



Baltic MUPPETS



BALTIC MUPPETS INNOVATION CALL

-

GUIDELINES FOR APPLICANTS (UPDATE 1.0)



Table of Contents

1. Baltic Muppets project overview	6
1.1. The concept.....	6
1.2. The project	6
2. Innovation call overview	7
2.1. The innovation call.....	7
2.2. Innovation Call Budget.....	7
2.3. Innovation Call Timeline	8
3. Innovation Call Challenges.....	8
4. Eligibility Criteria.....	15
4.1. Who can apply?.....	15
4.2. Eligible regions	16
4.3. Proposal eligibility.....	17
5. How to apply?	18
5.1. How to submit your proposal	18
6. How will applications be evaluated and selected?	19
6.1. Evaluation steps	19
6.2. Step 1: Eligibility Check	19
6.3. Steps 2 - 4: Selection.....	20
6.4. Reserve list.....	22
6.5. Redress process.....	22
7. What is next? Sub-grant agreement signature	22
8. Funding Programme - selected entities obligations	24
8.1. Implementation and reporting	24
8.2 Financial support provided.....	25
8.3. Payment scheme.....	25
9. Additional considerations	26
9.1. Conflict of interest.....	26
9.2. Checks and reviews	26
9.3. Promoting the action and giving visibility to the EU funding	26
9.4. Intellectual Property Rights	27
9.5. Data protection	27
10. Important links and contacts.....	27

List of Tables

Table 1: Innovation Call budget details	7
Table 2: Innovation Call budget details	8
Table 3: SMART TARGET for Challenge 1.1.	9
Table 4: SMART TARGET for Challenge 1.2.	10
Table 5: SMART TARGET for Challenge 1.3.	11
Table 6: SMART TARGET for Challenge 2.1.	12
Table 7: SMART TARGET for Challenge 2.2	13
Table 8: SMART TARGET for Challenge 2.3	13
Table 9: SMART TARGET for Challenge 2.4	14
Table 10: SMART TARGET for Challenge 2.5	14
Table 11: regions covered by the Baltic Muppets Consortium	16
Table 12: Selection Criteria	20
Table 13: score values	21
Table 14: necessary documents to sign the sub-grant agreement	23
Table 15: stages of selected project	24
Table 16: payment schedule	25

List of Figures

Figure 1: Regions covered by the Baltic Muppets Consortium	17
Figure 2: Evaluation of the Innovation Call	19

1. Baltic Muppets project overview

1.1. The concept

Due to low salinity, the Baltic Sea blue mussels are often smaller and have therefore not been preferred for human consumption. In commercial blue mussel farms where the salinity is higher, small mussels are considered a side-stream of market size mussel production. Nevertheless, mussel meat contains the same amino acid composition as fish meal and can be used as a sustainable raw material in pet food.

1.2. The project

The goal of Baltic MUPPETS is to develop, scale and commercialise complete value chains for small blue mussel-based pet-food products. The main goal of the project is to valorise this unused resource through the cooperation of three demonstrator sites in Sweden, Denmark and Germany. The project works on three different business cases, all using innovative submerged farming techniques (to avoid ice, reduce costs and increase public acceptance), and ultimately creating high value pet food products. Baltic MUPPETS will also co-develop business cases for additional products from small mussel side-streams and conduct market research to evaluate the profitability of the three demonstrators' business cases. The financial and environmental value of the ecosystem services provided by the farms will be assessed, with efforts made to create tangible, concurrent benefits in terms of sustainable development (both scientific and economic), blue growth (economic) and job creation (societal).

The Baltic MUPPETS project - Baltic MUssel Products for PET-foodS - is implemented under the Grant Agreement no. 101083785, within the framework of the ERDF Interregional Innovation Investments Instrument (I3) of the European Commission.

2. Innovation call overview

2.1. The innovation call

The Baltic MUPPETS Innovation Call invites innovative start-ups and SMEs from selected regions to propose solutions that drive sustainable business strategies and technological advancements within the mussel value chain. This initiative aims to accelerate the market uptake of mussel-based products and services, promoting environmental sustainability, fostering economic growth, and supporting ecosystem restoration efforts.

This call will fund projects in two key areas: testing and piloting activities, particularly for submerged mussel farms, and feasibility studies, market analysis, and business strategy development, complementing ongoing investments in Baltic MUPPETS mussel farms and market research. The call is open to eligible regions in Sweden, Germany, Denmark, Estonia, and Ireland, and offers a 5-month project period.

This document outlines the general terms, objectives, and eligibility criteria for applicants. All associated Annexes must be read carefully before the submission of an application.

The open call will fund projects that address the two following clusters:

- **Testing and piloting activities:** Solutions for submerged mussel farms, including testing and piloting of harvesting systems, regulatory requirements, and logistic solutions.
- **Feasibility study, market study, and business strategy development:** Feasibility and market studies, strategies to overcome market barriers, increase consumer acceptance, assess pricing, recommend certifications, and explore new revenue streams from mussel farming products and services with focus on high-value pet food.

2.2. Innovation Call Budget

The total available funding for the Innovation Call is **€100.000,00**. Selected SMEs will receive up to **€50.000,00 each** to implement projects addressed to the selected challenges within the eligible regions.

