Interreg North Sea 2021-2027

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Call 2

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General Guidance for project applicants	**Version 1 – 01.07.2022**
How to use this document?	• This guidance is meant as an introduction to the programme and the most important rules and requirements for applicants. It is not intended as a replacement for the official documents and rules; all applicants should refer to the official documents before they apply. Please note that there is also information specific to each call for applications, which sets out any special conditions that apply to that call. You can find this information for Call 2 at the end of this document. • There are two types of projects under the programme; regular projects and small-scale projects, and there are specific rules for each type of projects. It is important to observe both the general rules for the programme and the specific rules for the type of project you wish to apply for.
Who can apply?	• The North Sea Programme is open to anyone in the programme area, which is the whole of Denmark and the Netherlands, the Flemish region of Belgium, northwest Germany, northwest France, the south western area of Sweden and all but the northern-most regions of Norway. There is a detailed list of regions at the end of the *Draft priorities, specific objectives, & spotlight themes* document on the programme website. • Organisations apply as part of a partnership. Every partnership in a project must include at least three partners from three different countries. The "rule of three" covers both small-scale projects and both stages of the regular project application. However, projects should have a positive effect on large parts of the programme area so only meeting the minimum requirements will be a considerable weakness. • You need to be a legal entity (organization or enterprise) based in the programme area in order to apply. Partners from outside the programme area can be part of a partnership under special conditions.

Two-stage application process for regular projects

- All applicants for regular projects are asked to submit an expression of interest (please see the conditions for Call 2 on page 19 for an exemption to this rule). If the programme's Monitoring Committee approves the expression of interest, the project will be asked to develop and submit a full application. If this is approved, the project will receive a contract and can start work.
- The expression of interest is a short form application allowing the Monitoring Committee to decide whether a project proposal fits the programme and whether the planned partners, activities, budget and results seem realistic to deliver the idea. It is important that care is taken with preparing the expression of interest to ensure that all important information has been included in the limited space.
- The purpose of the expression of interest is also to allow partners to experiment with a project proposal without making a significant time and budget commitment. It allows the Monitoring Committee to provide recommendations and/or conditions before the full application is submitted, such as requesting the inclusion of another country, private sector stakeholders, etc.
- After an expression of interest is approved, the project team must submit a full application during one of the next two calls for full applications. A tentative schedule of calls for the programme period (to be published soon on the programme website) will make it possible for applicants to plan their next step.
- The full application requires detailed activity plans with targets, budgets and timelines, as well as technical information and funding guarantees from partner organisations. A lump sum is offered to approved projects to cover their preparation costs, provided that the submitted and approved application lives up to quality requirements (see below).
- If a full application is rejected, the applicants may re-apply in the next call for proposals.

Small-scale project parameters, requirements and examples

- Small-scale projects are new to the North Sea Programme in this programme period. From the programme side, the basic aim of supporting small-scale projects is to provide the Monitoring Committee with a flexible tool for getting innovative and good ideas off the ground relatively quickly. For the project community, small-scale projects represent an alternative to regular projects, i.e. smaller projects that allow partners to test out an idea in a relatively short amount of time with minimal administrative requirements.

- Small-scale projects must function as 'stand-alone' projects that contribute to the same programme objectives as regular projects but on a smaller scale. The purpose or focus of small-scale projects will vary as the programme progresses:
    - At the beginning of the programme small-scale projects will serve to kick-start the programme, e.g. by establishing new partnerships, especially by involving organisations new to the programme, involving the new territories, addressing new thematic fields, and setting the scene for bigger initiatives (projects) in and/or outside the North Sea Programme. The expected outcome of the latter is a clear vision and a specific plan on how the project activities, the related outputs and results, and the partnership will be upgraded.
    - At a later stage of the programme, small-scale projects will fulfil other purposes identified at that stage and may be the focus of targeted calls, e.g. to attract more projects on a specific spotlight theme (see the next section for more on spotlight themes), to encourage projects that include measures to increase citizen involvement, or to draw interest from applicants that wish to focus on social innovation, etc.
    - In the second half/end phase of the programme, small-scale projects might focus on capitalization, i.e. help the take-up of results delivered by previously implemented projects.
- Small-scale projects must fulfil three requirements:
    1. Partnership of between three and seven partners from at least three Interreg North Sea countries
    2. Maximum total budget of EUR 500.000; suggested minimum budget of EUR 200.000
    3. Lifetime of no more than 18 months
- As stated above, one of the benefits of small-scale projects, from the project perspective, is the chance to try something out at relatively low risk. To make it even easier for partners to administer their project, small-scale projects are financed via a simplified cost option of staff

costs + 40% for all other costs. This reduces the amount of work and time that partners have to spend on reporting during the short project lifetime.

