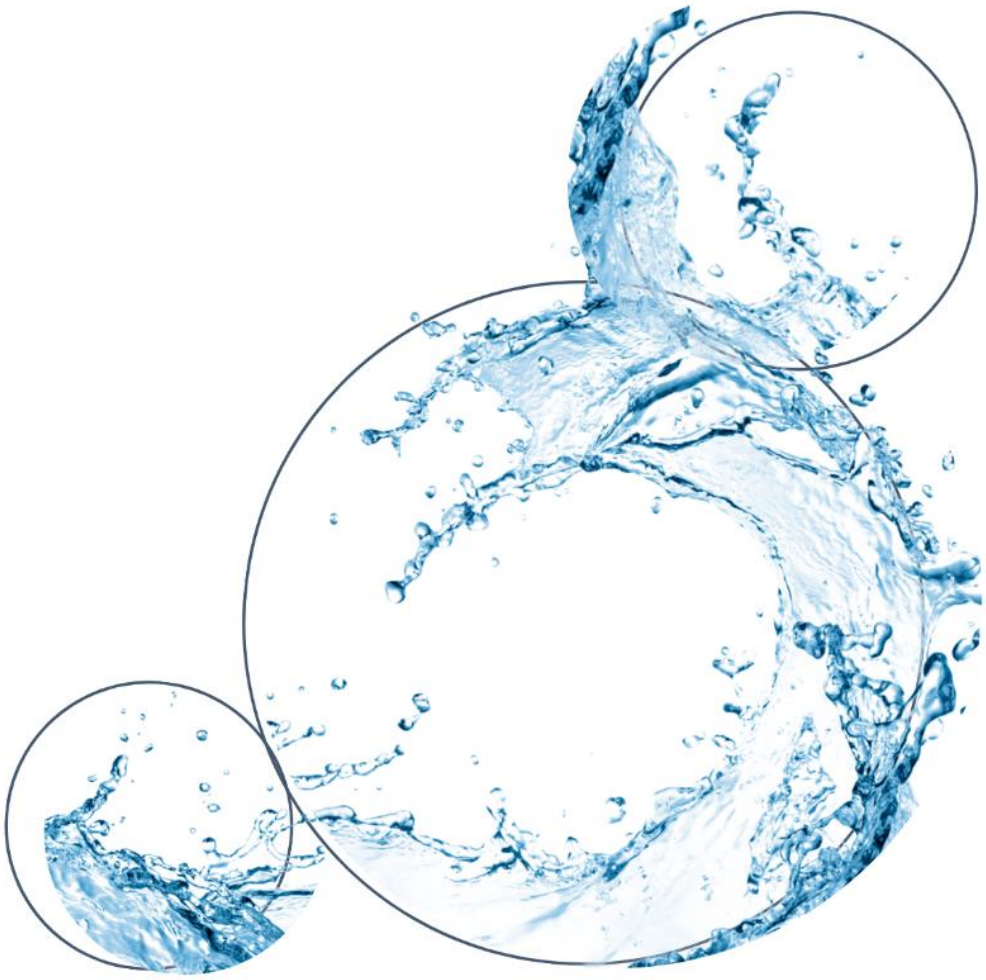

CircInWater
Supporting European SMEs to bring water-smart solutions to market

CircInWater Innovation lump sum Guide for applicants

Co-funded by the European Union

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SECTION 1. OVERVIEW OF INNOVATION LUMP SUM

This document summarises the key elements regarding the open call of the CircInWater Innovation lump sum scheme (Table 1):

Table 1.- Innovation lump sum summary.

Number of SMEs	14-42, until the budget is exhausted
Total budget	€850 000
Grant allocation	SME
Call	Open call, from 29th March 2023 to 31st May 2023
Grant per lump sum	min. €20 000/SME and max. €60 000/SME
Period per project	maximum 12 months
Maturity level	TRL 5-9
Participants (SME)	1-3

1.1 What is CircInWater?

CircInWater, the Water-Smart Eurocluster project funded by the EU, develops and implements support measures, including cascade funding, for companies addressing the lack of water-smart solutions to promote the digital, green, and resilient transitions (triple transitions) of the European industrial ecosystems. CircInWater will focus on supporting European SMEs (Small and medium-sized enterprises) to develop and implement water-smart solutions for the agri-food and energy-intensive industries (EII) (mining, pulp and paper, steel, and chemical industry).

For that purpose, CircInWater will provide financial support to the **SMEs** working on innovation, knowledge, and internationalisation activities focused on boosting and facilitating the triple transitions in this area through three lump sum schemes. The CircInWater lump sum schemes aim to offer flexibility to SMEs to cover their needs towards these transitions, depending on the maturity level of their technology or their knowledge and internationalisation demands. An SME can get a maximum grant from the CircInWater project of €60 000, considering all the lump sum schemes.

1.2 CircInWater Innovation lump sum

The CircInWater financial support for Innovation projects (Innovation lump sum) supports SMEs in developing new products, services, or methods, addressing the water challenges in the agri-food and energy-intensive industries within a maximum period of 12 months. Therefore, this Innovation lump sum targets two industrial ecosystems (agri-food and energy-intensive industry) through one call that will remain open from the 29th of March 2023 until the 31st of May 2023.

Collaborative projects are encouraged with up to 3 partners, but individual SMEs may also apply. The innovation project may also include non-funded entities, such as Research and Technology Organisations (RTOs) or large companies, that will support the project implementation (e.g. demonstration sites/industrial partners, or others). Those entities collaborating in implementing the action, **without requesting funding**, will participate as 'Project Collaborators'. (See more information in 'Section 3.1 Who can apply?').

For applications involving 'Project Collaborator(s)", it is highly encouraged to join a Letter of Support from each "Project Collaborator" to demonstrate interest and willingness to contribute to the project.

In total, between 14 and 42 SMEs will get support of the Innovation lump sum, depending on the amount requested, being a minimum per SME of €20 000 and a maximum of €60 000. SMEs can apply for the three different CircInWater lump sum schemes (Innovation, Knowledge, Internationalisation) up to a maximum of €60 000 in total.

1.3 Available lump sum schemes

CircInWater offers three different lump sum schemes (See Tables 5, 6, and 7 in Annex C). In addition to the Innovation lump sum, European SMEs can apply to:

- The Knowledge lump sum: facilitates external support on strategic issues that will accelerate the SMEs' triple transitions.
- The Internationalization lump sum: support the participation of the SMEs in the meet-the-buyer events organised by CircInWater in third countries or fairs/international events in third countries targeted by the project.