Table 1: Innovation Call budget details

Maximum funding per SME	up to 50.000,00 €
Type of financial support	Lump sum
Innovation Call total budget	100.000,00€

2.3. Innovation Call Timeline

Table 2: Innovation Call budget details

Baltic MUPPETS Innovation Call timeline	
Call opening date	5 November 2024
Call closing date	14 January 2025, 17:00 CET (Brussels time) New closing date: 28 January 2025, 17:00 CET (Brussels time)
Eligibility check	February 2025
Internal evaluation	February 2025
Announcement of results	February 2025
Sub-grant agreement signature	February 2025
Selected projects implementation	1 March 2025 – 31 October 2025 <i>(total program of 5 months that offers flexibility in start date)</i>

3. Innovation Call Challenges

The following section outlines the specific challenges and opportunities available for applicants in two key areas:

Cluster 1 - Testing and Piloting Activities

Cluster 2 - Feasibility Studies, Market Strategies, and Business Plans.

These clusters focus on developing innovative solutions for mussel farming and mussel-based products, ultimately creating high value pet food products, with a strong emphasis on testing, market readiness, and scaling up promising ideas.

Applicants are invited to submit project proposals aimed at addressing the challenges described in each cluster. The selected proposals will not only contribute to the sustainable growth of the mussel farming industry but also address critical environmental concerns, such as eutrophication, remediation, nutrient extraction, and improved water quality, while opening new commercial opportunities for small mussels.

Technical solutions to be funded under Cluster 1 are expected to be at the level of maturity of TRL 6. Actions to be funded under Cluster 2 must be related to the main investments of Baltic Muppets which start at TRL6.

For each challenge SMART goals have been identified. SMART goals are **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**elevant, and **T**ime-bound.

Cluster 1 - Testing and piloting activities

Challenge #1.1 Test solutions for submerged farms - Assessment of durability and stability of ropes (Sweden)

In Sweden, four different types of ropes are used as substrate for the growth of mussels at specific mussel farming sites in the open sea and these ropes perform differently, in terms of harvest biomass per meter rope. The performance of a certain rope-type is different between different farm locations, for example, one type of rope performs well at one farm-site but is useless on another site, presumably because of different environmental conditions. It is difficult to tell in general which type of rope is best, because there is no “one type fits all” solution.

The criteria for good performance are:

1. The mussels should not fall off the rope during growth, or when pulled up from the water at harvest.
2. The ropes should not get twisted around themselves while hanging in the water.
3. Substrate from the ropes should not get ripped off by the harvester and end up in the harvest.

The selected applicant should evaluate the performance of different ropes at different sites, coupled with site-specific conditions (e.g. exposure, current, strength of byssus thread attachment by the mussels). The expected result is the development of expertise on which ropes to use in low-saline waters and in different site conditions.

The selected challenge will require for the applicant to travel to the Ecopelag mussel farms in Västervik, Norrstensfjärden and St. Anna, where the different rope-types are in use. Additionally, it might be required to follow the harvest team to design a sampling method for evaluation of rope wear and tear.

Table 3: SMART TARGET for Challenge 1.1.

Specific	The report from the study will analyse the optimal type of substrate for spat collection and mussel production at the mussel farms in Västervik, Norrstensfjärden, and St. Anna.
Measurable	The study will analyse four types of substrates at three locations from May to October 2025. Mussel density, size distribution, and biofouling will be reported.
Achievable	The three mussel farms are established, and the study will be supported by boat time.
Relevant	To optimize spat collection and mussel production, site-specific knowledge of substrate types is essential.
Time	May - October 2025 <i>(total program of 5 months that offers flexibility in start date due to potential changes in environmental conditions).</i>

Challenge #1.2 Test solutions for submerged farms - Regulatory requirements, such as marking systems to document ownership. (Denmark)

According to the Danish regulation, all elements on a Mussel farm must be marked with a unique code to identify the equipment owner. The marking system should be robust, and it should allow

the read of the unique number after the equipment has been submerged and exposed to biofouling. This includes the development of a marking system with the possibility of identifying unique codes to be applied to the equipment.

Testing activities should focus on stability and readability of ownership marks. The performance of the marks may be evaluated according to:

- Easy to attach to the farm elements.
- The mark must be robust according to seawater and the processing.
- The tacks should be readable for >20 y.
- Easy to read by the mussel farmer and the authorities.
- Reading should not be affected by biofouling.
- The cost of the system should be below 1 EUR per mark.

The system must be tested at a submerged mussel farm in the Limfjord (Denmark) on different types of equipment (pipes, nets, concrete blocks, markings etc.). The selected applicant shall do the marking of the equipment and monitor the performance of the marks. Taking into consideration the budget limitation, another possibility would be to develop a marking system, a plan for tests and a manual for the implementation of outcomes of tests.

Table 4: SMART TARGET for Challenge 1.2.

Specific	The report and three prototypes from the study will analyse the most efficient methods for marking mussel farming equipment, focusing on the stability and readability of the ownership marks. Three types of marks will be tested on a submerged mussel farm in the Limfjord.
Measurable	The marks will be evaluated based on the following criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ease of attachment to farm elements. • Robustness against seawater and processing conditions. • Durability: Marks should remain readable for over 20 years. • Ease of reading by mussel farmers and authorities. • Resistance to biofouling: Readability should not be compromised by biofouling. • Cost-effectiveness: The system should cost less than 1 EUR per mark.
Achievable	Danish law requires that all equipment be marked. While various types of marks exist in the market, they have not yet been tested on mussel farms.
Relevant	Danish mussel farmers must mark all equipment, so developing or identifying the best mark will streamline the marking process and improve efficiency.
Time	March - October 2025 <i>(total program of 5 months that offers flexibility in start date due to potential changes environmental conditions).</i>

Challenge #1.3 Pilot the solution for submerged farms - New logistic solutions for harvested mussels. (Sweden)

The project proposal must focus on innovative, resource efficient and sustainable piloting activities of the selected solution to evaluate the performance of the selected solution in a real-world, operational environment before full-scale implementation. The proposal should focus on piloting solutions.

