Version: 1.1</b> |
|  | <b>Author(s): C. Hertel-ten Eikelder</b>                             | <b>Level: PU</b>    |

environments. The roadmap shall help to identify the opportunities and limits to integrate the (full or partial) SeaClear2.0 technological solution into current or future operations addressing feasibility and possible barriers arising from environmental, and regulatory restrictions.

The SeaClear2.0 mentors will share their knowledge on the SeaClear2.0 technology and the experience with legal and regulatory requirements that exist in the projects demo and pilot sites. A template with guiding questions will be supplied to help assess requirements and limits and develop the roadmap.

### 3.2.2 Beach clean-up

Beaches may be the source but are more often affected by marine litter that is washed ashore. Gathering volunteers for the specific occasion of a joint beach clean-up will not only help to raise awareness but also remind every person about the difference they can make and embrace the power of a strong community taking care of the beaches and the environment in general. A guide on how to create and implement a beach clean-up, mobilize volunteers, and choose the right timing will be available to the AR applicants. A first round of beach clean-ups has been implemented in the six SeaClear2.0 demo and pilot sites and the experience and outcome will be shared with the AR for preparation.

### 3.2.3 Participatory event

No matter the nature of proposals and solutions presented, we encourage the ARs to communicate and publish their efforts broadly by organizing a participatory side event. This event is specifically linked to the suggested solutions introduced under 3.1. We expect the AR to disseminate their contribution to the SeaClear2.0 project and the Mission Ocean by organizing an event to involve and activate the local community. The aim is to do good and speak about it, by actively reaching out, and spreading the idea of ocean health and conservancy, the work conducted, and the results achieved.

### 3.2.4 Establish a Community of Practice (CoP)

A CoP represents a group of citizens from various sectors, connected by the same goal. CoPs bring together a diverse group of people (e.g., public, or private bodies, Small and Medium Enterprises (SME), researchers, academics, experts, NGOs, tourism industry, (shell-)fishers, divers, scientists, activists, artists, etc.) with a common interest in marine litter prevention, reduction, and remediation, to collaborate, discuss and share ideas on how to address the marine litter issue in their localities. We encourage the establishing of a local CoP to connect, exchange and join forces towards a common goal. Communicate and disseminate the project results on the ARs communication channels and social media accounts and if applicable integrate relevant findings in academic papers and policy whitepapers.


### 3.2.5 Endorse the mission charter

The Mission “Restore our Ocean and Waters” charter is about the protection and restoration of the health of our marine and freshwater ecosystems by 2030. The Mission Charter’s purpose is to rally all stakeholders, fostering cooperation, aligning efforts, and amassing the necessary momentum for the transformative change needed to restore our oceans and waters. The European Commission is calling on a wide range of stakeholders, including public or private organizations, national/regional/local authorities (including cities and ports), philanthropists and investors, enterprises and businesses, civil society, research, and academia to adhere to the Mission Charter by submitting actions for achieving the Mission objectives. Any actions at European, transnational, national, regional/local level,



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| <br><b>101093822</b> | <b>D7.2: Call for tender design for associated regions</b>           |                     |
|  | <b>WP7: Integration, scaling, replication via associated regions</b> | <b>Version: 1.1</b> |
|  | <b>Author(s): C. Hertel-ten Eikelder</b>                             | <b>Level: PU</b>    |

promoted by public or private funds (including crowd funding), contributing to the Mission objectives are welcome. AR applications and solutions will add to the Mission as well.



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| <br><b>101093822</b> | <b>D7.2: Call for tender design for associated regions</b>           |                     |
|  | <b>WP7: Integration, scaling, replication via associated regions</b> | <b>Version: 1.1</b> |
|  | <b>Author(s): C. Hertel-ten Eikelder</b>                             | <b>Level: PU</b>    |

## 4. Final documents and actions

To structure and facilitate the application process a set of directing documents has been prepared covering all initial thoughts on proposal ideas and requirements to be fulfilled by the applicants. This shall not only serve the candidates, but also the evaluators rating the submitted proposals for final selection. A short introduction to each of the documents will follow in this chapter. The documents themselves (Template for application and Applicant Guide) are found in full length in the Annex.

### 4.1 Template for application

The template for application contains general instructions on how to submit the application itself and the kind of information to be supplied for a complete proposal. It was designed to ensure that all important aspects of planned work by the AR are described to receive comparable proposals with respect to the evaluation criteria. The applications shall be elaborated on (1) Concept and Innovation, (2) Expertise and Excellence of the proposed team, (3) Alignment and project planning, (4) Impact and sustainability. Apart from the overall introduction of the proposal idea, this incorporates e.g., time and budget planning, introduction of the project team and experience, suitability to SeaClear2.0 objectives and the implementation process. Further explanations to the Open Call and the expected outcome are gathered in an Applicant Guide.

### 4.2 Applicant guide

The applicant guide is an extensive document supplying all relevant information in regard to the Open Call, its implementation and procedures. It is composed as quick guide to answer immediate questions that may arise from applicants. Even though the SeaClear2.0 website covers overall project information such as the project aim, the team involved, and the results achieved, a short introduction summarizing these same also opens the guide.

A chapter on the open call highlights timelines, eligibility criteria, objectives, and activities to be funded. It also sums up and further explains the requirements and mandatory activities elaborated in section 3.1. and 3.2 to be completed by successful applicants.

Submission and evaluation are a standalone chapter within the guide introducing the submission procedure and the Financial Support to Third Parties (FSTP) Board, who oversees evaluating the proposals as well as its composition. The evaluation criteria are explained, just as the scoring scheme to conduct the rating. The method for the final selection process and appeal procedures completes this chapter.

As reasonable next step the project implementation is addressed. The concept of mentors to the selected ARs and their support during the proposal implementation marks one aspect, to clarify the support to be expected by the SeaClear2.0 consortium. Administrative details like meetings and reporting for the project duration are outlined but will be established indefinitely during the contracting and in dependence on the project nature. Dissemination of projects activities and results is an integral part of the Open Call coming along with a mandatory display of EU funding.

The procedures regarding the financial support and payment modalities are a standalone chapter, just as data protection measures.


The checklist for applicants concludes the applicant guide summarizing the main aspects to fulfill to ensure the submitting of complete and eligible applications, which are to be included in the evaluation process.



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|  |  |                     |
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| <br><b>101093822</b> | <b>D7.2: Call for tender design for associated regions</b>           |                     |
|  | <b>WP7: Integration, scaling, replication via associated regions</b> | <b>Version: 1.1</b> |
|  | <b>Author(s): C. Hertel-ten Eikelder</b>                             | <b>Level: PU</b>    |

### 4.3 FAQs

The Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) are gathered in a living and growing file published on the SeaClear2.0 website<sup>3</sup>. The most important questions, that were anticipated before opening the call made a start and have been constantly extended. This applies especially to questions, that are of common interest to all potential applicants. Most of them up to date revolve around eligibility criteria of the organizations applying and the country of origin as well as the subcontracting possibilities, technology applications to become part of proposals.

### 4.4 Evaluation and scoring system

A Financial Support for Third Parties (FSTP) Board will carry out the evaluation process. It is composed of members of the SeaClear2.0 consortium, an invited expert from our sister project in the Mediterranean Sea, 'REMEDIES', and several members of the SeaClear2.0 Advisory Board. In case the content of the submitted proposal is not completely covered by the expertise of the FSTP board, an independent expert will be invited for evaluation of the proposals.

Only complete applications submitted from 1<sup>st</sup> March 2024 to 31<sup>st</sup> May 2024, 12:00 (CET) will be considered and assessed by the FSTP board. Applications will be sorted and selected following four steps.

In the first stage, the applications will be assessed on eligibility. All applications will be checked on compliance with the minimum defined criteria to follow through to the SeaClear2.0 evaluation process. After this stage, four evaluators from the FSTP board will be appointed suited to the proposal topic to conduct an evaluation based on a scoring scheme in four main criteria each weighed 25%:

- Concept and Innovation
- Expertise and Excellence
- Alignment and Innovation
- Impact and Sustainability

Based on the scores, the proposals receive from the evaluators, a ranked list will be prepared and discussed during a meeting with all evaluators involved in the process. A recommendation on proposals to be funded will be prepared and presented to the SeaClear2.0 Steering Committee, that will make the final decision on selected applications.