The key elements and requirements for the Knowledge and Internationalization lump sum schemes will be defined in separate Guides for Applicants. However, the '*ANNEX C. Summary of CircInWater lump sum schemes*' includes summary tables with the main information about the three CircInWater lump sum schemes.

1.4 Eligible activities

The Innovation lump sum provides financial support to SMEs for developing new products, services or methods addressing the water-related challenges in the agri-food and energy-intensive industries. The aim of the Innovation lump sum is to support SMEs **to scale up and implement close-to-market water-smart solutions** (Technology Readiness Level -TRL- **between 5 and 9** at the beginning of the project; See 'ANNEX B. Technology readiness level'). **At least one or several of the following eligible activities must be addressed** in the applications:

- Development of a prototype: designing, engineering, and manufacturing a prototype which is the first product that gets fabricated according to the original idea.
- Validation of technologies, services, or methodologies in a relevant environment: testing needed for validating a technology, service, or methodology, using a prototype working in a real simulated environment.
- Demonstrating technologies, services, or methodologies in a relevant or operational environment: testing needed for demonstrating and verifying a technology, service or methodology, using a prototype working in an operational environment.
- Designing, engineering and/or testing a pilot: first stage of a technology, service, or methodology implementation, used for testing/demonstrating a minimum viable product that provides the intelligence needed to take it to scale.
- Developing a complete and qualified system: prototype testing with all its components in their final form and under assumed conditions, reaching the end of the technology, service, or methodology development.
- Designing and/or implementing business case: design and/or implementing a technology, service, or methodology delivery strategy or a massive production and commercialisation roadmap.

The project and the eligible activities must address a water-related challenge in the agri-food or energy-intensive industries, preferably those identified by the CircInWater project. For the list of identified challenges in these industries, see 'ANNEX A.3 CircInWater challenges for the agrifood and energy-intensive industries'. However, the projects could also address other challenges according to CircInWater scope (See Section 1.1). In this case, the sound relevance of the challenge proposed needs to be duly justified in the project proposal.

1.5 Overall process

Figure 1 summarises the whole process and timeline for applying and implementing an Innovation project. This process will also be explained in detail in the following sections of the document.

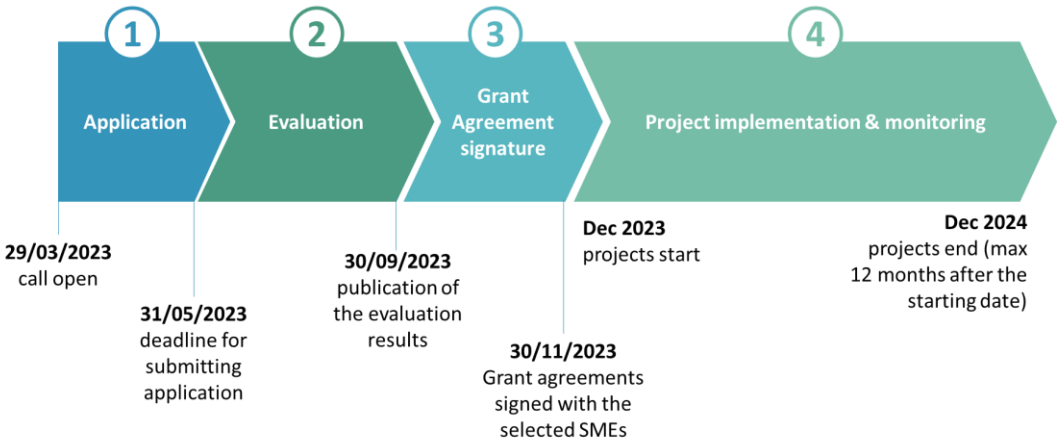

Figure 1. Innovation lump sum timeline.

SECTION 2. FUNDING CONDITIONS

2.1 Financial provision

A lump sum is a fixed amount of money that beneficiaries can use for several purposes related to achieving the project objectives and according to eligible activities and costs. The granting of a lump sum does not foresee the delivery of detailed financial reporting and timesheets. The use of the project budget will be controlled in the monitoring meetings considering the technical advancements. The Final Report will assess the fulfilment of work packages, tasks, and achievement of milestones and outcomes previously described in the project application. Additional supporting documents may be requested, if deemed necessary, to evaluate the progress.

The applicants can apply for a minimum grant of €20 000€ and maximum €60 000€ covering up to 100% of the eligible costs. The total budget reserved in CircInWater for the Innovation lump sum is €850 000.

The payment will be made directly to all beneficiaries (i.e. Coordinator, Partner I and/or Partner II) as a lump sum as follows (see also the section "6. Project implementation and monitoring"):

- **Prepayment**: 50% of the grant once the project is approved for starting, within 30 days upon signature of the Grant Agreement.
- **Final payment**: remaining 50% of the grant within 30 days upon approval of the Final Report.

Applicants are entitled to apply and benefit from more than one CircInWater lump sum schemes, reaching a total **max. funding of €60 000 per SME**, provided that the CircInWater projects are executed in line with the CircInWater lump sum schemes guidelines.

The payment will be made to each beneficiary individually, both in projects implemented by a single SME and in projects carried out as a consortium.

Furthermore, it should also be considered:

- All payments will be made in euros.
- Submission of an application does not constitute an entitlement for funding
- Beneficiaries have to set up internal contracts regulating their cooperation. CircInWater will not be responsible for paying any costs applied for and incurred by the beneficiaries in case of non-compliance with the terms and conditions of this funding scheme
- The following bodies may also carry out checks, reviews, audits and investigations — during the action or afterwards:
- European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency (EISMEA)

- the European Commission
- the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) under Regulations No 883/2013 22 and No 2185/9623
- 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 under Regulations above. To this end, the beneficiary concerned must keep all relevant information relating to the action, at least for 5 years after the final payment (or 3 form grants of not more than €60 000) and, in any case, until any ongoing checks, reviews, audits, investigations, litigation or other pursuits of claims have been concluded.

2.2 Eligible Costs

Although the payment will be made as a lump sum, it is necessary to explain in the application form how the lump sum will be used, including a clear budget proposal with the following budget lines: Direct staff costs, subcontracting and purchasing costs.