In the low saline part of the Baltic Sea, it takes 2 years for a blue mussel to reach good size for harvest. Harvest is performed with a specialized floating harvest machine, and because of the high costs associated with the harvest, it is important to optimize the transport of harvested mussels from the offshore farm to quay.

When mussels are harvested, they are still alive and will continue to live as long as they are kept in good conditions. However, at harvest they are collected in dense packed bags and stored in the open air. Under those conditions, the time that the mussels can survive limits the time available for collection and transport to quay, and the time available for further transport and processing.

The harvester has a limit of ca 5 tons per day and the smallest reasonable amount to transport to the quay is 15 tons. The selected applicant should evaluate feasibility of harvesting limits, taking into consideration conditions for survival of mussels. The identified problem is the survival of the mussels, which depends on water temperature and density of packaging. In addition to clarifying time-limits for harvest and transport with today's methods, the applicant should also research which harvest and storage conditions could possibly be improved, in order to increase the time of survival.

The access to relevant premises may be granted for the 3rd party to pilot selected solutions (special conditions may apply). Pilots can also be conducted on a site with similar conditions.

Table 5: SMART TARGET for Challenge 1.3.

Specific	The report from the study will analyse how to optimise logistics in mussel production on the east coast of Sweden. The logistics include harvesting, transport, and storage of the mussels before processing. The report will propose two technical solutions for an integrated process and estimate the investment cost.
Measurable	The analysis will propose two different integrated technical solutions for harvesting, transport, and processing. Investment and operational costs will be estimated for both solutions.
Achievable	The existing European processing industry for mussels uses technology that must be adapted to small, thin-shelled mussels from the Baltic.
Relevant	Optimized logistics will reduce cost and improve the quality of the product.
Time	May - October 2025 <i>(total program of 5 months that offers flexibility in start date due to potential changes environmental conditions).</i>

Cluster 2 - Feasibility study, market study, business strategy

Challenge #2.1 Strategy on how to overcome barriers for market entry of new mussel products

The project proposal must examine the obstacles to the market introduction of new mussel products - pet food products based on small mussels.

The project proposal must propose a strategy to overcome the barriers and offer solutions to reach the market and target group. The strategy should include a market overview of already existing pet food products made from mussels in Germany, Sweden and Denmark and an analysis of the different characteristics such as prices, packaging sizes, main product characteristics (e.g. canned wet food, mussels only as an additive, dry food, frozen food, barf, etc.).

New products may also include the sale of goods and services derived from shellfish farming, such as nutrient extraction, improvement of water quality and biodiversity, and the use of shellfish to build biogenic reefs.

Table 6: SMART TARGET for Challenge 2.1.

Specific	<p>This challenge aims at identifying potential obstacles for sale and consumption of mussel-based pet food products, as well as ideas how to overcome these. Potential obstacles can be found in (unpleasant) smell, price, why a product is bought by customers, shelf life, packaging, form of application, and the novelty of the product itself, which might require additional explanation.</p> <p>Mussel food and its particular properties should be compared to already existing food products, and specific advantages/benefits of mussel products (e.g. health benefits, attractive price, regionality, traceability of sources) and particularly the environmental benefits should be identified.</p>
Measurable	Measurable results will be a report on the customers experience with mussel pet food resulting in a ranking of the obstacles that according to the impact on potential customer decision.
Achievable	A survey on the a.m. topics of 5(+) retailers and 50(+) end consumers is achievable
Relevant	Crucial for market success of product
Time	March – July 2025

Challenge #2.2 Strategy to increase consumer acceptance for mussel products

The project proposal shall study consumer acceptance for mussel products, especially petfood products, by performing a research analysis of consumer acceptance for mussel products. The proposal should bring detailed characteristics of consumers and their needs regarding mussel-based pet products and provide a tailored strategy for increasing consumer acceptance in Sweden/Germany/Denmark. The strategy should cover analysis of what kind of products pet

owners look for and what special characteristics (e.g. GAGs for joint health, product “X” makes shiny fur etc.) of mussel-based pet products would be desirable.

Table 7: SMART TARGET for Challenge 2.2

Specific	Challenge 2.2 aims at understanding and increasing the consumer acceptance of mussel pet-food products. This challenge is linked to challenge 2.1 and a cooperation between both should be established. The already performed consumer survey by CRM should be used as a base to be extended to Sweden and Denmark. The study should result in a list of preferences for purchase decision.
Measurable	A market analysis and potential increase of turnover of mussel products must be prepared, including the analysed and evaluated surveys in Denmark and Sweden.
Achievable	An online survey in Denmark and Sweden, and an elaborated campaign
Relevant	Crucial for market success of product
Time	March – July 2025

Challenge #2.3 Go-to-market strategy with assessment of willingness to pay for mussel products

The project proposal shall study the mussel products market landscape, customer preferences and positioning of mussel products. The proposal should also survey potential customers to gather data on customer preferences regarding the price of mussels’ products. The strategy should cover analysis of pricing models, market surveys and gathering consumer feedback.

Table 8: SMART TARGET for Challenge 2.3

Specific	An overview about already existing mussel products on the pet food market, including prices must be prepared. Also, a research on the role of price for the purchase decision in the world of pet food general and – more specifically – for mussel-based products is expected.
Measurable	A study on willingness to pay for mussel-based pet food products in relation to turnover, considering the various advantages of mussels.
Achievable	A survey of 100(+) people is conducted either online or in person.
Relevant	Important to give an orientation for feasibility and pricing of mussel pet-food products.
Time	May –October 2025

Challenge #2.4 Recommendation for certification to improve mussel production

The project proposal shall propose a study of the certification to improve mussel production. This includes a list of standards and benefits for the identified certificates and provide criteria and compliance requirements for each certificate. Additionally, the study should provide relevant information concerning requirements to obtain the certification. The proposed study shall evaluate not only international certification systems, but also focus on regional alternatives. Moreover, it should conduct a gap analysis to determine the current state of mussel production processes in relation to the standards of the desired certifications. It needs to include the identification of areas which need improvement to meet the certification desirable requirements relevant to at least mussel farm in the following countries: Germany/Denmark/Sweden.