- Small-scale projects have a one-step application procedure. There is no expression of interest necessary for small-scale project applicants.

- For inspiration: in Call 1, three small-scale projects were approved, addressing a variety of topics.
    - *Priorities and topics:* The small-scale project approved in priority 2, specific objective 2.4 sets up a transnational Circular Business Innovation Programme for SMEs from rural and urban areas who need to develop sustainable business models. The development of a system to monitor light pollution in the Wadden Sea is the aim of a small-scale project approved in priority 3, specific objective 3.2. A first ever small-scale project was approved in the newly introduced priority 4 on governance. It will improve the overall governance of the use of biomass to drive the green transition by strengthening the capacities of local authorities to engage and collaborate with citizens and bioenergy stakeholders.
    - *Budget:* The budgets of the small-scale projects approved in Call 1 range from 462.499 € to 487.802 €.
    - *Partnership:* Partnerships of the three projects vary in size and geography. The smallest partnership consists of three partners from three countries, the largest of seven partners from five countries.
    - *Activities and outputs:* As per the parameters set out for small-scale projects, each approved small-scale projects consists of a single work package. The activities are all encompassing, often starting with research and data collection, then going on to designing a solution and testing it in pilot actions, although it should be noted that priority 4 is not pilot focused. This is accompanied by the development of strategies and roadmaps. Communication activities are also part of the work package activities.

What kind of issues does the programme work with?

- The programme has four priority themes and each theme includes between one and five specific objectives. Please consult the *Draft priorities, specific objectives, & spotlight themes* document on the programme website for more information. (At a later stage a Citizen Summary, explaining the programme in an abbreviated form, will be

	published. The Citizen Summary is, however, not available for Call 2.) Every project has to select one specific objective that it will work towards. Projects are also encouraged to incorporate one or more of the programme's spotlight themes in their project proposal. Spotlight themes are new to the programme, and we encourage you to read more about them in the above document. • The descriptions of the specific objectives in the draft document on the website also include examples of the types of activities and impact expected. Please note that these are only examples! Any relevant activity that clearly requires transnational cooperation and will contribute strongly to a specific objective can be considered for funding. Likewise, the fact that an activity is mentioned in the Interreg Programme does not guarantee success for projects if the overall contribution to the specific objective is weak. • In addition to specific themes, all projects granted funding under the programme also have to comply with a number of horizontal principles, like the need to promote equal opportunities and sustainable development. These are covered separately below. • There is a focus on outputs and results in the programme. A separate fact sheet on indicators (#22) tells you exactly what you need to do, but as a general rule please make sure that the targets you set are realistic and really capture what you are trying to achieve.
Are there special rules for Norway?	• Norwegian partners and lead partners are treated the same as EU partners in the North Sea Programme and are subject to the same rules. • The only important difference is that Norwegian partners are funded from their own separate reserve of Norwegian funding. As a result, Norwegian money is kept separate from ERDF funding in the application and reporting systems. The most important practical implication of this is that the Norwegian funds are more limited. • In addition, the grant rate for Norwegian partners is at 50%, whilst Member State partners operate with a grant rate of 60%.
Can private companies get involved?	• Private companies, and in particular SMEs, are welcome in projects but cannot take on the role as lead partner (see Fact Sheet 14 on Roles and Responsibilities for information about private organisations that act in a non-profit capacity and their eligibility to fulfil the lead partner

role in a project). They must demonstrate that their work contributes to wider programme goals.

- There are specific requirements for how companies operate in the programme and all participating enterprises must agree to respect these rules. These often differ from standard private sector operating procedures. These rules cover issues like State aid, real cost principles, public procurement, record keeping, and sharing of results (see page 2 of Fact Sheet 26 on this topic, in particular). It is essential that all private sector partners consult these rules carefully before committing to the programme to avoid problems during implementation. They are described in Fact Sheet 16 on State aid.

How should partners work together?