At all times, the Open Call is aligned with the same basic principles, which govern the European Commission calls:


**Excellence:** The proposal(s) selected for funding must demonstrate a high quality in the context of the topics and criteria set out in the call. The SeaClear2.0 project has a clear European dimension as will the Open Call.

**Transparency:** Funding decisions are based on clearly described rules and procedures, and all applicants will receive adequate feedback on the outcome of the evaluation of their proposals. The SeaClear2.0 project will publish the outcome of the call without delay, including a description of the projects, the date of the award, the duration and the legal name and the country.

<sup>3</sup> FAQ Document in the SeaClear2.0 Website:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/112CUATgox8BeAC3I9mI22NPWTH0To2ls/view?usp=sharing>



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| <br><b>101093822</b> | <b>D7.2: Call for tender design for associated regions</b>           |                     |
|  | <b>WP7: Integration, scaling, replication via associated regions</b> | <b>Version: 1.1</b> |
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**Fairness and impartiality:** All proposals submitted to a call are treated equally. They are evaluated impartially on their merits, irrespective of their origin or the identity of the applicants.

**Confidentiality:** All proposals and related data, knowledge and documents are treated in confidentiality.

#### 4.5 Open Call Dissemination

The Call opened on March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024. It was published on the EU Funding and Tenders Portal and on a dedicated subpage to the SeaClear2.0 website. Further information and the invitation for participation was advertised via the SeaClear2.0 social media profiles on LinkedIn, X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, and Instagram. We also made use of our projects partner networks, who distributed the information to their contacts via social media as well.

Research conducted prior to opening the call gathered contact details from suitable ministries dealing with the topic of marine litter, marine environment protection and the like in all those EU member states and Associated Countries eligible to take part. Roughly 70 suitable institutions have been identified and approached via targeted email campaign, encouraging them to either submit ideas, or inform appropriate entities in their region.

Through hosting a 1,5-hour webinar on 11<sup>th</sup> April 2024, the call opportunities and requirements were formally introduced by the responsible team members from TUD, ISO and HPA to interested applicants. The latter additionally had the chance to pose questions during the meeting on certain aspects of the open call. Roughly 80 people signed up for the webinar and about 40 stakeholders joined the online meeting. The session was recorded and sent to all registered stakeholders, participants and further made available on our website and via YouTube.

### 5. Summary


Thorough planning and development effort has been put into the design of the Open Call. Ideas on how to involve additional partners from AR to the project most beneficially have been presented to and discussed with the full SeaClear2.0 consortium up to the final version. As a result, a demanding call for tender has been set up with a clear set of requirements and mandatory activities to fulfill in the hope, that the output from the ARs involvement serves the overall project aim and Mission Ocean purpose.



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| <br><b>101093822</b> | <b>D7.2: Call for tender design for associated regions</b>           |                     |
|  | <b>WP7: Integration, scaling, replication via associated regions</b> | <b>Version: 1.1</b> |
|  | <b>Author(s): C. Hertel-ten Eikelder</b>                             | <b>Level: PU</b>    |

## ANNEX 1 - Application Template

### INSTRUCTIONS

*Please read carefully before submitting your proposal.*

Please use this application form to submit your proposal. Only proposals submitted through the EU Survey platform will be accepted. Proposals submitted through any other platform are ineligible and will not be evaluated.

While preparing your proposal you can save it as a draft and come back to it at any time, given that the call for applications is still open.

Please submit your proposal only once it has been finalised. Once your application has been submitted, you will not be able to edit or withdraw your submission.

**Please delete this page and the guidance/ information text in BLUE in each section before submitting the proposal.**

This application form has been developed to ensure that all important aspects of your planned work are measurable with respect to the evaluation criteria. Sections 2 to 5 in the application, each correspond to an evaluation criterion (see Guide for Applicants for details). All criteria carry the same weighting in the evaluation process (25%), with each contributing towards a total score of 100%.

All sections are mandatory. Submissions with missing information will be considered incomplete and will be deemed ineligible for evaluation.

Proposals must be submitted by 31<sup>st</sup> May 2024 at 12:00 CET.

For further information please refer to the Call for Applications or the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) on the SeaClear2.0 website.



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101093822

**D7.2: Call for tender design for associated regions**

**WP7: Integration, scaling, replication via associated regions**

**Version: 1.1**

**Author(s): C. Hertel-ten Eikelder**

**Level: PU**

## COVER PAGE


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| Proposal Information |  |
| Acronym              |  |
| Title                |  |

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| Applicant name (Full legal name) | Country |
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|--|--|---------------------|
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|  | <b>WP7: Integration, scaling, replication via associated regions</b> | <b>Version: 1.1</b> |
|  | <b>Author(s): C. Hertel-ten Eikelder</b>                             | <b>Level: PU</b>    |

## 1. SUMMARY OF THE PROJECT PROPOSAL

*Maximum 0.5 page*

*Please provide a full public (understandable for the public) summary of the project that can be published if the project is funded.*

## 2. CONCEPT AND INNOVATION

*Maximum 1.5 pages*

*The application should briefly introduce the challenge and demonstrate a clear set of objectives aligned with the definition of the goals of the project. Appropriateness of the project scope addressing one of the open call goals as well as the overall SeaClear2.0 project vision. The interoperability level of the proposed solution should be clarified. The innovation level should be described, in a technical (if applicable), strategic and implementation perspective, as well as practices.*

## 3. EXPERTISE AND EXCELLENCE OF THE PROPOSED TEAM

*Maximum 1.5 pages*

*Expertise*

*Please provide credible evidence that the applicants organisation and the project team are committed and have the necessary skills, competence, and expertise to deliver the project. Prepare a short introduction paragraph on the people to be involved in the project. Indicate experience on organisation level in earlier e.g., EU projects and list other relevant projects and current activities connected to the topic of this Open Call.*

*Project team*

*Please indicate the number of person-months (full-time equivalent) of the people involved in the project in the table below for the duration of the project.*

*Person-months allocated to the project*

| Name of person | Person months (PMs) |
|----------------|---------------------|
| Person 1       |                     |
| Person 2       |                     |
| Person 3       |                     |
| TOTAL          |                     |

*Add/delete lines when required.*

*Estimated cost of the project proposal*

*Provide a description and justification of the expected costs and the requested total contribution using the table below. All costs should be calculated according to the EC Horizon Europe rules and in accordance with the SeaClear2.0 FSTP conditions: exclusively person hours from persons working directly on the project are considered eligible costs; project management, financial and legal administration are not considered eligible activities. Furthermore, purchase of equipment, consumables, travel and subsistence costs are considered eligible costs.*



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| Cost category          | Budget | Description and justification |
|------------------------|--------|-------------------------------|
| Direct Personnel costs | €      |                               |
| Travel costs           | €      |                               |
| Equipment costs        | €      |                               |
| Other Direct costs     | €      |                               |
| TOTAL                  | €      |                               |

**4. ALIGNMENT AND PROJECT PLANNING**

*Note: Maximum 2 pages*

*This section should describe the quality, effectiveness and clarity of project activities, structure, and timing. Alignment of the activities with the open call goals and the project vision. Appropriateness of deliverables, milestones and means of verification. Appropriateness of expected costs and resources assigned to the project.*

Work Plan

*Please define the proposed work plan to be implemented towards the achievement of the objectives/ results. Include also:*

- The specific activities that will be implemented, the time required, and the expected outputs.*
- Relevant milestones and KPIs to measure achievement of results.*
- External barriers/risks that may affect the work plan and compromise the project.*

Suggested Table for description of activities

| Activity name | Description | Planned duration | Expected output |
|---------------|-------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Activity 1    |             |                  |                 |
| Activity 2    |             |                  |                 |
| Activity 3    |             |                  |                 |

*Add/delete lines (for activities) if required.*

Suggested table for description of milestones and KPIs


| Activity name | Milestone and KPI description | Delivery month |
|---------------|-------------------------------|----------------|
| Activity 1    |                               |                |
| Activity 2    |                               |                |
| Activity 3    |                               |                |

*Add lines if required.*



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| <br><b>101093822</b> | <b>D7.2: Call for tender design for associated regions</b>           |                     |
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## 5. IMPACT AND SUSTAINABILITY

*Maximum 2 pages*

*Please provide the ambition and a clear set of expectations aligned with the objectives of the call. Proposals must demonstrate the overall impact of the project and its contribution. The ambition underlines the potential extend and overall impact and replicability of the project actions. Among others, focus on:*