Only costs generated during the lifetime of the project are eligible. Since each project is funded in the form of a lump sum, costs described in the submitted budget must be determined in accordance with the beneficiary's usual accounting and management principles and practices. The categories of eligible costs are:

1. **Direct staff costs** (personnel): cost of the "human effort" related to the staff working in the development of the project. The total work hours dedicated to each work package must be also indicated in the Application Form.
2. **Subcontracting costs** (external expertise): work carried out by an external provider which has entered into an agreement on business conditions with the beneficiary.
3. **Purchasing costs:** travel and subsistence, equipment depreciation, consumables, other goods, works and services. Purchases or provision of paid services between consortium partners is not eligible.

The CircInWater evaluation criteria is considering the use of resources in your application (See Table 3 in Section '*4.2.2 Technical evaluation criteria*'), promoting those projects with a balance between the action plan proposed and the resources requested for its implementation.

SECTION 3. APPLICATION PROCESS

3.1 Who can apply?

The Innovation lump sum is for **European SMEs** (see Section '4.1 Step 1. Eligibility check/criteria'), providing innovative water-smart solutions for the agri-food or energy-intensive industries.

Individual SMEs may apply for this lump sum, but also collaborative projects of 2-3 SMEs are encouraged. In this case, the consortium needs to define a **'Project coordinator'** that will be responsible for the proposal submission, and the other SMEs involved in the project with financial support will act as **'Project Partners'**. Furthermore, the innovation project may also include non-eligible or no-funded entities, such as RTOs, or large companies: demo sites/industrial partners, or others. Those entities collaborating in implementing the action, **without requesting funding**, will participate as **'Project Collaborators'**.

Applicants can participate in several CircInWater Innovation projects as a Partner (within the limit of the maximum total funding of €60 000/SME), but an **SME can coordinate only one project.**

3.2 Timing

The call for Innovation projects will open on the **29th of March 2023 (12:00 am CET)** and will close on the **31st May 2023 at (5:00 pm CET)**. Only proposals submitted before the deadline will be evaluated. No additions or changes to received proposals can be made after submission closing.

The complete evaluation of applications will last a maximum of 4 months after the submission deadline. The results of the CircInWater Innovation lump sum will be announced at the end of September 2023 on the ECCP CircInWater website and the CircInWater submission platform.

3.3 How to apply?

Proposals must be submitted online using the Application Form available on the CircInWater submission platform (See the document 'CircInWater submission platform guide').

A draft proposal can be edited and updated as often as needed until the closing deadline of the open call or submitting it. Please note that any further modification of the proposal will not be possible once you click on submit. In case you need to submit a new modified application, before the call deadline, you can contact by email to CircInWater team (info@circinwater.eu) and ask for their support. Evaluators will only consider the information included in the application form.

The information provided in the application must be actual, true, and complete to allow the proposal assessment. English is the official language of the CircInWater Open Call. Thus, all proposals must be in English. Only proposals with all the fields completed in the application form can be submitted.

For collaborative projects, the 'Project Coordinator' is responsible for including all the information required in the Application Form. However, **all 'Project Partners' applying for funding, must individually complete** the information requested in **Section '1.1. Project partner information' and '1.2.1 Eligibility check – Participants eligibility',** in the CircInWater submission platform, as well as the **'Declaration of Honour'**.

3.3.1 Application Form structure

The Application Form includes the following sections, which are all mandatory to be filled in:

- Section 1. Administrative and legal information.
  - 1.1 Project partner information.
  - 1.2 Eligibility check
    - 1.2.1 Participants eligibility.
    - 1.2.2 Project eligibility: Duration, Technology Readiness Level (TRL).
  - 1.3 Additional project information.
- Section 2. Project description.
  - 2.1 Excellence.
  - 2.2 Impact.
  - 2.3 Quality and efficiency of the implementation.
- Section 3. Declarations
  - 3.1 Online Declaration of honour
  - 3.2 Application signature.

Table 2 summarises the responsibility for completing each section in the application form for collaborative projects. For projects implemented by individual SMEs, the applicant must complete all the sections.

Table 2. Application Form sections and responsible for completing.

SECTION IN THE APPLICATION FORM	ONLY PROJECT COORDINATOR	ALL PROJECT PARTNERS
Section 1. Administrative and legal information.		
1.1 Project partner information		X
1.2 Eligibility check		
1.2.1 Participants eligibility		X
1.2.2 Project eligibility: Duration, TRL	X	
1.3 Additional project information	X	
Section 2. Project description: Project coordinator		
2.1 Excellence	X	
2.2 Impact	X	
2.3 Quality and efficiency of the implementation	X	
Section 3. Declarations		
3.1 Declaration of honour		X
3.2 Application signature	X	

Note that for collaborative projects all applicants need to register in the submission platform and complete the information required according to their role in the project: Project Coordinator or Participant.

Furthermore, it is also possible to include a **'Scheme and graphic annex'** (5 pages maximum) in your application form, with infographics, graphics, schemes, etc. that may facilitate the evaluation of your application. This document will be uploaded in the platform by the project coordinator as a pdf and **it is encouraged to include it in your application**.

CircInWater partnership provides the Word document 'CircInWater Innovation lump sum application form', which reproduces the Application Form in the CircInWater submission platform. The applicants can use it to work offline on the application. However, this is not the official Application Form. CircInWater applicants must apply by completing and submitting an online application form via the CircInWater submission platform. Application forms received in any other way will not be considered.

3.3.2 Work Packages definition

Section 2.3.3 Work plan in the 'CircInWater Innovation lump sum Application Form' requires the definition of a work plan organised in Work Packages (WPs). A WP is a building block of the project work breakdown that groups the related tasks and expected outcomes in the work plan to achieve one or more specific objectives.

The maximum number of WPs allowed in the Application Form is 4, including one mandatory WP dedicated to project monitoring and communication. Therefore, the other maximum of 3 WPs should correspond to the organisation of the technical work to be done in the project implementation. As an example, these 3 WPs could be organised as follows: work preparation, solution development, and validation. However, this is only an example, and each applicant should decide the organisation of the technical work in 3 or fewer building blocks.

To facilitate the comprehension of how to complete the information requested on each WP in the application form, the following example provides some key ideas for the monitoring and communication WP:

- **Work package name:** WP1. Monitoring and communication.
- **Start month:** M1.
- **End month:** M12.
- **Work package objective:** The main objective of this WP is to ensure the smooth development of the project and the promotion of the results achieved.
- **Partners involved:**
    - Leading partner: Project coordinator.
    - Other partners: Partner I, Partner II
- **Activities:**
    - Preparing the checkpoints meetings and reporting.
    - Internal monitoring of the work plan implementation and timeline.
    - Project publication on the website
    - Recording a short video for the promotion of the results.
    - Participation in one CircInWater networking event digitally
    - Presentation on a physical event.
- **Outcomes:**
    - Checkpoints meeting and Final Report with positive feedback.
    - Implementation of the action according to the initial plan and schedule.
    - Engage water and agri-food/energy-intensive industries stakeholders with the project and its results.