- All partners must cooperate on joint development and joint implementation of the project. As such, they must state individually in the application how they will be involved, what they will deliver, and what they expect to gain from the project.
- Partners must also cooperate in the staffing and/or financing of the project. When filling in the application form, projects are asked to explain how staff will work together on delivering the project.
- The need for transnational cooperation needs to be reflected in the way that project activities are planned and implemented. It is not enough for each partner to act independently and then exchange results. Partners must help each other to design, implement and communicate new solutions.
- It is also important to involve the 'right' partners, meaning those with the required expertise and contacts in each country. The partnership will be assessed on whether it has the right skills and knowledge in place as well as the capacity and ability to create impact in each participating country.
- The partnership also needs to be viable, which means that all partners should have a clear role in the project, be committed for the entire lifetime of the project, and be prepared to support activities (especially those related to capitalizing on results and outcomes) after the lifetime of the project.
- It is also important to demonstrate the involvement and support of the main users of project results. For example, a project to develop new ways of encouraging SME innovation must involve effective feedback from SMEs if the results are to be credible.

What is the role of the lead partner?

- The lead partner leads the project, ensures that all partners deliver what has been promised and is the contact point between the project and programme management. Every project must have a lead partner agreed by the partnership. In particular, the lead partner will:
    - Prepare and submit the application (in cooperation with the rest of the partnership);
    - Prepare and submit all progress reports and requests for payment based on inputs from the other partners;
    - Ensure that information from or to the programme is communicated on time and in full;
    - Receive all payments from the programme and distribute the amounts owed to all partners.
    - Draw up a partnership agreement regulating the cooperation within the partnership. It is important that the partnership agreement clarifies how common costs for e.g. administrating the project partnership (the lead partner role) is covered. It must also regulate what happens if one or more partners do not fulfil their obligations within the partnership. The partnership agreement must be signed by all partners.
- Fact Sheet 14 provides more detail on the lead partner role and explains the different roles and responsibilities within partnerships.

Help for small organisations

- It can be a lot of work to understand all of the programme rules, forms and procedures – especially for small organizations with limited resources or organisations with only a small role in the project. Such organisations fulfil an important but limited role in the partnership but may feel that the budgets available are not worth the administrative effort of future participation. These partners may, therefore, participate as 'sub-partners'.
- Sub-partners can be grouped together under one project partner (generally a public authority of some kind). The advantage of forming this arrangement is that the partner can submit payment and activity reports for the sub-partners (less paperwork for the sub-partners). This also means that the partner and sub-partners can use the same controller and get their expenditure checked at the same time (thereby reducing control costs).

	• The following points must be kept in mind (see Fact Sheet 14 for more information):
	  ○ The partner and its sub-partners must be based in the same country;
	  ○ All sub-partners are subject to all programme rules about the eligibility of funding;
	  ○ All sub-partners must keep full separate records of their expenditure;
	  ○ It is the responsibility of the partner to ensure that there is real and effective control of all sub-partner expenditure;
	  ○ Sub-partners are still liable for any irregularities in their expenditure and are covered by the standard programme rules for repaying any amounts incorrectly paid out.

Funding rates	• All partners in EU Member States can claim reimbursement of 60% of costs for all project activities (Norwegian partners 50%). Applicants should always check the specific conditions for each call for proposals for information on the total funds still available and any special funding terms that may apply. There is no formal minimum or maximum budget for regular projects, but projects will be assessed on value for money and larger projects will be expected to deliver significant and tangible benefits to the programme area. Budget sizes for North Sea Programme projects during the previous funding period (VB) ranged from roughly €2 to 6 million. Small-scale projects must keep within the total budget limit of €500.000, and the suggested minimum budget is €200.000.
Calls for proposals	• The programme launches regular calls for proposals. All project applications correctly submitted through the online monitoring system with all relevant supporting documents by the end of a call will be assessed. Applicants should regularly consult the programme website at www.northsearegion.eu for announcements about new calls. As a general rule these will take place every six months in the start-up phase of the programme later on in the programme implementation the intervals may increase.
Important links to policy and North	• You have to make sure that your idea fits with the programme, that it is demand-driven, and that it clearly addresses common challenges in