- Contribution of the proposal to the SeaClear2.0 overall objectives.*
- Contribution of the project to providing concrete solutions for plastic litter decreases.*
- Planned activities / measures to promote the project, and to exploit and disseminate the project results.*

### Strong points


*Name 3 characteristics that define the strong points of your project and one line justification per each.*

*For example: Impactful: as it foresees to change the connection between services and have a more effective implementation of litter detection.*



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## ANNEX 2 - Applicant Guide

# Applicant Guide


## SeaClear2.0 Open Call

Closing Date for Proposals: 31<sup>st</sup> May 2024



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The SeaClear2.0 consortium consists of the following partners:

| No. | Beneficiary   | Short name  | Country     |
|-----|---|-------------|-------------|
| 1   | TECHNISCHE UNIVERSITEIT DELFT   | TU Delft    | Netherlands |
| 2   | REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY DUBROVNIK                                 | DUNEA       | Croatia     |
| 3   | FRAUNHOFER GESELLSCHAFT ZUR FOERDERUNG DER ANGEWANDTEN FORSCHUNG E.V. | Fraunhofer  | Germany     |
| 4   | HAMBURG PORT AUTHORITY  | HPA         | Germany     |
| 5   | ISOTECH LTD   | ISOTECH     | Cyprus      |
| 6   | M. DANANCHOR LTD  | MDAnchor    | Israel      |
| 7   | SUBSEA TECH SAS   | Subsea Tech | France      |
| 8   | TECNICAS Y OBRAS SUBACIATOCAS, SLU                                    | TECNOSUB    | Spain       |
| 9   | TECHNISCHE UNIVERSITAET MUENCHEN                                      | TUM         | Germany     |
| 10  | SVEUCILISTE U DUBROVNIKA  | UNIDU       | Croatia     |
| 11  | UNIVERSITATEA TEHNICA CLUJ-NAPOCA                                     | UTC         | Romania     |
| 12  | VEOLIA PROPRETE   | VEO         | France      |
| 13  | VENICE LAGOON PLASTIC FREE  | VLPF        | Italy       |

#### DISCLAIMER


The SeaClear2.0 consortium reserves the right to update, amend or modify any part, section or detail of the document at any point in time without prior information. Updates will be widely communicated using all project communication channels. Additionally, should an update and/or any change in the submission deadline be required during the open call application period, pending and completed applications will be notified of the change so that they can act if required. Updates will not be detrimental to anterior decisions that were made in line with previous versions of the documents.

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## Table of Contents

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>1. Introduction.....</b>                                       | <b>35</b> |
| 1.1 About the SeaClear2.0 Project.....                            | 35        |
| <b>2. Open call overall information.....</b>                      | <b>37</b> |
| 2.1 Timeline.....   | 37        |
| 2.2 Eligibly criteria.....  | 37        |
| 2.3 Objectives.....   | 37        |
| 2.4 Activities funded .....                                       | 38        |
| 2.5 Requirements and mandatory activities.....                    | 39        |
| <b>3. Submission and Evaluation.....</b>                          | <b>41</b> |
| 3.1 Timeline.....   | 41        |
| 3.2 Submission procedure .....                                    | 41        |
| 3.3 FSTP Board .....  | 41        |
| 3.4 Evaluation .....  | 41        |
| 3.5 Scoring scheme .....  | 42        |
| 3.6 Final selection .....   | 43        |
| 3.7 Appeal procedure .....  | 43        |
| <b>4. Project implementation .....</b>                            | <b>44</b> |
| 4.1 Mentors & support by SC2.0 project partners / consortium..... | 44        |
| 4.2 Meetings and Reporting .....                                  | 44        |
| 4.3 Dissemination .....   | 44        |
| 4.4 Funding visibility .....                                      | 44        |
| <b>5. Financial support &amp; payment .....</b>                   | <b>44</b> |
| <b>6. Data protection.....</b>                                    | <b>45</b> |
| <b>7. Checklist for Applicants.....</b>                           | <b>46</b> |
| <b>Annex 1 .....</b>  | <b>47</b> |



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**D7.2: Call for tender design for associated regions**

**WP7: Integration, scaling, replication via associated regions**

**Version: 1.1**


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**Level: PU**



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|  |  |                     |
|--|--|---------------------|
| <br><b>101093822</b> | <b>D7.2: Call for tender design for associated regions</b>           |                     |
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## Abbreviations

- **EC:** European Commission
- **CET:** Central European Time
- **GA:** Grant Agreement
- **OC:** Open Call
- **AR:** Associated Regions
- **CoP:** Community of Practice
- **FSTP:** Financial Support to Third Parties
- **GDPR:** General Data Protection Regulation



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|  |  |                     |
|--|--|---------------------|
| <br><b>101093822</b> | <b>D7.2: Call for tender design for associated regions</b>           |                     |
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## 1. Introduction

The Horizon Europe project SeaClear2.0 ‘Robotic and participatory solutions for marine litter prevention and remediation’ (GA no. 101093822) was launched on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2023 and has a duration of 48 months. As part of the project an Open Call (OC) to engage five Associated Regions (AR) is launched offering financial support to stakeholders potentially taking action towards plastic remediation and protection of the marine environment. This is done through developing and implementing roadmaps, innovative solutions, and awareness campaigns contributing to the overall SeaClear2.0 project approach.

This open call guide is designed for applicants to inform and further elaborate on the open call topic, the requirements, the application and awarding process, the implementation procedures as well as the financial support principles.

### 1.1 About the SeaClear2.0 Project

SeaClear2.0 supports the achievements of the EU Mission ‘Restore our Ocean and Waters’ by preventing and eliminating seafloor and floating marine pollution. This is achieved through a combination of technological innovation, stakeholder engagement, citizen activation, and contribution to policymaking.

Every year, up to 600,000 tons of macroplastics and microplastics enter European seas. While plastic pollution affects all seas across Europe, the Mediterranean is the most affected sea, due to its semi-enclosed basin and the intense human activities taking place on the surrounding coastal areas. SeaClear2.0 is developing an integrated approach to address the full cycle of marine litter in a way that will help meet the objectives of the Mission to restore, protect and preserve the health of our oceans, seas and waters by 2030, in the framework of the Mediterranean Sea basin lighthouse of the European Commission<sup>4</sup>.


To this end, the SeaClear2.0 consortium aims to prevent and reduce marine litter pollution, particularly plastics and microplastics, in the Mediterranean via

- I. **Community activation, citizen empowerment**, and participatory practices for identifying site-specific measures for marine litter prevention and reduction, thus supporting the implementation of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) and EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD);
- II. Scaling up and demonstrating the SeaClear2.0 system, an innovative solution with teams of **autonomous, intelligent robots** for effective **monitoring and collection of marine seafloor and surface litter**;
- III. Providing **solutions for the valorization** of the collected marine litter through better sorting and recycling;
- IV. Adding novel dimensions in **policy making** by providing evidence for new legislation and the implementation of existing regulation to achieve Good Environmental Status and
- V. Accelerating the uptake of our solution by **demonstrating its scalability and replicability** to the Mediterranean basin and beyond.

The SeaClear2.0 project will be showcased in three demo sites Dubrovnik, Marseille, and Tarragona. Additionally, single component trials are planned in our pilot sites Ashdod, Hamburg, and Venice. To further address the impact driven approach of the Mission Ocean, SeaClear2.0 will engage with Associated Regions that can benefit from the developments and demonstration activities showcasing

<sup>4</sup> [Restore our Ocean and Waters - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](https://european-council.europa.eu/media/en/press-articles/2022/07/14/restore-our-ocean-and-waters-mission)




|  |  |                     |
|--|--|---------------------|
| <br><b>101093822</b> | <b>D7.2: Call for tender design for associated regions</b>           |                     |
|  | <b>WP7: Integration, scaling, replication via associated regions</b> | <b>Version: 1.1</b> |
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feasibility, replicability, and scale up of our solution.



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|--|--|---------------------|
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## 2. Open call overall information

### 2.1 Timeline

The Open Call will be launched on **March 1<sup>st</sup> of 2024 at 8:00 (CET)**, inviting local and regional authorities from Associated Regions to contribute to and benefit from the SeaClear2.0 project. It is advertised widely via the funding and tender portal<sup>5</sup> the SeaClear2.0 website and the project's social media profiles. The OC closes with the **application deadline being set on 31<sup>st</sup> May of 2024, at 17:00 (CET)**.