SECTION 4. EVALUATION PROCESS

The evaluation process (see Figure 2) will last maximum 4 months after the submission deadline and will be done in 3 main steps:

- Step 1: Eligibility check.
- Step 2: Technical evaluation and ranking.
- Step 3: Proposal selection.

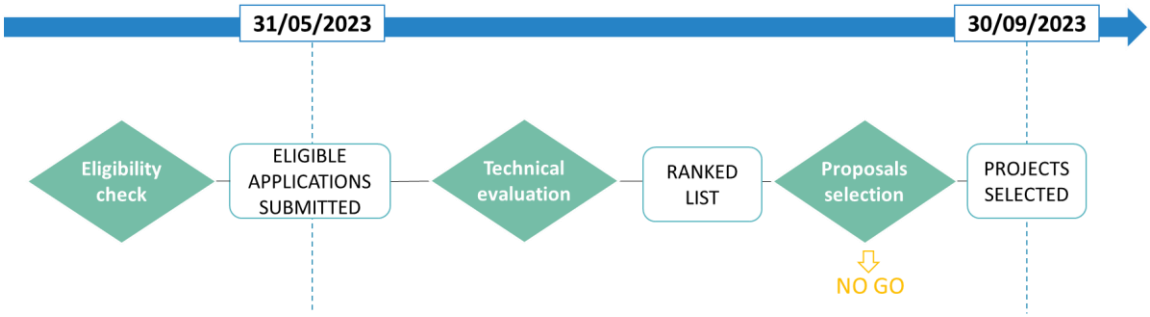

Figure 2. Evaluation process.

Information about the evaluators: Applications will be reviewed by two types of evaluators:

- **CircInWater Evaluation Committee:** composed of CircInWater project partners. They will be in charge of the Technical evaluation. To avoid any conflicts of interest, CircInWater partners will not evaluate proposals from their own countries.
- **External evaluators**: 6 external evaluators have been selected to participate in the final selection of projects to be funded. They have been chosen based on their expertise in the target sectors and in innovation projects. Their role is not to re-evaluate the entire proposals but to do a final check on the CircInWater Evaluation Committee evaluation, to confirm the results achieved during the process and verify the ranking list. The evaluation of the External evaluators will result in the final selection of the proposals to be funded in the frames of the available budget.

4.1 Step 1. Eligibility check/criteria

The eligibility check will be done based on a checklist and information provided in the CircInWater submission platform:

Eligible participants

To be eligible, the applicants must:

- be an SME according to the SME definition of the EU;
- be established in one of the eligible countries, i.e.:
    - EU Member States (including overseas countries and territories (OCTs))

- non-EU countries:
  - listed EEA countries and countries associated to the COSME part of the Single Market Programme or countries which are in ongoing negotiations for an association agreement and where the agreement enters into force before grant signature (list of participating countries);
- be a member of a cluster organisation registered on the European Cluster Collaboration Platform (ECCP);
- not request more than €60 000 within CircInWater lump sum schemes (innovation, knowledge, internationalisation)[1].

In collaborative proposals, Section '1.2.1 Eligibility check – Participants eligibility' of the Application form needs to be completed and fulfilled by each 'Project Partner' individually (Project Coordinator, Partner I and II) in the CircInWater submission platform. Also, all the information requested in Section '1.1. Project partner information' and the online Declaration of Honour must be filled out individually in the submission platform.

Duration

The project duration does **not** exceed 12 months.

Technology Readiness level (TRL)

The project is developing or implementing a water-smart solution which is between TRL 5 -9 (see 'ANNEX B. Technology readiness level').

Only those proposals fulfilling all eligibility criteria and completing all mandatory fields in the application form will be considered eligible. However, the **proposal must be considered eligible to continue and finalise the submission** process in the platform. In collaborative projects, **all 'Project Partners' must meet all** the above **Eligibility criteria (Eligible participants)**, to submit the application and consider the proposal as eligible.

4.2 Step 2. Technical evaluation

4.2.1 Technical evaluation process

Complete and eligible applications will be evaluated by **at least 2 experts of the CircInWater Evaluation Committee** according to three criteria: Excellence, impact and quality and efficiency of the implication (cf. below). Applications will be given points out of 128 (125 points Application Form + 3 extra points for collaborative projects).

[1] Applicants are entitled to apply and benefit from more than one CircInWater lump sum scheme, reaching a total max. funding of € 60.000 per SME.

Each expert will prepare an individual evaluation report that includes scores for each criterion with explanatory comments. Once the individual evaluation reports are finalised, one of the evaluators will prepare an evaluation consensus report and put forward comments that match the consensus scores (arithmetic media) based on the individual evaluation reports. In cases where experts do not agree, a third expert will be invited to evaluate the application.

4.2.2 Technical evaluation criteria

The evaluation procedures are designed to identify the best proposals in terms of excellence, impact, and quality and efficiency of the implementation as thoroughly and accurately as possible; and to undertake the assessment in a fair, transparent, and homogeneous way for all proposals submitted under the call.

Proposals will be evaluated based on four main evaluation criteria:

1. Excellence (from 0 to 40 points).
2. Impact (from 0 to 40 points).
3. Quality and Efficiency of the Implementation (from 0 to 45 points).
4. Extra bonus points will be given to Collaborative projects (2 to 3 partners) – 3 points.

Evaluation scores will be awarded accordingly to the four main evaluation criteria giving, as a result, a score up to 128 points (125 points for Application Form + 3 extra points for collaborative projects), with a threshold of 75 points (without considering extra bonus points for collaborative projects). Table 3 gathers the punctuation and thresholds on each section of the Application Form.

Table 3. Evaluation criteria.