Table 9: SMART TARGET for Challenge 2.4

Specific	The aim of this challenge is to research the role and importance of organic labels (producer labels, EU-label, regional labels), identify specific differences and requirements for producers. On the basis of a concrete example of a not yet certified farm, work and financial effort in order to gain a specific certification should be demonstrated.
Measurable	Report about the role and importance of organic certification for end-consumers. A list of eco-labels in Germany, Denmark, and Sweden. A concrete scenario for a farm including effort, costs and potential turnover effect.
Achievable	A report on the should be delivered.
Relevant	Orientation of mussel farms about potential economic benefits by eco-labelling for mussel farmers.
Time	March –July 2025

Challenge #2.5 Sales of goods and services from mussel farming

The project proposal shall include a study for market goods and services from mussel farming, including sale of nutrient catch, sales of improved water quality, sales of improved quality of bathing water, sales and relaying of mussels for habitat restoration of biogenic reefs. The study should identify relevant market partners, important selling points, need of process guarantees and pricing of the product relevant to at least one mussel farm in these countries: Germany/Denmark/Sweden.

Table 10: SMART TARGET for Challenge 2.5

Specific	A report will analyse goods and services from mussel farming, the market for selling these assets—including private and public buyers—market mechanisms, and sales points for different segments. The report will address the impact of new EU regulations such as the Habitat Restoration Law and the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD).
-----------------	---

Measurable	The report will be structured as a matrix, detailing 1) type of ecosystem service, 2) potential market for the service, 3) price, and 4) sales arguments. It will also forecast the impact of the Habitat Restoration Law and the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD).
Achievable	There is extensive scientific knowledge on goods and services from mussel farming, and the market for habitat restoration and investment in sustainable projects, particularly for improving CSRD reporting, is expanding.
Relevant	The sale of goods and services related to habitat restoration presents a potential secondary value chain for mussel farms, which needs to be developed.
Time	March – July 2025

4. Eligibility Criteria

This section describes in detail who can apply and what conditions should be met by the submitted proposal.

4.1. Who can apply?

The Baltic Muppets Innovation Call is open to **single applicants as an SMEs/start-up (Micro, small and medium-sized enterprises)**.

Micro, small and medium-sized enterprise (SMEs) will be considered eligible **ONLY** if complying with the [Commission Recommendation 2003/361/EC](#) and [the SME user guide](#).

In summary, the criteria which define an SME are:

- a) The headcount in the Annual Work Unit (AWU) is less than 250.
- b) Annual turnover less or equal to €50 million OR annual balance sheet total less or equal to €43 million.

Start-ups that do not have yet an annual turnover or balance sheets are also considered eligible given that they fulfil the criteria (a) and (b) at submission time.

Applicants will be considered eligible if they comply will **the following rules**:

- a. Applicant fulfils the conditions for SME or start-up, described in the section 4.1.
- b. Applicant has not been declared bankrupt or has initiated bankruptcy procedure.
- c. Applicant has not been convicted for fraudulent behaviours, other financial irregularities, unethical or illegal business practices.
- d. Applicant is not under liquidation or an enterprise under difficulty according to the Commission Regulation No 651/2014 art. 2.18.

- e. Applicant has not been excluded from the possibility of obtaining EU funding under the provisions of both national and EU law, or by a decision of both national or EU authority.

4.2. Eligible regions

Applicants should be legally registered in the regions covered by the Baltic Muppets Consortium, including partners & associated partners regions (Fig. 1; Table 3):

Table 11: regions covered by the Baltic Muppets Consortium

Country	Regions	NUTS II code
Sweden	Stockholm	SE11
	Småland och öar	SE21
	Södra Sverige	SE22
Germany	Berlin	DE30
	Schleswig-Holstein	DEF0
Denmark	Sjælland	DK02
	Midtjylland	DK04
	Nordjylland	DK05
Estonia	Eesti	EE00
Ireland	Northern and western	IE04