If the desired number of eligible proposals is not reached by the end of the OC, it might be extended or published again later in 2024.

### 2.2 Eligibility criteria

Only applicants from **EU Member states and Horizon Europe Associated Countries** are admitted to participating in the OC. Please note that the list of Associated Countries may change over time, and it is recommended to check the latest list of eligible countries before applying.<sup>6</sup>

**Non-eligible applicants** are those from countries already represented in the SeaClear2.0 consortium, namely: Croatia, Cyprus, France, Germany, Israel, Italy, Netherlands, Romania, and Spain.

Applicants that already received funding via the **Horizon Europe project REMEDIES** (also awarded under HORIZON-MISS-2021-OCEAN-03) are not eligible to apply.

Applicants must **not fall under EU Sanctions** and the respective measures.

**Local and regional authorities** in the Associated Regions are invited to submit proposals either as individual organisation or a consortium (max. three entities). Either way, all participants must fulfil the criteria of regional or local authority (100% state funded administrations, authorities, and governmental organisations at the federal, regional or municipality level).

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), 20 (recordkeeping) and 25 (checks, reviews, audits and investigations – extension of findings). Further information is supplied in Annex 1.

All documents must be filled and submitted in good command of **English**.

The total of the suggested activities within **one AR proposal** can at the **utmost benefit** from the budget of max. **EUR 100.000**.

The application must be **aligned with the goals of the SeaClear2.0 project** and OC objectives. It must demonstrate a closed set of activities that qualify for financial support. The goal is to engage ARs, that share similar ecosystems (e.g., neighbouring regions and/or regions in a different sea basin) and/or less-developed regions, to build capacity to implement the innovative solutions to solve issues and needs tackled by the SeaClear2.0 project and OC in particular.

### 2.3 Objectives

SeaClear2.0 will engage and work with selected ARs to showcase feasibility, replicability and scale-up of the solutions developed within the project in other areas with ecosystems that can benefit from


<sup>5</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/competitive-calls-cs/5342>

<sup>6</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/list-3rd-country-participation\\_horizon-euratom\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/list-3rd-country-participation_horizon-euratom_en.pdf)



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|--|--|---------------------|
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the achievements and demonstration activities in SeaClear2.0.

Our consortium is aiming for a bi-directional involvement in the project. On the one hand, innovative ideas, techniques, and results from the ARs shall enhance the SeaClear2.0 system. On the other hand, the call shall boost the genuine motivation of the ARs to plan and implement significant activities to prevent and reduce marine litter pollution and thus helping to preserve, restore and protect the health of our oceans.

The SeaClear2.0 consortium will assist selected ARs to develop roadmaps and plans to identify litter sources, build up data bases, classify marine waste, and develop solutions to collect and recycle it respectively. We will provide technical and methodological expert knowledge to address possible barriers and showing feasibility of their solutions.

The ARs will be able to follow the SeaClear2.0 project and its demonstration activities and the SeaClear2.0 partners will proactively reach out to the ARs.

## 2.4 Activities funded

The SeaClear2.0 project is developing an integrated approach to address the full cycle of marine litter. Therefore, we are aiming to engage ARs complying to the SeaClear2.0 idea by choosing activities that contribute to the project in the following areas:

### **Image collection to help build a data base to train AIs in litter, e.g.,**

- Video based images of underwater marine litter
- Sonar based images of underwater marine litter

### **Microplastics handling, e.g.,**

- Detection and collection strategies
- Methodological approach
- Development and implementation of technical solutions to recover microplastics from the water column

### **Marine litter collection, e.g.,**

- Fishing / ghost nets recovery
- Installation / implementation of marine collection systems at the waterside
- Technology based / automated beach clean-up approaches on shore

### **Litter reuse and upcycling, e.g.,**

- Return-to-shore strategies for fishing nets and fishing gear
- Second life / upcycling – recycling of fishing / ghost nets
- Second life / upcycling – recycling of other litter fractions
- Artwork from marine litter


### **Mitigation and prevention strategies, e.g.,**

- Development / implementation/ installation of tools and technologies to catch marine litter before it reaches open water
- Feasibility study: Litter origin and mitigation plan
- Strategy development and demonstrator for litter mitigation
- Implementation of innovative citizen involvement / educational campaigns



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## 2.5 Requirements and mandatory activities

Apart from the formal proposal in the above-described areas, each applicant gets the opportunity to broadly involve and activate their local communities by committing to carry out the following activities to contribute to the SeaClear2.0 project and especially the Mission Ocean: The planning and implementation of each of the activities will be closely guided by the SeaClear2.0 partners and assigned mentors. Applicants will receive extensive support, tools, templates, and instructions to accomplish the mandatory activities. The awarded AR will be invited to participate in designated workshops and benefit from the experience and know-how of the SeaClear2.0 demo and pilot sites, which committed to carrying out the same activities. It is our aim to offer the utmost support to successfully raise awareness and reach a broad public towards the Mission Ocean in the AR.

- **Prepare a roadmap** on how to operate the full SeaClear2.0 system or components in the AR and integrating the system or components in regular and future operations addressing feasibility and possible barriers arising from e.g., environmental, and regulatory restrictions.

The roadmap shall help to identify the opportunities and limits to integrate technological solutions to minimize the impacts marine litter imposes on the ARs marine environments. The SeaClear2.0 mentors will share their knowledge on the SeaClear2.0 technology and the experience with legal and regulatory requirements that exist in the SeaClear2.0 demo and pilot sites. A template with guiding questions will be supplied to help assess requirements and limits and develop the roadmap.

- Organize at least one **participatory side event** to involve and activate the local community by hosting e.g., a workshop, a best practice competition or a community building event to disseminate the activity under 2.4, raise awareness to the topic of marine litter and contribute to its prevention and remediation

This event is specifically linked to the suggested solution under 2.4. We expect the AR to disseminate their contribution to the SeaClear2.0 project and the Mission Ocean by organizing an event like the above described. The aim is to do good and speak about it, by actively reaching out, and communicating about the idea, the work conducted, and the results achieved.

- Organize two **beach clean-ups**

Beaches may be the source but are more often affected by marine litter that is washed ashore. Gathering volunteers for the specific occasion of a joint beach clean-up will not only help to raise awareness but also remind every person about the difference they can make and embrace the power of a strong community taking care about the beaches and the environment in general. A guide on how to create and implement a beach clean-up, gather volunteers and choose the right timing will be available to the AR applicants. A first round of beach clean-ups has been implemented in the SeaClear2.0 demo and pilot sites and the experience and outcome will be shared with the AR.


- Establish a **local Community of Practice (CoP)**

A CoP represents a group of citizens from various sectors, connected by the same goal. CoPs bring together a diverse group of people (e.g., public or private bodies, SMEs, researchers/academics/experts, NGOs, tourism industries, shellfishers, divers, scientists, activists, artists, etc.) with a common interest in marine litter prevention, reduction, and remediation, to collaborate, discuss and



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| <br><b>101093822</b> | <b>D7.2: Call for tender design for associated regions</b>           |                     |
|  | <b>WP7: Integration, scaling, replication via associated regions</b> | <b>Version: 1.1</b> |
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share ideas on how to address the marine litter issue in their localities. We encourage the establishing of a local CoP to connect, exchange and join forces towards a common goal.

- **Communicate and disseminate** the project results on the ARs communication channels and social media accounts and if applicable integrate results in academic papers, policy whitepapers.

In order to disseminate the work done in the ARs with the proposed activities as well as the SeaClear2.0 project, we offer and expect vice versa communication on established channels and formats to reach a wide spread of the efforts made towards the mission ocean and the marine litter topic. We offer to include notifications, news, and updates from the AR on our social media (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, X, YouTube), website and newsletter and will help to do so on the AR channels respectively. This may also include jointly prepared articles and press releases.

- **Endorse the Mission Ocean Charter**

The Mission “Restore our Ocean and Waters” charter is about the protection and restoration of the health of our marine and freshwater ecosystems by 2030. The Mission Charter's purpose is to rally all stakeholders, fostering cooperation, aligning efforts, and amassing the necessary momentum for the transformative change needed to restore our oceans and waters. The European Commission is calling on a wide range of stakeholders, including public or private organisations, national/regional/local authorities (including cities and ports), philanthropists and investors, enterprises and businesses, civil society, research and academia to adhere to the Mission Charter by submitting actions for achieving the Mission objectives. Any actions at European, transnational, national, regional/local level, promoted by public or private funds (including crowd funding), contributing to the Mission objectives are welcome. Your application and solution will add to the mission as well.