Sea region interests and needs	the North Sea region. Regardless of thematic strengths, applications can only be approved if they link with European policy goals and the interests and needs of the wider programme area. The programme strategy and expectations for projects under each priority theme are set out in the Interreg Programme.
Additional points to consider	• **Cooperation:** This should be reflected in a work plan based on joint efforts to develop and implement new solutions. Cooperation should also be understood as bringing together different sectors (sometimes called 'horizontal' cooperation) and different levels of administration from local to international (sometimes called 'vertical' cooperation). The aim of these multi-level and multi-disciplinary approaches is to develop durable solutions based on winning the support of all main stakeholder groups. This need for cooperation should be balanced against the need to ensure that the partnership remains manageable and focused on core stakeholders. The wider stakeholder network will often not be part of the partnership but will be involved in other ways. This should be described in the application. • **Innovativeness:** Some parts of the programme focus on 'innovation' in the sense of developing new products and services for the market. All parts of the programme should be 'innovative' in the sense of developing and spreading new and improved solutions throughout the partnership and the wider programme area. Some projects will try to develop completely new approaches to the challenges they are addressing. Others will try to introduce existing technologies and methods into areas or organizations where they have not been used before. The priority descriptions in the Interreg Programme contain information on the preferred approach for some specific objectives. Applications should clearly set out the innovative aspects of the projects and how they differ from existing norms and practices in target regions / organisations. • **Explain links to other policies, funds and initiatives:** Projects must demonstrate an awareness of the main actions and results under related programmes and applications should reflect how the North Sea project fits into this wider picture. In particular, projects should highlight specific results from earlier projects that can be used in the new project, and explain how the expected results of the new project will feed back into other programmes and funds. The Interreg Programme contains an overview of the most relevant policies and

funds but the application should also address national and regional actions.

- **Additionality:** Project funds cannot be used to fund the already financed activities of partner organisations. The activities carried out in the project should represent an addition to the normal work of the partners, and programme funds will only cover the costs for this additional work.

- **Integrated approach to territorial development:** All activities should be considered in terms of their likely effect on the wider programme area. Project activities should promote balanced development across the region and should especially aim to support regions facing particular geographical, structural or economic challenges.

- **Sustainable development:** Interreg North Sea 2021-2027 works for an on-going improvement of sustainability. During project development, projects should consider how to ensure net social, environmental and climate benefits (where possible), in particular when making investments and travel plans.

- **Equal opportunities and non-discrimination:** All organisations involved in the North Sea Programme must contribute to a positive environment for the active pursuit of equal opportunities and the prevention of deprivation, exclusion and discrimination in all forms.

Below is a list of some of the online databases you should have a look at when exploring what your project contributes. (Please note – this is not an exhaustive list; other, more targeted EU funding programmes might be more relevant for your search.)

- **Keep EU**: https://keep.eu/programmes/ (database of Interreg projects)
- **LIFE**: https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/life/publicWebsite/index.cfm
- **CORDIS**: https://cordis.europa.eu/projects/en (database of Horizon2020 and FP7 projects)
- **ERASMUS**: https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/projects_en

How to find partners

- A partner platform will be included in the new programme website, which is scheduled to be ready in the second half of 2022. Until the

	platform is launched, the programme offers a simplified version on the current website. Please visit the website for more information. • National Contact Points can also assist you with finding partners in their respective countries. Their contact information can be found on the website. • Check online discussion groups and social media for partner search features.
How to apply	• A description of the application procedure can be found in Fact Sheet 18. • Small-scale project applications, expressions of interest and full applications must be submitted through the online monitoring system, which also has technical information about how to fill in the different parts of the respective form. All documentation is electronic so there is no need to send any paper copies. • If you have a visual item (e.g. a flowchart, map, a list of items referred to in the application form, a picture, etc.), which can enhance the readers' overall understanding of your project, you are allowed to upload the related file as an annex to the application. The uploaded file cannot be text based, must be in jpg or in pdf format, and cannot be more than 10 pages. Please note that any text included in the annex to extend any text fields in the application will be disregarded during the assessment, and that each section of the uploaded file must include a clear reference to the text field to which it is linked in the application form. • All partners need to submit a signed Letter of Intent with the small-scale project or full application form.

How to prepare a good application	• Assessments are based on the information provided in the application **only**. You should not rely on assumed knowledge or arguments about, for example, the general need for innovation support or sustainable public transport but must instead relate these to the specific circumstances of the partners and the programme area. In particular, you must make sure that you clearly explain:
	    o The need for your project and how it differs from current norms and practices
	    o The need for transnational cooperation
	    o The role of each partner

- The outputs and results that will be delivered
- How you will ensure that the project has an impact beyond the project lifetime

- Avoid quoting programme documents and focus on clearly explaining what your project will deliver.