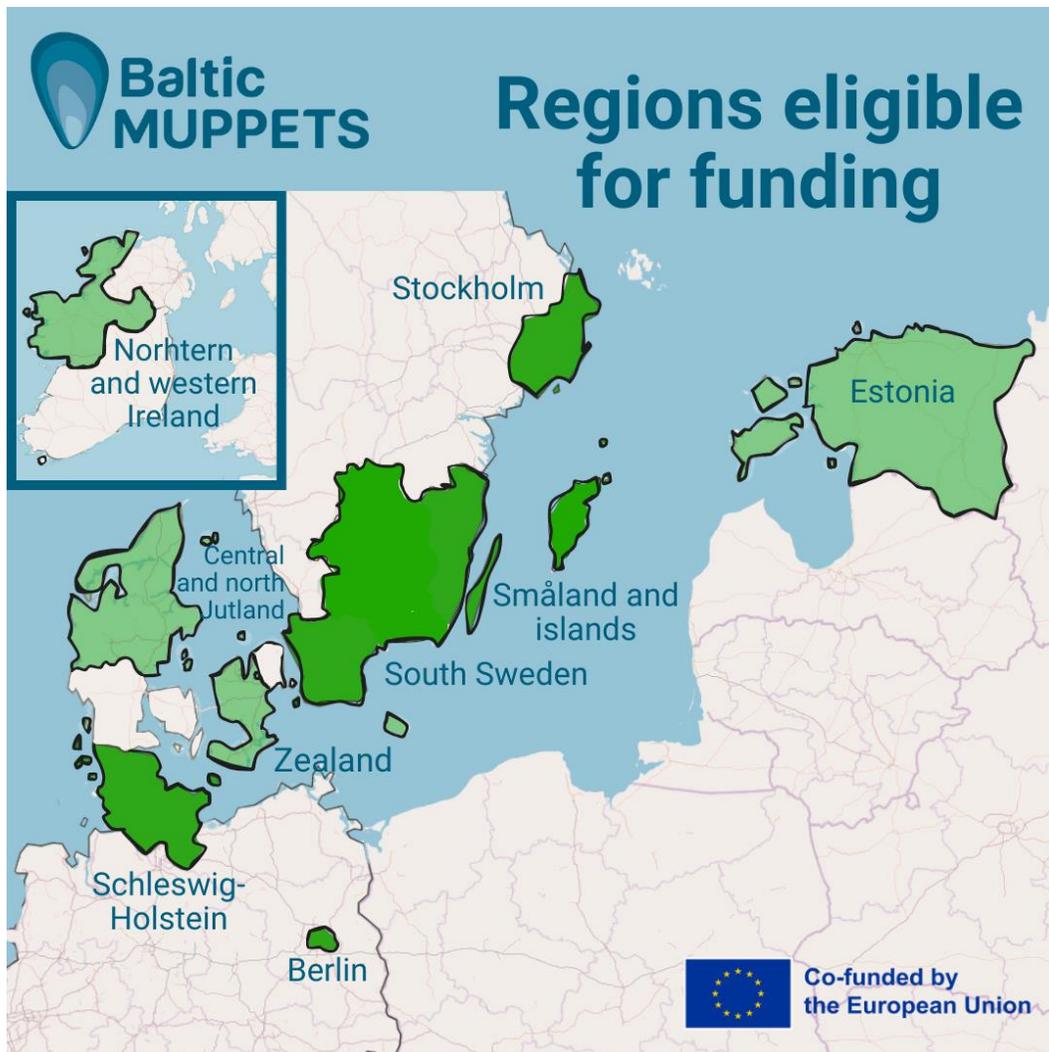


Figure 1: Regions covered by the Baltic Muppets Consortium

4.3. Proposal eligibility

- a) Each applicant can submit only **one** proposal. At the application stage, the criteria of time will be applied, as only the last submitted proposal to the F6S platform is going to be taken into consideration for further analysis.
- b) Each applicant can only address **one challenge** mentioned in Section 3.
- c) Applications for the Baltic Muppets Innovation Call must be submitted in English. Submissions in any other languages will be considered ineligible and will not be evaluated.
- d) The total budget per proposal project may not exceed **€50.000,00**. Also, the total amount requested must represent 100% of the total project costs.
- e) Proposals will not be accepted from entities who are partners (beneficiaries) or affiliated entities/ linked-third parties to the Baltic MUPPETS consortium, or who are formally linked in any way to them.

5. How to apply?

This section explains the submission process and defines the rules and procedures on how to apply to the Innovation Call.

5.1. How to submit your proposal

The applicants can submit their proposals exclusively through the F6S platform:

<https://www.f6s.com/baltic-muppets-innovation-call/apply>

The submission window opens on the **5th of November 2024 and closes on 14th of January 2025, at 17:00 CET.**

Applications submitted via any other channels will be automatically rejected. The applicants are required to **create a profile at www.f6s.com** to be able to submit their proposal.

The proposal template - **Baltic MUPPETS Proposal template** is available on the Baltic MUPPETS website: <https://balticmuppets.eu/opportunities/innovation-call/>. The template is extracted as a document for reference purposes only. The Application form should be directly filled out at the F6S platform.

We recommend becoming familiar with the templates of: **Baltic MUPPETS Sub-grant agreement, SME declaration and Declaration of Honour**. These documents must be provided if the applicant is selected and are mandatory to finalise the contract and enter the project implementation phase.

We strongly recommend not waiting until the last moment for proposal submission. **Failure of the proposal to arrive in time for any reason, including communications delays, or network issues is not acceptable as an extenuating circumstance and will automatically lead to rejection of the submission.** The time of receipt of the proposal as recorded by the submission system will be definitive.

Important: Please note that after application submission, editing is not possible. If an error is discovered and the call deadline has not passed, the applicant may request a resubmission by contacting the Baltic Muppets Innovation Call team at support@f6s.com, using the subject line: "RESUBMISSION REQUEST". While we will make every effort to process resubmission requests, we cannot guarantee the feasibility of resubmitting before the deadline if the request is not received in a timely manner.

All decisions made by the Baltic Muppets Innovation Call team regarding submission and resubmission are final.

6. How will applications be evaluated and selected?

This section defines the rules and procedures which will be performed for the evaluation of the Innovation Call and selection of innovators.