- Participate in SeaClear2.0 workshops presenting the AR project, approach and potential outcome

Throughout your project implementation, the SeaClear2.0 consortium might organize events or workshops (most likely online). ARs will possibly be asked to participate due to the nature of their projects, which will be considered a valuable contribution to the event and worth to be presented to a broader audience. We will make sure to equally involve all awarded ARs and limit their participation to one workshop unless they wish to be involved more.

## 2.6 Budget

The total support available for granting is EUR 500.000 to 5 Associated Regions. The suggested activities within one AR proposal can at the utmost benefit from the budget of max. EUR 100.000.


The AR proposal budget should be calculated according to the [EC Horizon Europe rules](#) and in accordance with the SeaClear2.0 FSTP conditions: exclusively person hours from persons working directly on the project are considered eligible costs. Project management, financial and legal administration are not considered eligible activities. Purchase of equipment, consumables, travel and subsistence costs needed to fulfil the project activities are considered eligible costs.



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| <br><b>101093822</b> | <b>D7.2: Call for tender design for associated regions</b>           |                     |
|  | <b>WP7: Integration, scaling, replication via associated regions</b> | <b>Version: 1.1</b> |
|  | <b>Author(s): C. Hertel-ten Eikelder</b>                             | <b>Level: PU</b>    |

## 3. Submission and Evaluation

### 3.1 Timeline

Opening date: 1 March 2024 at 8:00 (CET)

Closing Date: 31 May 2024 at 12:00 (CET)

Granting completed: 30 June 2024

Project implementation: 1 July 2024 – 31 March 2026

### 3.2 Submission procedure

Applicants must submit proposals via the designated application form<sup>7</sup>. The proposals are only accepted within the application period, between 1 March and 31 May 2024, 12:00 (CET). No other submissions or adjustments are allowed after the set deadline.

Only the documentation required to be submitted specifically for the SeaClear2.0 OC will be considered by evaluators. Proposals submitted by any other means other than the one identified above will be automatically discarded and will not be evaluated. All information provided should be actual, true, and complete to allow the assessment of the proposal.

### 3.3 FSTP Board

A Financial Support for Third Parties (FSTP) Board will carry out the evaluation process. It is composed of members of the SeaClear2.0 consortium, an invited expert from our sister project in the Mediterranean Sea, 'REMEDIES', and several members of the SeaClear2.0 Advisory Board. In case the content of the submitted proposal is not completely covered by the expertise of the FSTP board, an independent expert will be invited for evaluation of the proposal.

### 3.4 Evaluation

Only complete applications submitted from 1 March 2024 to 31 May 2024, 12:00 (CET) will be considered and assessed by the FSTP board. Applications will be sorted and selected following four steps:

1. Admissibility and Eligibility check (SeaClear2.0 staff responsible for OC)
2. Remote proposal evaluation via scoring scheme (internal experts from SeaClear2.0 and external expert from REMEDIES Project and SeaClear2.0 Advisory Board members; for specific cases an independent expert might be invited)
3. Ranking (based on scores, geographic spread and proposal topic chosen by the applicants)
4. Final decision (internal)

In the first stage, the applications will be assessed on eligibility. All applications will be checked on compliance with the minimum defined criteria to follow through to the SeaClear2.0 evaluation process.

After this stage, four evaluators from the FSTP board per application will be appointed, according to the topic of the application. Based on the scores the proposals received from the evaluators, a ranked


<sup>7</sup>

<https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/SeaClear2AssociatedRegionsApplication>



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|--|--|---------------------|
| <br><b>101093822</b> | <b>D7.2: Call for tender design for associated regions</b>           |                     |
|  | <b>WP7: Integration, scaling, replication via associated regions</b> | <b>Version: 1.1</b> |
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list will be prepared and discussed during a meeting with all evaluators involved in the process. A recommendation on proposals to be funded will be prepared and presented to the SeaClear2.0 Steering Committee, that will make the final decision on selected applications. At all times, the OC is aligned with the same basic principles, which govern the European Commission calls:

**Excellence:** The proposal(s) selected for funding must demonstrate a high quality in the context of the topics and criteria set out in the call. The SeaClear2.0 project has a clear European dimension as will the OC.

**Transparency:** Funding decisions are based on clearly described rules and procedures, and all applicants will receive adequate feedback on the outcome of the evaluation of their proposals. The SeaClear2.0 project will publish the outcome of the call without delay, including a description of the projects, the date of the award, the duration and the legal name and the country.

**Fairness and impartiality:** All proposals submitted to a call are treated equally. They are evaluated impartially on their merits, irrespective of their origin or the identity of the applicants.

**Confidentiality:** All proposals and related data, knowledge and documents are treated in confidentiality.

### 3.5 Scoring scheme

Proposals will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

**Concept and Innovation:** Is the project idea and the methodology clearly outlined? Are the objectives well developed and innovative? How well does the concept fit with the EU Mission Ocean and overall, Horizon Europe topic?

**Expertise and Excellence:** Does the applicant have experience in handling EU projects or other types of funding? Do the applicant's expertise and resources suffice to implement the proposed action?

**Alignment and project planning:** Is the project planning realistic and feasible, is it taking risks into account, and does it include a clear workplan outlining KPIs and milestones? Is the budget appropriately allocated? Does the proposal align with and strengthen the SeaClear2.0 developments and overall efforts?

**Impact and Sustainability:** What is the capacity of the applicants to disseminate and apply the SeaClear2.0 project results, reach the targeted audience, implement changes, and impact human behavior? Is the idea / solution suited to be replicated and transferred to other environments or to be adopted by other stakeholders to help achieve the Mission goals?

Proposals will be scored on a range of 0 – 3 for each criterion. Within each of the four criterion a maximum of 15 points can be reached adding up to a maximum of 60 points for the overall proposal.

Proposals must achieve an overall threshold of 30 points (in the separate evaluation reports) to be considered for funding within the limits of the available budget.


The scores are defined as follows:

|   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| Scores given on a scale from 0 to 3<br>0= the lowest/worst and 3 = the highest/best | 0 | requirements are not met at all/ major flaws and inconsistencies / insufficiently and poorly substantiated |
|   | 1 | requirements are barely met/ improveable / basic   |
|   | 2 | Requirements are fully met / well prepared and flawless  |
|   | 3 | Requirements are met to full extend / exceeds the expectations / outstanding work                          |



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|--|--|---------------------|
| <br><b>101093822</b> | <b>D7.2: Call for tender design for associated regions</b>           |                     |
|  | <b>WP7: Integration, scaling, replication via associated regions</b> | <b>Version: 1.1</b> |
|  | <b>Author(s): C. Hertel-ten Eikelder</b>                             | <b>Level: PU</b>    |

### 3.6 Final selection

After finalizing the formal evaluation by the FSTP board, the proposals will be chosen by the SeaClear2.0 consortium. This decision will be taking into account regional representation of applicants as well as a healthy variety in the topics of the applications, while equally considering the added value, complementarity, as well as overall impact towards the Ocean Mission and the SeaClear2.0 project.

Successful applicants will be notified within one week after the final selection. The process of contracting and execution will begin immediately after.

The outcome of the calls will be published without delay.

### 3.7 Appeal procedure

If, at any stage of the evaluation process, the applicant considers that a mistake has been made or that the evaluators have acted unfairly or have failed to comply with the rules of SeaClear2.0 OC and that their interests have been prejudiced as a result, a complaint should be drawn up in English and submitted to the official SeaClear2.0 OC email: [oc2.0@seaclear-project.eu](mailto:oc2.0@seaclear-project.eu). The email should be sent with a request for confirmation of receipt. The appeal should be sent within 10 calendar days, counting from the reception of the decision. An answer from the SeaClear2.0 project should be expected within 30 calendar days from the date of the reception note of the appeal email.

Any complaint made should include clear information:

- contact details
- the subject of the complaint
- information & evidence regarding the alleged breach.