CRITERIA	THRESHOLD
Excellence • The solution has an innovation potential aligned with a real challenge of Agri-food or Energy-Intensive Industries, and goes beyond state-of-the-art compared to existing or competing/ existing solutions (15 points). • The objectives defined are clear and realistic, considering the project duration and scope (10 points). • The methodology to address the objectives is clearly defined and solid (15 points).	24/40
Impact • The smart water solution will increase digitalisation, sustainability and resilience in the target industry (digital (5 points), green (5 points), resilient (5 points)).	24/40

• The solution will have a sound impact on the whole value chain, considering providers and end users, and will be available in Europe and also integrating components produced in Europe (resilient) (5 points). • The strategy to up-scale the solution and achieve the market is clearly defined and realistic. A clear business continuity plan for the solution considering both the technology development phase and the commercialisation is defined (10 points). • Realistic and relevant description of how the innovation will impact the participating companies is included (10 points).	
Quality and efficiency of the implementation • For individual SMEs, expertise for addressing the challenge proposed. For consortium, quality, and complementarity of the participants and the extent to which the consortium, as a whole, brings together the necessary expertise (5 points). • Suitable structure of the work plan, including high quality and effectiveness of the work plan, and realistic identification of critical risks and uncertainties (20 points). • Balance the allocation of tasks and resources, ensuring that all participants have a valid role and adequate resources in the project to fulfil that role (20 points). * Note that for applications involving 'Project Collaborator(s)", it is highly encouraged to join a Letter of Support from each "Project Collaborator" to demonstrate the interest and willingness to contribute in the project	27/45
Bonus point: Collaborative projects Project involving 2 or 3 partners	+ 3 pts

Ranking order of applications with equal scores will be adjusted based on the following criteria (in order):

1. Projects with woman-led SMEs as a partner.
2. Projects with an SME as a partner which is established in an EU-13 country[2].
3. Projects with an SME as a partner which has been involved in the EU ClusterXchange programme, participating as a host or visiting organisation in a virtual or physical exchange[3].
4. Projects with an SME as a partner which is established in a less developed region[4].

[2] Member states which joined the European Union in or after 2004.

[3] *ClusterXchange is a programme that supports short-term exchanges to better connect Europe's industrial ecosystems (see https://clustercollaboration.eu/clusterxchange).*

[4] https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/policy/how/is-my-region-covered_en

4.3 Step 3. Selection by external experts

The final step in the CircInWater evaluation process is an evaluation check by an independent external expert. The external expert will check the selected proposals from the technical evaluation. The main role of the external expert is not to re-evaluate the entire proposals but to do a final check on the CircInWater Evaluation Committee technical evaluation and come to a final selection of the proposals to be funded.

The independent external experts will be provided with the list of proposals above the threshold and their associated technical evaluation reports and will:

- review the technical evaluation reports and scores, detecting potential inconsistencies or weaknesses and exchange this with the CircInWater project consortium.
- decide on the 'selection list' of applications to be invited to enter into the grant agreement signature process in the frames of available budget.

A 'reserve list' will also be defined with applications that may, in the end, get funding if one or more applications in the 'selection list' cannot sign a grant agreement. The final list of selected projects will include projects up to the budget exhaustion allocated to this lump sum scheme.

The CircInWater Evaluation Committee will communicate the provisional results to the applicants by email. The applicants that did not achieve the minimum threshold will receive a communication with the score. The proposals above the threshold will receive qualitative feedback and scores based on the conclusions of the expert's assessments. With these results, the CircInWater Evaluation Committee will elaborate a provisional list of successful applications that will be published on the ECCP CircInWater page and the CircInWater submission platform.

The CircInWater Evaluation Committee will communicate the final list of selected projects once the redress period is finished and, in case of receiving any redress request, once their assessment according to the redress procedure section is done. This redress process could mean that projects on the provisional list of selected projects are finally not funded due to budget limitations.

4.4 Redress procedure

A request for redress can only be based on objective, clear, and well-documented evidence of the reasons for the complaint. It must clearly identify the application and be submitted by someone legally authorised to represent the applicant **within five calendar days** of receiving notice of your evaluation results to the following email address: info@circinwater.eu. A redress committee, including representatives from CircInWater partnership members, will review the case and recommend an appropriate course of action. Its role is to ensure a coherent legal interpretation of requests and equal treatment of applicants.

The redress procedure is concerned only with the evaluation process, and the scientific or technical judgement of the qualified experts is not in doubt.

Only one request for redress per application will be considered. All requests for redress will be treated in confidence.

4.5 Funding decision

The final list of successful applications will be published on the ECCP CircInWater page and the CircInWater submission platform no later than 30/09/2023.

Once the final evaluation results are published, the CircInWater partnership and Innovation lump sum beneficiaries move to the next step and start preparing the Grant Agreement (GA) signature. During this period, the CircInWater partnership may ask for additional documents, such as SME declaration according to the EC model or a Solvency declaration. Both beneficiaries and the CircInWater partnership will be in close contact during the GA preparation phase. Therefore, it is recommended to check daily the contact email in the application.

Changes to the budget or work plan in the application cannot occur during the preparation of the Innovation lump sum GA.

SECTION 5. GRANT AGREEMENT SIGNATURE AND GENERAL CONDITIONS FOR BENEFICIARIES

5.1 Grant agreement signature

Following the final list of selected projects, the CircInWater team will send the Grant Agreement to the successful SMEs. Each SME will sign an individual GA with CircInWater partnership, both in individual SME projects and collaborative ones. The Grant Agreement must be completed and duly signed **no later than 30/11/2023**. If any of them fail to sign within this period, applicant SMEs in the reserve list following the ranking order will be offered a contract until budget exhaustion.

The selected projects can start the day right after the GA signature (by all project partners in the case of collaborative projects) but **no later than 01/12/2023 (except projects from the reserve list, whose GA signature deadline will be extended until 31/12/2023)**. In all cases, the Grant Agreement must be signed before the beginning of the projects.

5.2 Promotion and dissemination

The beneficiary(ies) SME(s) must promote the project funded by CircInWater and its results. All the projects must fulfil the minimum communication activities defined by the CircInWater partnership, which include:

- Promotion of the project on the SME website. In the case of collaborative projects, the publication must be included on the websites of all the SMEs participating in the project as beneficiaries.
- Recording a short video of maximum 3 minutes for the dissemination of the project results.
- Participation in at least one CircInWater networking event.
- Presentation of the project and its results in at least one physical event. This presentation could be done at any relevant event selected by the beneficiaries, which should be relevant for the promotion of the results.

Unless otherwise agreed with the CircInWater partnership, all communication and dissemination activities developed by the beneficiaries in relation to the project (including media relations, conferences, seminars, and information material, such as brochures, leaflets, posters, presentations, etc., in electronic form, via traditional or social media, etc.), must include:

- The European flag (emblem) and funding statement.
- The Euroclusters programme logo.
- The CircInWater logo.