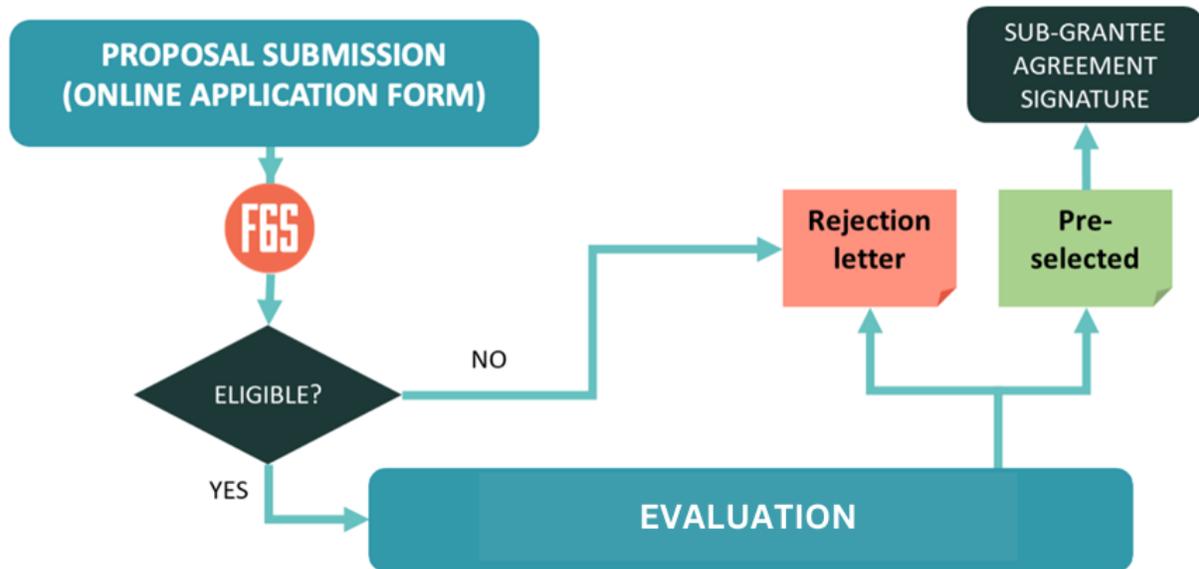


Figure 2: Evaluation of the Innovation Call

6.1. Evaluation steps

The evaluations will take place remotely and will be organised in the following steps:

- **Step 1: Eligibility Check:** An initial eligibility check will be carried out to verify that the applications meet the conditions expressed in section 4 and to discard non-eligible applications.
- **Step 2: Individual Internal Evaluation:** Each application will be assigned to at least two experts, involved in the Baltic Muppets consortium. The experts will perform an individual evaluation.
- **Step 3: Consensus:** After the individual evaluation, the internal experts will have a consensus meeting to agree on a common evaluation text and a score.
- **Step 4: Ranking lists:** At the end of the evaluation, a ranking will be prepared with the shortlisted applications.

6.2. Step 1: Eligibility Check

An initial eligibility check will be performed to filter and discard non-eligible proposals. All proposals must meet the following criteria:

1. Submission has been made only in English through the F6S platform and by the defined deadline [Y/N].
2. The applicant submitted only one proposal, which is fully completed, including all required sections [Y/N].
3. The applicant is an SME/startup legally registered and established in one of the eligible regions covered by the Call.
4. The total budget of the proposal does not exceed €50,000, representing 100% of the project costs.
5. Applicants and proposal met all conditions described in Section 4 [Y/N]

Proposals must meet **ALL the eligibility criteria**. Proposals that do not meet one or more of the criteria will be deemed non-eligible and discarded. Eligible proposals will be shortlisted for the next step of the evaluation process.

Applicants whose proposals are deemed non-eligible will be notified via email after the eligibility check has been concluded.

6.3. Steps 2 - 4: Selection

6.3.1. Selection criteria

The applications will be scored based on the criteria shown in the table 4 below.

Table 12: Selection Criteria

Criteria	Description
Criterion 1: Concept and approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Alignment with the Baltic Muppets project and the challenge selected. ● Coherence and plausibility of the application. ● Innovation, novelty and feasibility of the proposed solution and approach.
Criterion 2: Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Quality and feasibility of the work plan and the concept fit to a 5-month programme. ● Quality and feasibility of the described scenario of the testing or piloting activities (challenge dedicated to piloting or testing activities) or plan for preparing the strategy (challenges dedicated to strategies).
Criterion 3: Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The expected impact of the proposed solution. ● Exploitation potential of the proposed solution beyond the project timeline.
Criterion 4: Team and value for money	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Demonstrated capacity to implement the proposed solution. ● Knowledge, technological and business expertise. ● Allocation and justification of resources and project costs.

Each criterion under examination exhibited in Table 4 will receive score values that are represented by the rationale detailed in the table 5 below.

Table 13: score values

Score	Rationale
1 - Poor	The application addresses the criterion in an inadequate manner or there are significant weaknesses.
2 - Fair	The application addresses the criterion broadly, but there are still several weaknesses.
3 - Good	The application addresses the criterion well, but improvements are necessary.
4 - Very Good	The application addresses the criterion very well, but some improvements are still possible.
5 - Excellent	The application successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion. Any shortcomings are minor.

Each criterion will be scored between 1 and 5. Half point scores are not given. The final score (including for each criterion) is calculated based on the average of the scores provided by the evaluators. The threshold for each criterion is three (3), therefore any criterion with a score less than three will disqualify the application.

At the end of the evaluation process, all applications will be ranked into two ranking lists, one per each Cluster. Threshold: only proposals scoring at least 3 points (out of 5) in each criterion will be considered for funding.

The ranking will follow the rules:

- **Rule 1:** The applications will be ranked based on their final score.
- **Rule 2:** If there is a tie between applications, these will be ranked according to the following order:
 - Best score on *Concept and Approach* (Criterion 1);
 - Best score on *Implementation* (Criterion 2);
 - Best score on *Impact* (Criterion 3);
- **Rule 3:** In case following Rule 2 there are proposals in the same position, priority will be given to the application that has a lower funding request.