Please note:

- This procedure is concerned only with the evaluation and/or eligibility checking process. The SeaClear2.0 team will not carry out any verification regarding scientific or technical questions or judgment of appropriately qualified experts.
- 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 AR proposal or not. This means, for example, that a problem relating to one evaluation criterion will not lead to a re-evaluation if a proposal has failed on other criteria as well.
- The evaluation score following any re-evaluation will be regarded as definitive and it may be lower than the original score.



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## 4. Project implementation

### 4.1 Mentors & support by SC2.0 project partners / consortium

Each awarded applicant will be assigned at least one mentor from the SeaClear2.0 project partners to support the AR during the stages of the project implementation. The mentor(s) will be assigned by the SeaClear2.0 consortium based on the analysis of the profile of the selected OC applicants taking into consideration the organizational/technical/scientific expertise/understanding and geographical proximity. The mentor(s) will serve as a bridge between the project and the implementation process, providing support, orientation, within the knowledge and capability of the mentor.

The goal is that in the OC kick-off meeting the mentor(s) is/are presented to the successful applicants, as a first contact.

### 4.2 Meetings and Reporting

Monthly progress meetings with the FSTP Coordinators and mentor(s) will be coordinated. This concerns the project implementation, budgeting, and related organizational topics.

The selected ARs are expected to present the status quo on deliverables and milestones, in order to give a clear notion of the evolution of the project. The applicants will receive the needed support, guidance, and input from the mentors and FSTP coordinators.

The FSTP Coordinators are:

- TU Delft for administrative, financial coordination
- Hamburg Port Authority for organizational coordination

### 4.3 Dissemination

All selected ARs are required to provide quantitative and tangible information on the implementation of their activities, providing information (e.g. interviews, photos, videos, logos, graphics) to be used by the SeaClear2.0 communication and dissemination partner. The applicants, as financed third parties from a Horizon Europe project, are also required to promote the SeaClear2.0 project during the project implementation.

### 4.4 Funding visibility

Unless the European Commission or the SeaClear2.0 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 EU Mission Restore our Ocean and Waters visual identity material
- display the SeaClear2.0 logo
- display a written reference to the funding received


## 5. Financial support & payment

The requested funding will be granted in three payments. A pre-payment of 40% of the agreed funding



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|  |  |                     |
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| <br><b>101093822</b> | <b>D7.2: Call for tender design for associated regions</b>           |                     |
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will be transferred at the start of the project after the SeaClear2.0 FSTP agreement is signed, another 40% of the funding will follow after approval of the first reporting. The first reporting is treated as a go/no go control point for the remaining period of the project. If poor or no implementation occurs during the implementation period, the SeaClear2.0 consortium may stop at any time the applicant's participation in the SeaClear2.0 OC, and produce the legal previewed effects described in the SeaClear2.0 FSTP Agreement.

The reporting periods will be identified before the start of the project and stated in the agreement between the Associated Region and TU Delft in their role as SeaClear2.0 consortium leader. The final payment (20%) will be performed after the final reporting on the project has been approved by the Open Call administrators and mentor(s) of the applicants.

The payments will be treated as lump sum payments based on the initial budget and progress of the associated regions. In case the FSTP is granted to a consortium (max 3 entities, all ARs), all parties will sign the agreement. The payment will be delivered to the main applicant, which transfers their share to the other beneficiaries without delay.

More details are available in the 'Agreement for Financial Support to Third Parties within the SeaClear2.0 project'.

Applicants (third party) can only once benefit from the financial support to third parties provided by the SeaClear2.0 project, provided the non-existence of the same third party selected for award in the same topic call (HORIZON- MISS-2021-OCEAN-03-01).

## 6. Data protection


In order to process and evaluate applications, SeaClear2.0 will need to collect personal and institutional data. The OC manager of the project will act as Data Controller for data submitted for these purposes to ensure compliance with data protection regulations, such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), and that personal data is collected, processed, and stored in a secure manner. Data will be stored in the project repository on a NetworkDrive, managed by the project coordinator TU Delft.

Please note that SeaClear2.0 requests the minimum information needed to deliver the evaluation procedures or support the proposal and will retain all information for 5 years after the project (SeaClear2.0) ends.



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| <br><b>101093822</b> | <b>D7.2: Call for tender design for associated regions</b>           |                     |
|  | <b>WP7: Integration, scaling, replication via associated regions</b> | <b>Version: 1.1</b> |
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## 7. Checklist for Applicants

| ANSWER:<br>YES/NO | QUESTIONS   |
|-------------------|---|
|                   | Does your planned work fit with the call for proposals scope and topic?<br><i>Check that your proposed work addresses the objectives of SeaClear2.0 OC.</i>   |
|                   | Do you comply with the defined eligibility criteria described in Section 2?   |
|                   | Do you comply with any budgetary limits as described in Section 2?  |
|                   | Did you complete and submit all the required sections in the application form?<br><i>Please, make sure that your application is finalised.</i>  |
|                   | Does your proposal fulfil the requested information?<br><i>Proposals should be precise, concise and must answer the requested information. Omitting requested information will almost certainly lead to lower scores and possible rejection.</i>  |
|                   | Are you submitting your proposal within the defined deadline?<br><i>It is strongly recommended not to wait until the last minute to submit your proposal. The failure of the proposal to arrive on time for any reason, including network communications delays, is not acceptable as an extenuating circumstance. The time of receipt of the message as recorded by the submission system will be definitive, with no extensions possible, for a matter of fairness and transparency of the process.</i> |


If you have answered YES to all questions, you are most probably included in the OC selection process and you are a possible candidate to be one of the selected applicants for SeaClear2.0 OC.



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| <br><b>101093822</b> | <b>D7.2: Call for tender design for associated regions</b>           |                     |
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## Annex 1

### Articles 12, 13, 14, 17.2, 18, 19, 20 and 25 of the Grant Agreement

#### ARTICLE 12 — CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

##### 12.1 Conflict of interests

The beneficiaries must take all measures to prevent any situation where the impartial and objective implementation of the Agreement could be compromised for reasons involving family, emotional life, political or national affinity, economic interest or any other direct or indirect interest ('conflict of interests').

They must formally notify the granting authority without delay of any situation constituting or likely to lead to a conflict of interests and immediately take all the necessary steps to rectify this situation.

The granting authority may verify that the measures taken are appropriate and may require additional measures to be taken by a specified deadline.

##### 12.2 Consequences of non-compliance

If a beneficiary breaches any of its obligations under this Article, the grant may be reduced (see Article 28) and the grant or the beneficiary may be terminated (see Article 32).

Such breaches may also lead to other measures described in Chapter 5.

#### ARTICLE 13 — CONFIDENTIALITY AND SECURITY

##### 13.1 Sensitive information

The parties must keep confidential any data, documents or other material (in any form) that is identified as sensitive in writing ('sensitive information') — during the implementation of the action and for at least until the time-limit set out in the Data Sheet (see Point 6).



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101093822

**D7.2: Call for tender design for associated regions**

**WP7: Integration, scaling, replication via associated regions**

**Version: 1.1**

**Author(s): C. Hertel-ten Eikelder**

**Level: PU**

If a beneficiary requests, the granting authority may agree to keep such information confidential for a longer period.

Unless otherwise agreed between the parties, they may use sensitive information only to implement the Agreement.

The beneficiaries may disclose sensitive information to their personnel or other participants involved in the action only if they:

- (a) need to know it in order to implement the Agreement and
- (b) are bound by an obligation of confidentiality.

The granting authority may disclose sensitive information to its staff and to other EU institutions and bodies.

It may moreover disclose sensitive information to third parties, if:

- (a) this is necessary to implement the Agreement or safeguard the EU financial interests and
- (b) the recipients of the information are bound by an obligation of confidentiality.

The confidentiality obligations no longer apply if:

- (a) the disclosing party agrees to release the other party
- (b) the information becomes publicly available, without breaching any confidentiality obligation
- (c) the disclosure of the sensitive information is required by EU, international or national law.

Specific confidentiality rules (if any) are set out in Annex 5.

### 13.2 Classified information

The parties must handle classified information in accordance with the applicable EU, international or national law on classified information (in particular, Decision 2015/444<sup>15</sup> and its implementing rules).

Deliverables which contain classified information must be submitted according to special procedures agreed with the granting authority.

Action tasks involving classified information may be subcontracted only after explicit approval (in writing) from the granting authority.

Classified information may not be disclosed to any third party (including participants involved in the action implementation) without prior explicit written approval from the granting authority.