- The following disclaimer: “Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are, however, those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or EISMEA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.”

After the GA signature, a communication kit will be provided to all the beneficiaries with all logos needed.

5.3 Confidentiality

The CircInWater partnership will be authorised to publish the following information:

- The title and acronym of the project.
- The name of the beneficiary(ies) SME(s) and website(s).
- The geographic location of the activities carried out and of the beneficiary(ies) headquarters.
- Project publishable summary provided in the Application Form and Final Report.
- Total funding support provided by CircInWater for the development of the project.
- The short video prepared by each project. The beneficiary(ies) SME(s) will ensure that all necessary authorisations for such publication have been obtained and that the publication of the information by CircInWater does not infringe any rights of third parties.

In those projects that count with a ‘Project Collaborator’, the confidentiality of this figure will be thoroughly secured according to their indications in the field “*Does the ‘Project Collaborator’ aim to keep its involvement in the project confidential so that its data and sensitive information are not included in any communication or dissemination activity published by both project partners and CircInWater partnership?: YES/NO*” of the Application Form.

SECTION 6. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION & MONITORING

During the execution of the projects, CircInWater's local sponsors will monitor the progress of the funded projects. Local sponsors are the project partners of CircInWater. Each partner is responsible for monitoring the projects coming from their own country. Furthermore, if a project is led by a beneficiary from a country outside the countries of the CircInWater partners, these will be evenly divided among the CircInWater partners. This monitoring will be done on the basis of the approved work plan submitted by the beneficiary(ies).

To monitor the progress of the projects, there will be 2 mandatory meetings ('check points') planned between the local sponsor and the beneficiary(ies):

- At month 3, there will be a first meeting to see if the project started well. Decision is to give the green light (projects started well, and no need to adjust/change the project proposal) or orange light (changes need to be made to ensure that the project will be executed in line with the submitted work plan).
- At month 6 there will be a second meeting to see if the project is running according to plan and what the progress is. Decision is to give the green light (the project is running well and no need to adjust/change the project proposal), orange light (changes need to be made to ensure that the project will be executed in line with the submitted work plan) or red light (termination of the project because there is no guarantee the project will be executed in a timely and right way).
- If necessary, there will be a third meeting in month 9 for projects which received an orange light at the checkpoint in month 6. Decision is to give the green light (the project is running/adjusted well) or red light (termination of the project because there is no guarantee the project will be executed in a timely and right way).

Within 30 days upon the end of the innovation project, the beneficiary(ies) must complete a Final Report of their project. The template for the Final Report will be provided by the CircInWater project. The Final Report is a mandatory requirement for the beneficiary(ies) to receive the final 50% of the grant.

IMPORTANT: Projects will not receive the final 50% of the grant in the following cases:

- A red light at second check point meeting in month 6.
- A red light at third check point meeting in month 9.
- The Final Report is not approved.

Please see the schedule in Figure 3 for the abovementioned process.

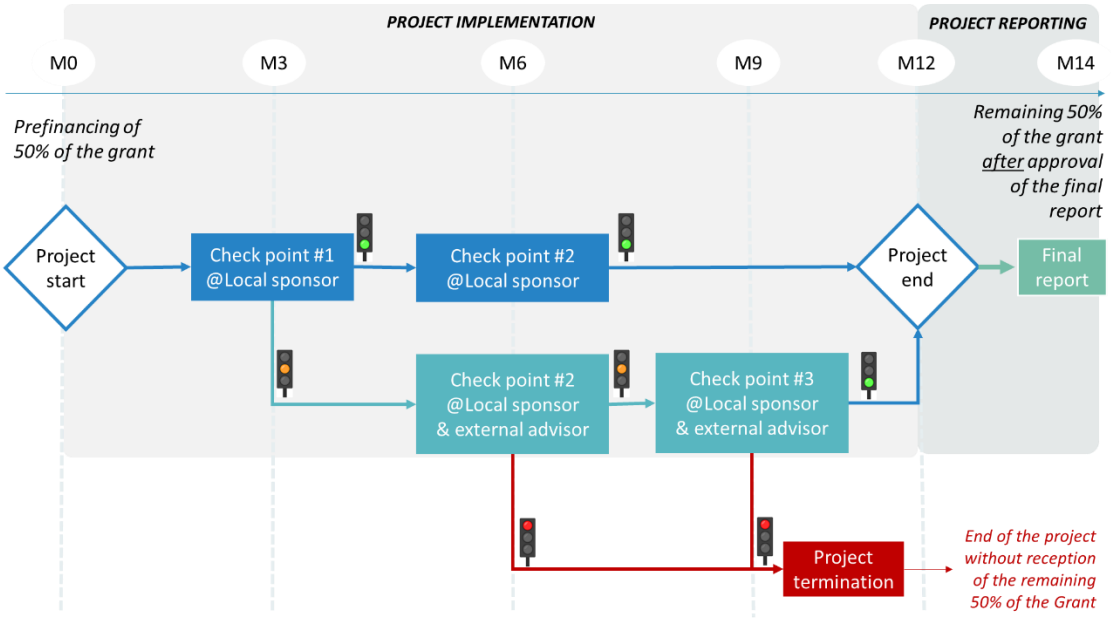

Figure 3. Monitoring schedule and milestones.

Note: The beneficiary must inform their local sponsor immediately about occurring problems that may compromise the success of the project.

SECTION 7. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

7.1 Data protection and management

The Application Form for Innovation lump sum requests the minimum information needed to deliver the evaluation procedures and application management. Additional information, such as bank account details or data about the lump sum recipient's representative, will only be requested to the beneficiaries SMEs. The company and personal data requested must be submitted through the CircInWater submission platform (GOOD Grants), whose design and operational procedures ensure that data is managed in compliance with the European legislation: The General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (GDPR)[5]. This information will also be managed by the CircInWater partnership according to the European legislation rules.

By submitting their proposal, the applicants must accept the use of data for the purpose of evaluation and application management.

7.2 CircInWater partners and contact information

For any queries about the CircInWater project, see the contact information in Table 4:

Table 4. Contact information.