6.3.2. Final selection of proposals

Priority to fund and invite to sign the contract will be given to applications addressing **Cluster 1 - Testing and Piloting Activities taking into account the budget of Innovation Call and total requested budget by applicants.**

In case no proposals are submitted to Cluster 1, or proposals from Cluster 1 score below 3 points, or the Innovation Call budget will not be entirely used, proposals from Cluster 2 will be selected.

6.3.3. Notification of the results

All applicants will be notified of the results of the evaluation and will receive an Evaluation Summary Report (ESR).

6.4. Reserve list

Baltic Muppets will keep a reasonable number of applications in a reserved list, in case any applicant decides to withdraw or is not able to fulfil the contract requirements.

6.5. Redress process

Within 3 working days of the delivery of a rejection letter considering the application as non-eligible or an ESR, the applicant may submit a request for redress if they believe the results of the eligibility check have not been correctly applied, or if they feel that there has been a shortcoming in the way their application has been evaluated that may affect the final decision on whether to enter the Baltic Muppets Programme for Innovators.

In such a case, an internal review committee from Baltic Muppets will examine the applicant's request for a redress. The committee's role is to ensure a coherent interpretation of such requests, and equal treatment of applicants. Requests for redress must:

- Be related to the evaluation process or eligibility checks.
- Clearly describe the complaint (in English).
- Sent by the entity's legal representative that has also submitted the proposal.

The committee will review the complaint and will recommend an appropriate course of action. If there is clear evidence of a shortcoming that could affect the eventual funding decision, it is possible that all or part of the application will be re-evaluated. Please note:

- This procedure is concerned only with the general evaluation and/or eligibility checking process. The committee will not question the scientific or technical judgement of the evaluators.
- A re-evaluation will only be carried out if there is evidence of a shortcoming that affects the final decision on whether to fund the proposal or not. This means, for example, that a problem related to one evaluation criterion will not lead to a re-evaluation if a proposal has failed anyway on other criteria.
- The evaluation score following any re-evaluation will be regarded as definitive. It may be lower than the original score.

All requests for redress will be treated in confidence and must be sent to the Baltic Muppets team at: opencall@BalticMuppets.eu.

7. What is next? Sub-grant agreement signature

After the final project selection, the contract preparation phase will start in collaboration with the representatives of the projects that have been awarded. We will ask the selected proposals to

provide the necessary documents which are mentioned in the table 6 below. All documentation requires a signature and must be signed with a valid electronic digital signature.

Table 14: necessary documents to sign the sub-grant agreement

Requirement	Description
Proof of legal existence	Company Register, Official Gazette or another official document per country showing the name of the organisation, the legal address and registration number and a copy of a document proving VAT registration (in case the VAT number does not show on the registration extract or its equivalent).
<p>Specific to SMEs</p> <p>1. Proof of the SME condition is required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the applicant has been fully validated as an SME on the Beneficiary Register Participant Portal, the PIC number must be provided. • If the applicant has not been fully validated as an SME on the Participant Portal, the following documents will be required to prove the status as an SME: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o SME Declaration signed (with a valid e-signature) and stamped: In the event the beneficiary declares being non-autonomous, the balance sheet and profit and loss account (with annexes) for the last period for upstream and downstream organisations is required. o Status Information Form, which includes the headcount (AWU), balance, profit & loss accounts of the latest closed financial year and the relation, upstream and downstream, of any linked or partner company. <p>2. Supporting documents:</p> <p>In cases where either the number of employees or the ownership is not clearly identified: any other supporting documents which demonstrate headcount and ownership such as payroll details, annual reports, national regional, association records, etc.</p>	
Know Your Customer (KYC) form	The document to collect the proof of Identity and proof of address from Directors of selected applicants to see if they are a Politically Exposed Person (PEP) or have been sanctioned.
Sub-grant agreement	The contract signed between the Baltic MUPPETS Consortium represented Treasurer (F6S) and the beneficiary. Contract as provided to the sub-grantee is final and may not be changed.
Declaration of Honour	The Document which covers all conditions related to the Baltic MUPPETS Innovation Call signed by the legal representative of the applying entity.
Bank Account information	The account where the funds will be transferred will be indicated via a specific form signed by the entity.

It should be emphasised that each participating SME should provide at contract preparation time a valid VAT number¹. Failure to provide a valid VAT number will automatically result in exclusion from the contract preparation.

Please make sure you provide documents within the deadlines that will be communicated to you. If you fail to deliver the requested documents on time, without clear and reasonable justification, you will be excluded from the further formal assessment and you will be replaced by the applicant from the Reserve List. In general, the negotiation should be concluded **within 2 weeks**.

8. Funding Programme - selected entities obligations

8.1. Implementation and reporting

Selected applicants participating in the Baltic MUPPETS Innovation Call will be responsible for the following duties:

8.1.1 Project Implementation:

The projects will run up to 5 months. Applicants must adhere to this timeline and demonstrate tangible progress throughout the implementation phase.

8.1.2 Project stages and Reporting:

Projects will be divided for up to 3 stages and will follow requirements as shown in the stage schedule described below in table 7.

At the end of each stage, applicants will have to deliver the assigned report or deliverable as a means of verification of work performed. Each report and deliverable will be evaluated as means to check the progress of the project implementation.