Specific security rules (if any) are set out in Annex 5.

### 13.3 Consequences of non-compliance


<sup>15</sup> Commission Decision 2015/444/EC, Euratom of 13 March 2015 on the security rules for protecting EU classified information (OJ L 72, 17.3.2015, p. 53).



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| <br><b>101093822</b> | <b>D7.2: Call for tender design for associated regions</b>           |                     |
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If a beneficiary breaches any of its obligations under this Article, the grant may be reduced (see Article 28).

Such breaches may also lead to other measures described in Chapter 5.

## ARTICLE 14 — ETHICS AND VALUES

### 14.1 Ethics

The action must be carried out in line with the highest ethical standards and the applicable EU, international and national law on ethical principles.

Specific ethics rules (if any) are set out in Annex 5.

### 14.2 Values

The beneficiaries must commit to and ensure the respect of basic EU values (such as respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and human rights, including the rights of minorities).

Specific rules on values (if any) are set out in Annex 5.

### 14.3 Consequences of non-compliance

If a beneficiary breaches any of its obligations under this Article, the grant may be reduced (see Article 28).

Such breaches may also lead to other measures described in Chapter 5.

## 17.2 Visibility — European flag and funding statement

Unless otherwise agreed with the granting authority, communication activities of the beneficiaries related to the action (including media relations, conferences, seminars, information material, such as brochures, leaflets, posters, presentations, etc., in electronic form, via traditional or social media, etc.), dissemination activities and any infrastructure, equipment, vehicles, supplies or major result funded by the grant must acknowledge EU support and display the European flag (emblem) and funding statement (translated into local languages, where appropriate):



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101093822

D7.2: Call for tender design for associated regions

WP7: Integration, scaling, replication via associated regions

Version: 1.1

Author(s): C. Hertel-ten Eikelder

Level: PU



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The emblem must remain distinct and separate and cannot be modified by adding other visual marks, brands or text.

Apart from the emblem, no other visual identity or logo may be used to highlight the EU support.

When displayed in association with other logos (e.g. of beneficiaries or sponsors), the emblem must be displayed at least as prominently and visibly as the other logos.

For the purposes of their obligations under this Article, the beneficiaries may use the emblem without first obtaining approval from the granting authority. This does not, however, give them the right to exclusive use. Moreover, they may not appropriate the emblem or any similar trademark or logo, either by registration or by any other means.

## ARTICLE 18 — SPECIFIC RULES FOR CARRYING OUT THE ACTION

### 18.1 Specific rules for carrying out the action


Specific rules for implementing the action (if any) are set out in Annex 5.

### 18.2 Consequences of non-compliance



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|--|--|---------------------|
| <br><b>101093822</b> | <b>D7.2: Call for tender design for associated regions</b>           |                     |
|  | <b>WP7: Integration, scaling, replication via associated regions</b> | <b>Version: 1.1</b> |
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If a beneficiary breaches any of its obligations under this Article, the grant may be reduced (see Article 28).

Such a breach may also lead to other measures described in Chapter 5.

## **SECTION 3 GRANT ADMINISTRATION**

### **ARTICLE 19 — GENERAL INFORMATION OBLIGATIONS**

#### **19.1 Information requests**

The beneficiaries must provide — during the action or afterwards and in accordance with Article 7 — any information requested in order to verify eligibility of the costs or contributions declared, proper implementation of the action and compliance with the other obligations under the Agreement.

The information provided must be accurate, precise and complete and in the format requested, including electronic format.

#### **19.2 Participant Register data updates**

The beneficiaries must keep — at all times, during the action or afterwards — their information stored in the Portal Participant Register up to date, in particular, their name, address, legal representatives, legal form and organisation type.

#### **19.3 Information about events and circumstances which impact the action**

The beneficiaries must immediately inform the granting authority (and the other beneficiaries) of any of the following:

- (a) **events** which are likely to affect or delay the implementation of the action or affect the EU's financial interests, in particular:
  - (i) changes in their legal, financial, technical, organisational or ownership situation (including changes linked to one of the exclusion grounds listed in the declaration of honour signed before grant signature)
  - (ii) linked action information: not applicable
- (b) **circumstances** affecting:
  - (i) the decision to award the grant or
  - (ii) compliance with requirements under the Agreement.

#### **19.4 Consequences of non-compliance**

If a beneficiary breaches any of its obligations under this Article, the grant may be reduced (see Article 28).


Such breaches may also lead to other measures described in Chapter 5.



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| <br><b>101093822</b> | <b>D7.2: Call for tender design for associated regions</b>           |                     |
|  | <b>WP7: Integration, scaling, replication via associated regions</b> | <b>Version: 1.1</b> |
|  | <b>Author(s): C. Hertel-ten Eikelder</b>                             | <b>Level: PU</b>    |

## ARTICLE 20 — RECORD-KEEPING

### 20.1 Keeping records and supporting documents

The beneficiaries must — at least until the time-limit set out in the Data Sheet (see Point 6) — keep records and other supporting documents to prove the proper implementation of the action in line with the accepted standards in the respective field (if any).

In addition, the beneficiaries must — for the same period — keep the following to justify the amounts declared:

- (a) for actual costs: adequate records and supporting documents to prove the costs declared (such as contracts, subcontracts, invoices and accounting records); in addition, the beneficiaries' usual accounting and internal control procedures must enable direct reconciliation between the amounts declared, the amounts recorded in their accounts and the amounts stated in the supporting documents
- (b) for flat-rate costs and contributions (if any): adequate records and supporting documents to prove the eligibility of the costs or contributions to which the flat-rate is applied
- (c) for the following simplified costs and contributions: the beneficiaries do not need to keep specific records on the actual costs incurred, but must keep:
  - (i) for unit costs and contributions (if any): adequate records and supporting documents to prove the number of units declared
  - (ii) for lump sum costs and contributions (if any): adequate records and supporting documents to prove proper implementation of the work as described in Annex 1
  - (iii) for financing not linked to costs (if any): adequate records and supporting documents to prove the achievement of the results or the fulfilment of the conditions as described in Annex 1
- (d) for unit, flat-rate and lump sum costs and contributions according to usual cost accounting practices (if any): the beneficiaries must keep any adequate records and supporting documents to prove that their cost accounting practices have been applied in a consistent manner, based on objective criteria, regardless of the source of funding, and that they comply with the eligibility conditions set out in Articles 6.1 and 6.2.

Moreover, the following is needed for specific budget categories:


- (e) for personnel costs: time worked for the beneficiary under the action must be supported by declarations signed monthly by the person and their supervisor, unless another reliable time-record system is in place; the granting authority may accept alternative evidence supporting the time worked for the action declared, if it considers that it offers an adequate level of assurance
- (f) additional record-keeping rules: not applicable

The records and supporting documents must be made available upon request (see Article 19) or in the context of checks, reviews, audits or investigations (see Article 25).



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|  |  |                     |
|--|--|---------------------|
| <br><b>101093822</b> | <b>D7.2: Call for tender design for associated regions</b>           |                     |
|  | <b>WP7: Integration, scaling, replication via associated regions</b> | <b>Version: 1.1</b> |
|  | <b>Author(s): C. Hertel-ten Eikelder</b>                             | <b>Level: PU</b>    |

If there are on-going checks, reviews, audits, investigations, litigation or other pursuits of claims under the Agreement (including the extension of findings; see Article 25), the beneficiaries must keep these records and other supporting documentation until the end of these procedures.

The beneficiaries must keep the original documents. Digital and digitalised documents are considered originals if they are authorised by the applicable national law. The granting authority may accept non-original documents if they offer a comparable level of assurance.

## **20.2 Consequences of non-compliance**

If a beneficiary breaches any of its obligations under this Article, costs or contributions insufficiently substantiated will be ineligible (see Article 6) and will be rejected (see Article 27), and the grant may be reduced (see Article 28).

Such breaches may also lead to other measures described in Chapter 5.

## **ARTICLE 25 — CHECKS, REVIEWS, AUDITS AND INVESTIGATIONS — EXTENSION OF FINDINGS**

### **25.1 Granting authority checks, reviews and audits**

#### **25.1.1 Internal checks**

The granting authority may — during the action or afterwards — check the proper implementation of the action and compliance with the obligations under the Agreement, including assessing costs and contributions, deliverables and reports.