ZINNAE- Cluster for the efficient use of water Contact person: María Benito Email: mbenito@zinnae.org	Water Cluster Finland Contact person: Pirkko Taskinen Email: pirkko.taskinen@lavango.fi
Water Alliance Contact person: Stefan Bergsma Email: s.bergsma@wateralliance.nl	Innovation centre of the Olomouc Region Contact person: Jakub Vylíčil Email: vylicil@inovaceok.cz
France Water Team Contact person: Oriane Marchal Email: oriane.marchal@france-water-team.com	CREA Hydro&Energy Contact person: Břetislav Skácel Email: bret@creacz.com

[5] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2016/679/oj

Blue Economy Mikkeli Contact person: Saija Tillgren Email: saija.tillgren@mikseimikkeli.fi	General CircInWater contact point Email: info@circinwater.eu

7.3 Gender equality

CircInwater seeks gender balance. Therefore, applicants are invited to take all measures to promote equal opportunities between men and women in the implementation of the action. They must aim for a gender balance at all levels of personnel assigned to the action, including supervisory and managerial levels to the extent possible.

7.4 Intellectual Property Rights

CircInWater does not obtain ownership of the results produced under this call. 'Results' means any tangible or intangible effect of the action, such as data, know-how or information, whatever its form or nature, whether or not it can be protected, as well as any rights attached to it, including intellectual property rights.

CircInWater has the right to use non-sensitive information relating to the call, and materials and documents received from the beneficiaries for policy, information, communication, dissemination and publicity purposes — during the project implementation or afterwards.

ANNEX A. DESCRIPTION OF THE INDUSTRIAL ECOSYSTEMS AND CHALLENGES

The two industrial ecosystems targeted represent an important share of European water consumption, a large share of the European economic value added, and more than 17 million workers. Together, they raise numerous challenges concerning water management, calling for varied innovative water-smart solutions.

A.1 Agri-food sector

Figure 4.- Agri-food ecosystem. © Norma Nardi 2020.

Agriculture land plays an important role in land use patterns across the EU. Due to accelerating population growth, urbanisation, and climate change, competition for water resources is expected to increase, with a particular impact on agriculture. Agriculture is the biggest water-consuming sector accounting for an estimated 72% of global freshwater withdrawals[6][7].

Furthermore, the food and drink industry is a key element of the European economy, generating €1.2 trillion in turnover with a value-added of €246 billion – making it the largest manufacturing sector in Europe and a major contributor to the European economy. Similarly to agriculture, water is an essential input for the food and drink industry and accounts for approximately 1.8% of Europe's total water use. This intensive water use results in large volumes of wastewater discharges that must be treated before discharging on the rivers.

[6] OECD-FAO Agricultural Outlook (Edition 2022).
[7] FAO, "AQUASTAT - Sistema mundial de información de la FAO sobre el agua en la agricultura,"

CircInWater project aims to support those SMEs promoting the development and implementation of water-smart solutions that address the water-related challenges in the whole agri-food ecosystem and value chain (Figure 5). For example, this can be water challenges in greenhouses to challenges in a brewery or a meat processing factory.

Figure 5. Agri-food value chain.

A.2 Energy-intensive industries

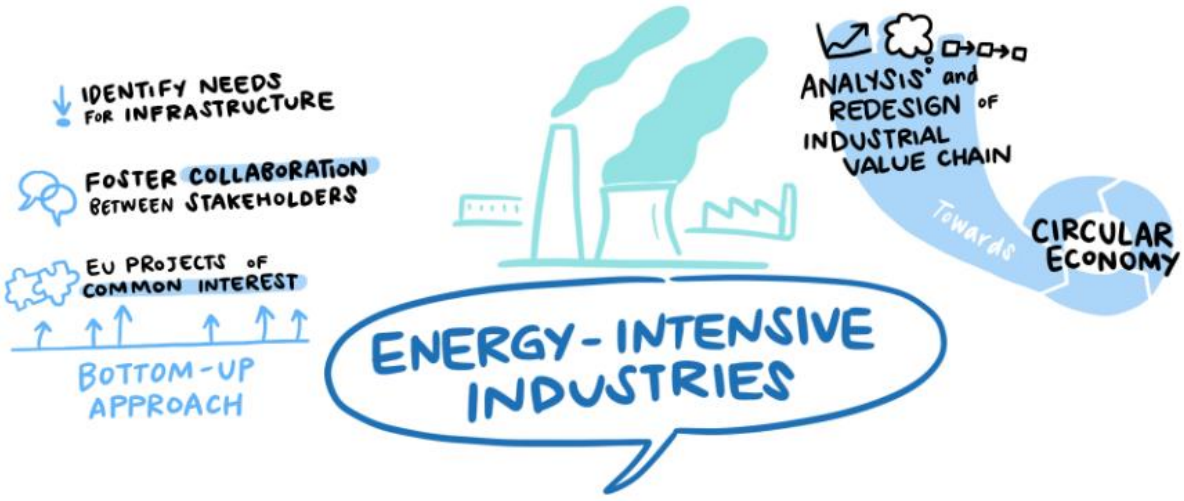

Figure 6. Energy-intensive industries ecosystem. © Norma Nardi 2020.

The Energy-intensive industries (EII) have in common that they supply intermediate products to each other and many downstream sectors of the economy, being closely integrated with energy providers and the waste and recycling industries. In particular, the EII ecosystem includes the chemicals, steel, pulp and paper, plastics, mining, extraction and quarrying, refineries, cement, wood, rubber, nonferrous metals, ferroalloys, industrial gases, glass and ceramics industries. All these sectors require high energy and carbon intensity and represent the starting point of many value chains, providing raw, processed and intermediate materials.

According to the European Commission Industrial strategy, the industry must reduce its own carbon footprints to contribute to the carbon-neutral economy goal and simultaneously accelerate the transition by providing affordable, clean technology solutions.

Therefore, water stakeholders need to develop and implement innovative and smart water solutions to address the challenges encountered by the EII in terms of their efficient and sustainable use of water in their industrial processes.

CircInWater is especially targeting these four energy-intensive sectors: Mining, Pulp and Paper, Steel, and Chemical Industry.

Furthermore, **other energy-intensive sectors** (plastics, extraction and quarrying, refineries, cement, wood, rubber, nonferrous metals, ferroalloys, industrial gases, glass and ceramics industries) could be eligible if the action is duly justified.

