Salient One analysis

A stronger Global Ocean Observing System to enhance Europe’s strategic autonomy, climate resilience and biodiversity conservation

Donor: European Commission

Location: Global marine areas — primarily beyond national jurisdiction.

Deadline: 16 February 2027

Open | Last updated 2026-11-12

Call description

This Horizon Europe Innovation Action seeks to strengthen the Global Ocean Observing System (GOOS), benefiting scientists, public authorities and businesses through ocean-observation equipment and improved biodiversity and ecosystem knowledge. Its geographical focus is global, primarily on areas beyond national jurisdiction, including under-observed regions relevant to Europe. It is not presented as a country-specific humanitarian response. Participation and entitlement to EU funding are distinct. Funding eligibility normally depends on establishment in an eligible country; an entity elsewhere may be funded if the topic provides for it or the granting authority considers its participation essential. This topic exceptionally makes all international organisations eligible for funding, subject to applicable participation restrictions.

The project start date and duration are to be fixed in the grant agreement; duration is expressed in months. The supplied topic extracts do not establish a specific duration. Extensions are exceptional and require justification and the granting authority’s agreement. The topic’s total indicative budget is EUR 50.00 million. The Commission estimates an EU contribution of around EUR 50.00 million per project, but proposals requesting different amounts may be submitted and selected. This is an estimate, not a stated project ceiling; the topic budget is also subject to the availability of Union appropriations.

Priorities and eligibility

Legal entities may participate subject to the Horizon Europe and topic conditions. For this Innovation Action, the general consortium rule requires independent beneficiary legal entities in different countries, including at least one in an EU Member State and two others in different Member States or Associated Countries. The beneficiaries select a coordinator from among themselves. Beneficiaries, affiliated entities and associated partners must register and obtain a participant identification code before submission; validation of beneficiaries and affiliated entities is required before grant signature, not before application.

Exclusion grounds are separate from the applicant category. Applicants subject to EU administrative exclusion or specified situations, including bankruptcy, tax or social-security breaches, grave professional misconduct, fraud or corruption, cannot participate. Misrepresentation or failure to supply required information can also lead to refusal. Legal entity validation, financial capacity verification and exclusion checks remain necessary before award.

If a project uses satellite-based Earth observation, positioning, navigation or related timing data and services, beneficiaries must use Copernicus and/or Galileo/EGNOS; other data and services may also be used. If it collects in-situ data and marine observations, beneficiaries must make them openly available through the European Marine Observation and Data network, following the findable, accessible, interoperable and reusable principle.

Legal entities established in China are generally ineligible to participate in this Innovation Action in any capacity; the general annex allows case-by-case exceptions for justified reasons. Separately, it states that China-established public universities administered by or under the supervision of the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology are ineligible to participate in any action under the work programme. The topic also excludes entities established in an eligible country that are directly or indirectly controlled by China or a legal entity established in China. These are participation restrictions, not merely funding restrictions.

Admissible and eligible Innovation Action proposals are evaluated for excellence, impact, and quality and efficiency of implementation. The published criteria address objectives and methodology, credible pathways to outcomes, dissemination and exploitation, work plans, risks, resources and participant expertise. For full applications, the stated individual criterion threshold is 3 and the overall threshold is 10; impact receives a 1.5 weighting for ranking Innovation Actions. Passing thresholds does not guarantee funding within the available budget.

Applicants need sufficient financial and operational capacity. Operational capacity is assessed during evaluation against implementation quality, with stated exemptions for public bodies, Member State organisations and international organisations. Financial capacity is checked during grant preparation, normally for the coordinator at the stated grant threshold, subject to exceptions. The topic's evaluation committee will be composed partly of EU institution representatives.

Proposals are expected to contribute to all stated outcomes in alignment with OceanEye. These include more resilient observing capacity, better public investment decisions, EU strategic autonomy and collaboration to validate, procure and deploy innovative observation technologies, particularly for biodiversity.

Funding and application requirements

Affiliated entities can receive funding if eligible but do not count towards the minimum consortium composition. Associated partners participate without signing the grant agreement or claiming contributions and may provide a route for entities not eligible for funding, unless topic conditions say otherwise. Other participation restrictions still apply.

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Applications must be submitted electronically through the Funding & Tenders Portal system using the forms inside that system. Paper submissions are not possible. The coordinator confirms its mandate to act for all applicants and the completeness and compliance of the application; participants confirm this again by declaration of honour before grant signature.

Part A is completed online and includes organisational information, the summarised budget and call-specific questions. Part B is downloaded from the submission system, completed and uploaded as a PDF; mandatory annexes and supporting documents are uploaded as PDFs or other system-permitted formats. The application must include an exploitation and dissemination plan with communication activities, subject to the first-stage exception for two-stage procedures. It must also include an ethics self-assessment.

The topic specifies a 100-page application limit, overriding the general full-application limit. After the deadline, excess pages are made invisible to evaluators. Applications may be submitted in any official EU language, although English is strongly advised. A request for call documentation in another official EU language must be made within 10 days after publication.

The general maximum funding rate for an Innovation Action is 70%, except for non-profit legal entities, for which up to 100% applies; a specific topic may set another rate. Equipment, infrastructure or other assets purchased specifically for this action, or developed as part of its tasks, may be declared as full capitalised costs. The grant agreement fixes the applicable parameters.

Do the complete topic conditions permit financial support to third parties, and are there any topic-specific limits or conditions? The general annex sets requirements only where that support is allowed; the supplied topic extracts do not establish permission. It would therefore be premature to design an onward-granting route as though it were confirmed.

The stated deadline for this call is 16 February 2027. The work programme permits the responsible Director-General to delay the deadline; applicants should check subsequent call updates.

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Recommendations

The topic calls for both immediate equipment deployment and a longer-term operational and sustainability plan; research or coordination alone would not demonstrate the full response sought. Connect GOOS-led deployment with observing-system optimisation, technology validation, training, data delivery and sustained cooperation, and show how each contributes to the expected outcomes.

Consortium design is consequential: the minimum beneficiary composition does not by itself establish that every participant can receive funding, and associated partners cannot claim contributions. The proposed work must also demonstrate the technical expertise and resources needed for deployment and sustained data delivery. Check each proposed entity’s participation and funding status, control and intended role before assigning tasks and budget.

Sources

ec.europa.eu - Official call

research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu - Official call

ec.europa.eu - Call document

Salient One analysis. Official call documents and amendments govern the funding conditions. wp-14-horizontal-activities_horizon-2026-2027_en.pdf: PDF conversion can omit pages, columns, tables and annexes. Compare this preview with the original; no OCR or page-completeness guarantee.

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