#### **25.1.2 Project reviews**

The granting authority may carry out reviews on the proper implementation of the action and compliance with the obligations under the Agreement (general project reviews or specific issues reviews).

Such project reviews may be started during the implementation of the action and until the time-limit set out in the Data Sheet (see Point 6). They will be formally notified to the coordinator or beneficiary concerned and will be considered to start on the date of the notification.


If needed, the granting authority may be assisted by independent, outside experts. If it uses outside experts, the coordinator or beneficiary concerned will be informed and have the right to object on grounds of commercial confidentiality or conflict of interest.



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|  |  |                     |
|--|--|---------------------|
| <br><b>101093822</b> | <b>D7.2: Call for tender design for associated regions</b>           |                     |
|  | <b>WP7: Integration, scaling, replication via associated regions</b> | <b>Version: 1.1</b> |
|  | <b>Author(s): C. Hertel-ten Eikelder</b>                             | <b>Level: PU</b>    |

The coordinator or beneficiary concerned must cooperate diligently and provide — within the deadline requested — any information and data in addition to deliverables and reports already submitted (including information on the use of resources). The granting authority may request beneficiaries to provide such information to it directly. Sensitive information and documents will be treated in accordance with Article 13.

The coordinator or beneficiary concerned may be requested to participate in meetings, including with the outside experts.

For **on-the-spot visits**, the beneficiary concerned must allow access to sites and premises (including to the outside experts) and must ensure that information requested is readily available.

Information provided must be accurate, precise and complete and in the format requested, including electronic format.

On the basis of the review findings, a **project review report** will be drawn up.

The granting authority will formally notify the project review report to the coordinator or beneficiary concerned, which has 30 days from receiving notification to make observations.

Project reviews (including project review reports) will be in the language of the Agreement.

### 25.1.3 Audits

The granting authority may carry out audits on the proper implementation of the action and compliance with the obligations under the Agreement.

Such audits may be started during the implementation of the action and until the time-limit set out in the Data Sheet (see Point 6). They will be formally notified to the beneficiary concerned and will be considered to start on the date of the notification.

The granting authority may use its own audit service, delegate audits to a centralised service or use external audit firms. If it uses an external firm, the beneficiary concerned will be informed and have the right to object on grounds of commercial confidentiality or conflict of interest.

The beneficiary concerned must cooperate diligently and provide — within the deadline requested — any information (including complete accounts, individual salary statements or other personal data) to verify compliance with the Agreement. Sensitive information and documents will be treated in accordance with Article 13.

For **on-the-spot visits**, the beneficiary concerned must allow access to sites and premises (including for the external audit firm) and must ensure that information requested is readily available.

Information provided must be accurate, precise and complete and in the format requested, including electronic format.

On the basis of the audit findings, a **draft audit report** will be drawn up.


The auditors will formally notify the draft audit report to the beneficiary concerned, which has 30 days from receiving notification to make observations (contradictory audit procedure).

The **final audit report** will take into account observations by the beneficiary concerned and will be formally notified to them.



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|  |  |                     |
|--|--|---------------------|
| <br><b>101093822</b> | <b>D7.2: Call for tender design for associated regions</b>           |                     |
|  | <b>WP7: Integration, scaling, replication via associated regions</b> | <b>Version: 1.1</b> |
|  | <b>Author(s): C. Hertel-ten Eikelder</b>                             | <b>Level: PU</b>    |

Audits (including audit reports) will be in the language of the Agreement.

## **25.2 European Commission checks, reviews and audits in grants of other granting authorities**

Where the granting authority is not the European Commission, the latter has the same rights of checks, reviews and audits as the granting authority.

## **25.3 Access to records for assessing simplified forms of funding**

The beneficiaries must give the European Commission access to their statutory records for the periodic assessment of simplified forms of funding which are used in EU programmes.

## **25.4 OLAF, EPPO and ECA audits and investigations**

The following bodies may also carry out checks, reviews, audits and investigations — during the action or afterwards:

- the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) under Regulations No 883/2013<sup>20</sup> and No 2185/96<sup>21</sup>
- the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) under Regulation 2017/1939
- the European Court of Auditors (ECA) under Article 287 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU) and Article 257 of EU Financial Regulation 2018/1046.

If requested by these bodies, the beneficiary concerned must provide full, accurate and complete information in the format requested (including complete accounts, individual salary statements or other personal data, including in electronic format) and allow access to sites and premises for on-the-spot visits or inspections — as provided for under these Regulations.

To this end, the beneficiary concerned must keep all relevant information relating to the action, at least until the time-limit set out in the Data Sheet (Point 6) and, in any case, until any ongoing checks, reviews, audits, investigations, litigation or other pursuits of claims have been concluded.

## **25.5 Consequences of checks, reviews, audits and investigations — Extension of results of reviews, audits or investigations**

### **25.5.1 Consequences of checks, reviews, audits and investigations in this grant**

Findings in checks, reviews, audits or investigations carried out in the context of this grant may lead to rejections (see Article 27), grant reduction (see Article 28) or other measures described in Chapter 5.

Rejections or grant reductions after the final payment will lead to a revised final grant amount (see Article 22).

<sup>20</sup> Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 883/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 September 2013 concerning investigations conducted by the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1073/1999 of the European Parliament and of the Council and Council Regulation (Euratom) No 1074/1999 (OJ L 248, 18/09/2013, p. 1).

<sup>21</sup> Council Regulation (Euratom, EC) No 2185/1996 of 11 November 1996 concerning on-the-spot checks and inspections carried out by the Commission in order to protect the European Communities' financial interests against fraud and other irregularities (OJ L 292, 15/11/1996, p. 2).



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101093822

D7.2: Call for tender design for associated regions

WP7: Integration, scaling, replication via associated regions

Version: 1.1

Author(s): C. Hertel-ten Eikelder

Level: PU

Findings in checks, reviews, audits or investigations during the action implementation may lead to a request for amendment (see Article 39), to change the description of the action set out in Annex 1.

Checks, reviews, audits or investigations that find systemic or recurrent errors, irregularities, fraud or breach of obligations in any EU grant may also lead to consequences in other EU grants awarded under similar conditions ('extension to other grants').

Moreover, findings arising from an OLAF or EPPO investigation may lead to criminal prosecution under national law.

### 25.5.2 Extension from other grants

Results of checks, reviews, audits or investigations in other grants may be extended to this grant, if:

- (a) the beneficiary concerned is found, in other EU grants awarded under similar conditions, to have committed systemic or recurrent errors, irregularities, fraud or breach of obligations that have a material impact on this grant and
- (b) those findings are formally notified to the beneficiary concerned — together with the list of grants affected by the findings — within the time-limit for audits set out in the Data Sheet (see Point 6).

The granting authority will formally notify the beneficiary concerned of the intention to extend the findings and the list of grants affected.

If the extension concerns **rejections of costs or contributions**: the notification will include:

- (a) an invitation to submit observations on the list of grants affected by the findings
- (b) the request to submit revised financial statements for all grants affected
- (c) the correction rate for extrapolation, established on the basis of the systemic or recurrent errors, to calculate the amounts to be rejected, if the beneficiary concerned:
  - (i) considers that the submission of revised financial statements is not possible or practicable or
  - (ii) does not submit revised financial statements.

If the extension concerns **grant reductions**: the notification will include:

- (a) an invitation to submit observations on the list of grants affected by the findings and
- (b) the **correction rate for extrapolation**, established on the basis of the systemic or recurrent errors and the principle of proportionality.

The beneficiary concerned has **60 days** from receiving notification to submit observations, revised financial statements or to propose a duly substantiated **alternative correction method/rate**.


On the basis of this, the granting authority will analyse the impact and decide on the implementation (i.e. start rejection or grant reduction procedures, either on the basis of the revised financial statements or the announced/alternative method/rate or a mix of those; see Articles 27 and 28).



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|  |  |                     |
|--|--|---------------------|
| <br><b>101093822</b> | <b>D7.2: Call for tender design for associated regions</b>           |                     |
|  | <b>WP7: Integration, scaling, replication via associated regions</b> | <b>Version: 1.1</b> |
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## 25.6 Consequences of non-compliance

If a beneficiary breaches any of its obligations under this Article, costs or contributions insufficiently substantiated will be ineligible (see Article 6) and will be rejected (see Article 27), and the grant may be reduced (see Article 28).

Such breaches may also lead to other measures described in Chapter 5.



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