A.3 CircInWater challenges for agri-food and energy-intensive industries

The ten challenges identified by the Circinwater partnership for the **agri-food and energy-intensive** industrial ecosystems are organised into **four topics**:

- Reducing water risk for agri-food and energy-intensive industries
- Circular economy
- Digitalisation
- Water quality monitoring and water treatment, remediation, and disinfection

A.3.1 Reducing water risk for agri-food and energy-intensive industries

Promotes the development of new solutions for the efficient use of water, reducing water stress and increasing climate change resilience, and includes the following challenges:

#1. **New water sources to reduce water stress.** New solutions for assessing/ modelling water resources in scarcely monitored /data-scarce areas.

#2. Developing and testing **scalable and affordable solutions to support water management and planning**, in the face of climate change and climate change resilience.

#3. Developing and testing affordable **smart water use** and **efficient technologies in agri-food and energy-intensive industries**.

A.3.2 Circular economy

Accelerates new approaches and solutions for water reuse, resource recovery, and valorisation based on the circular economy, through three challenges:

#4. **Resource recovery.** Recovery and valorisation of resources from wastewater and/or sludge (e.g. including energy, nutrients, cellulose, metals).

#5. **Resource production.** Production of novel feedstocks from agri-food and energy-intensive industries wastewater and/or sludge (e.g. fertilisers, hydrogen, bio-plastics, biofuel).

#6. **Water reuse.** Developing and testing new innovative solutions to foster transition to circularity for industrial processes and/or agricultural water reuse and recycling.

A.3.3 Digitalisation

Addresses the development of technologies and methodologies to improve the water system digitalisation of the two targeted ecosystems. The challenge identified under this topic is:

#7. **Smartening the agri-food and energy-intensive industries' water system** for advanced decision support and priority setting including Big data, Earth observation, sensor/monitoring tools, robotics, machine learning, artificial intelligence, DSS, leak detection, and/or scenario analysis.

A.3.4 Water quality monitoring and water treatment, remediation, and disinfection

Explores the development of new solutions and systems in the field of water quality control with a focus on the treatment and reduction of Contaminants of Emerging Concern (CECs), micropollutants, and viruses. The challenges within this topic are:

#8. **Water quality control.** Developing and testing innovative and affordable water quality monitoring systems (e.g. methodology, technology, sensoring, bioassays).

#9. **Water treatment and disinfection**. Developing more efficient, cost-effective, less energy dependant, lower carbon footprint, easier-to-implement technological solutions for water treatment, and/or disinfection in agri-food and energy-intensive industries.

#10. **Contaminants of emerging concern, viruses, and/or micropollutants.** Developing innovative solutions to remove, remediate and reduce CECs, viruses, and/or micropollutants at point and non-point sources. Improving agri-food and energy-intensive industries' wastewater treatment technologies for removing CECs, viruses, and/or micropollutants.

ANNEX B. TECHNOLOGY READINESS LEVEL (TRL)

The Technology Readiness Level (TRL) is a measure to describe the state of development or maturity of a technology (See Figure7). The scale ranges from 1 to 9, where TRL 1 is the lowest and TRL 9 is the highest. CircInWater project supports innovative actions between TRL 5 and 9.

Figure 7. Technology Readiness Level (TRL).

ANNEX C. SUMMARY OF CIRCINWATER LUMP SUM SCHEMES

Note: An SME can get a maximum grant from the CircInWater project of €60 000, considering all the lump sum schemes: Innovation, Knowledge, and Internationalisation.

C.1 CircInWater Innovation lump sum scheme

Table 5. Innovation lump sum summary.

Lump sum objective	To support cross-sectoral collaboration and development of new products to tackle industrial challenges
Activities to be supported	Activities to scale up, test and implement close-to-market water-smart solutions
Maturity level	TRL 5-9
Target beneficiaries	Individual or collaborative, up to 3 SMEs that are members of a cluster organisation registered on the ECCP
Total EU funding available for the Open Call	€850 000
The maximum amount to be granted per beneficiary	€60 000
Payment schedule	Two payments: • 50% with the Grant Agreement (GA) Signature • 50% end of the funded project after reception of the Final Report
Participation rules	Applicants can participate in several Innovation projects as a Partner, but an SME can coordinate only one project.
Open Call publication date	29-03-23 at 12:00 (Brussels time)
Open Call deadline	31-05-23 at 17:00 (Brussels time)
Expected duration of the projects	Up to 12 months
Submission process	Online
Thematic strands	1 call divided into 2 thematic strands: Agri-food and energy-intensive industry
Links/ platforms where this open call will be published:	Funding and Tenders Portal ECCP CircInWater website CircInWater submission platform Enterprise European Network

C.2 CircInWater Knowledge lump sum scheme

Table 6. Knowledge lump sum summary.

Lump sum objective	Training/support to boost resilience, green or digital transition
Activities to be supported	External support/consultancy services on strategic issues that will accelerate the SMEs' triple transitions
Target beneficiaries	Individual SMEs that are members of a cluster organisation registered on the ECCP
Total EU funding available for the Open Call	€160 000
The maximum amount to be granted per beneficiary	€4 000
Payment schedule	1 payment (100%) with the Financial Agreement (FA) signature. **Final Report** submission after action implementation is **mandatory**.
Participation rules	SMEs can be beneficiaries of a maximum of 2 Knowledge lump sum schemes
Open Call indicative publication date	07-06-23
Open Call indicative deadline	December 2024 or until the exhaustion of budget
Expected duration of the projects	Up to 6 months after FA signature
Submission process	Online
Links/ platforms where this open call will be published:	Funding and Tenders Portal ECCP CircInWater website CircInWater submission platform Enterprise European Network

C.3 CircInWater Internationalisation lump sum scheme

Table 7. Internationalisation lump sum summary.

Lump sum objective	To support the internationalisation of SMEs towards third markets
Activities to be supported	Travel and accommodation (for Meet the buyer events and international trade fairs/events)
Target beneficiaries	Individual SMEs that are members of a cluster organisation registered on the ECCP
Total EU funding available for the Open Call	€40 000
The maximum amount to be granted per beneficiary	€2 000
Payment schedule	1 payment (100%) with the Financial Agreement (FA) signature. **Final Report** submission after action implementation is **mandatory**.
Participation rules	SMEs can be beneficiaries of a maximum of 2 International lump sum schemes
Open Call indicative publication date	Beginning 2024
Open Call indicative deadline	February 2025 or until the exhaustion of budget
Expected duration of the projects	Up to 3 months after FA signature
Submission process	Online
Links/ platforms where this open call will be published:	Funding and Tenders Portal ECCP CircInWater website CircInWater submission platform Enterprise European Network

CircInWater

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