Table 15: stages of selected project

Stage name	Outcome of the stage	Timeline
Stage 1	Deliverable - detailed implementation plan	within 15 days after the start of the project
Stage 2	Mid-term report	By the last day of the stage implementation
Stage 3	Final report /deliverable	within 10 days after completing the project

8.1.3 Project Contact Point:

¹ To be checked at European Commission services such as http://ec.europa.eu/taxation_customs/vies/

Each selected project will be assigned a dedicated person (Project Contact Point) from the Baltic MUPPETS consortium. The Project Contact Point will provide guidance, monitor progress, and ensure that the project aligns with the predefined goals. The Project Contact Point will be the key point of contact for the applicants and will assist in overcoming any challenges faced during the project implementation.

8.2 Financial support provided

Successful proposals shall receive the requested financial contribution in the form of a lump sum, following the payment schedule. The detailed payment schedule and payment conditions will be stated in the Sub-grant (Beneficiary) Agreement.

Eligible costs

A lump sum funding is a grant based on a pre-fixed lump sum amount and not based on the reimbursement of actual costs. The lump sum must approximate the beneficiaries' underlining actual costs. The following direct costs, incurred during the project's duration, are eligible:

1. **Direct staff costs (personnel):** hours cost of the staff of the beneficiary that is dedicated to actual work under the development of the project;
2. **Equipment costs:** depreciation costs of equipment and only eligible for projects funded under Cluster 1 - Testing and piloting activities.
3. **Other direct costs:** further direct incurred costs can be claimed, like travel expenses, consumables, etc. Travel expenses will be eligible only for projects funded under Cluster 1 - Testing and piloting activities.
4. **Indirect costs:** 7% calculated as (personnel costs + equipment costs + other direct costs) *0.07.
5. **Subcontracting is not allowed.**

The granting of a lump sum does not foresee the delivery of a detailed financial report on actual costs and timesheets.

8.3. Payment scheme

Successful proposals shall receive the requested financial contribution in the form of a lump sum, following the payment schedule described below.

Table 16: payment schedule

Payment number	Amount	Timeline
1st payment	30% of the total funding paid	within 14 days after the positive review of deliverable - detailed implementation plan
2nd payment	40% of the total funding paid	within 14 days after the positive review of mid-term review
3rd payment	30% of the total funding paid	within 30 days after final report approved by the consortium

9. Additional considerations

9.1. Conflict of interest

Applicants must not have any current and/or potential conflict of interest with the Baltic Muppets Innovation Call selection process and during the whole programme. Applicants must formally and immediately notify the Baltic Muppets project of any situation constituting or likely to lead to a conflict of interest and take all the necessary steps to rectify this situation.

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

If a conflict of interest is discovered and confirmed at the time of the evaluation process, the application will be considered as non-eligible and will not be evaluated.

9.2. Checks and reviews

The EC may, at any time during the implementation of the sub-project and up to five years after the end of the sub-project, arrange for a check and review to be carried out by external auditors, or by the EC services themselves, including the European Anti-Fraud office (OLAF). The procedure shall be deemed to be initiated on the date of receipt of the relevant letter sent by the EC.

9.3. Promoting the action and giving visibility to the EU funding

The third parties which will receive funding must promote the sub-project, the Baltic Muppets project and its results, by providing targeted information to multiple audiences (including the media and the public) in a strategic and effective manner and to highlight the financial support of the EC. Further details will be provided in the Sub-Grant Agreement, and the Baltic Muppets Communication team will guide and support these communication activities.

9.4. Intellectual Property Rights

The results and IPR developed during the sub-granted project implementation will be the exclusive property of the corresponding beneficiary.

The third parties must comply with IP rules outlined in the Baltic MUPPETS Sub-Grant Agreement (template). In general terms, this includes the following aspects:

- The granting consortium - Baltic Muppets - will not obtain ownership of the results generated under sub-granted projects. However, the Baltic Muppets Consortium will be granted the right to make internal use of any results produced by the third party as part of their Baltic Muppets Innovation Call activities.
- The results generated under sub-granted projects will remain the property of the third party.
- The third party will be responsible for any costs associated with protection of Intellectual Property Rights.

9.5. Data protection

To process and evaluate applications, the Baltic Muppets consortium will need to collect Personal and Industrial Data. F6S Network Ireland Limited, as the Innovation Call Manager of the project, will act as Data Controller for personal data submitted through the F6S platform for these purposes. Please see the privacy policy [here](#). F6S Network Ireland Limited, as the Baltic Muppets FSTP Treasurer, will also have access to this information.

A Data Protection Officer (DPO) has been appointed by F6S 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.

The F6S platform's system design and operational procedures ensure that data is managed in compliance with The General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (GDPR). Each applicant will accept the F6S terms to ensure coverage. Please refer [here](#) to review the F6S platform's privacy policy and data security policy.

Apart from the F6S platform, data will also be stored in the F6S Google Drive, and in the project repository on SharePoint, managed by the SUBMARINER Network - the Baltic Muppets Project Coordinator.

The Baltic Muppets consortium must retain generated data until five years after the balance of the Baltic Muppets project is paid or longer if there are ongoing procedures (such as audits, investigations, or litigations). In this case, the data must be kept until the end.

10. Important links and contacts

The Baltic Muppets consortium will provide information to the applicants primarily via <https://www.f6s.com/baltic-muppets-innovation-call/discuss> so that all information (questions and answers) will be accessible to all potential applicants. No binding information will be provided via any other means.

- More info about Baltic Muppets: <https://balticmuppets.eu/>
- More info about the Baltic Muppets Innovation Call: <https://balticmuppets.eu/opportunities/innovation-call/>
- Apply via: <https://www.f6s.com/baltic-muppets-innovation-call/apply>
- Online Q&A and discussion forum: <https://www.f6s.com/baltic-muppets-innovation-call/discuss>
- Help desk: opencall@balticmuppets.eu
- F6S support team (for platform issues during the application): support@f6s.com