- Avoid jargon and abbreviations

What is the Monitoring Committee really looking for?

The programme uses a set of assessment criteria and this is what every project proposal is checked against. In addition, however, representatives of the countries in the programme have provided an informal list of key points that can influence how positively they look at an application. These are:

- Plain English (answering the right questions concisely but clearly and explicitly)
- Explain the clear need for the project. Why has the partnership decided that this project is the solution?
- Describe what you want to change and where (geographically)
- Being very clear about the assumptions behind the project
  - Is it clear why all of the actions are included?
  - Is there a clear logic for moving from one action to the next?
  - What would happen if one activity needed to be changed? Are they all necessary?
- Show the added value of each result / output - for each partner and for the North Sea region
- Show how you will focus your communication efforts. In particular, have you selected the right target groups and appropriate channels / means for reaching them?
- What could go wrong? Show you are aware of the main risks and how you will manage if things do not go according to plan
- How will you test whether the desired change has been delivered?
- Embed your project in the context of regional strategies and other programmes

There is no golden rule for getting a project approved. Following the advice here and using the support available will, however, give you a good chance.

Assistance with preparing an application

- The Monitoring Committee strongly recommends that applicants seek advice and assistance on their applications from the national contact points and staff members of the joint secretariat (JS). Applicants are welcome to get in touch to schedule online consultations with NCPs and/or JS staff, whose contact information can be found on the programme website.

- General support includes:
  - Workshops and conferences at which you can hear the latest news and ask questions. The majority of these are likely to be online in the form of webinars for the foreseeable future.
  - Written guidance and video tutorials on specific parts of the application process
  - Fact sheets, which contain information on the programme rules and procedures and can be found on the website

- An overview of projects funded during the VB programme can be found on www.northsearegion.eu. These can serve as inspiration and give applicants an idea of what type and scope of projects the programme has approved the past several years.

Assessment of small-scale projects, expressions of interest and full applications

- You will only be able to submit your application if you have completed all sections.
- Once your application is received, it will go through an eligibility check. The purpose of this brief check is to ensure that the partnership and project meet the minimum requirements, that there are no obvious errors with the budget or eligibility rules, and that any attached documents have been completed correctly.
- When your project passes the eligibility check, you will be notified. Next, the application will go through quality assessment. The purpose of this assessment is to evaluate how far your proposal meets the strategic and operational requirements of the programme and its detailed rules.
- All project partners are subject to a capacity check, which will be carried out by the respective national authorities in parallel to the quality assessment procedure. As part of the capacity check, the organisation may be asked to submit additional documentation to help the national authority evaluate their capacity to participate as a partner in the project.
- The assessments of an expression of interest, small-scale project application, and regular project full application are based on the programme's selection criteria. For the expression of interest, a

	limited set of criteria is used to assess the degree to which a potential project will match the programme's objectives and envisaged results. Assessment of the small-scale project and regular project full applications goes further and focuses on how the project will be delivered. It also addresses more technical questions concerning eligibility and coordination. Assessment ends with a recommendation to the Monitoring Committee on whether the project should be approved or rejected. You can find the assessment criteria in Fact Sheet 18. • Assessment of the full application will also consider whether the application corresponds to the proposal made in the expression of interest. If there are significant differences, this will be highlighted in the assessment and will be considered when the Monitoring Committee makes its funding decision.
How is the funding decision made?	• Project applications and assessments, together with a recommendation to fund or reject the project, are provided to the programme's Monitoring Committee made up of national and regional representatives from all of the countries in the programme. The committee decides whether to approve or reject the project based on the secretariat's assessment, and sets any conditions that need to be met before contracting. • The funding decision is primarily based on the assessment of the application made by the staff of the joint secretariat. Other factors may, however, also play a role, especially limits on the funding available. The decision of the committee is final. • All applicants will be informed about the committee's decision in writing. You can complain if your project is rejected. Complaints can only address the assessment procedure and will be expected to demonstrate that there has been a clear and significant breech of the published procedures and criteria. If a complaint is upheld, your project will be considered at the next meeting. The Complaints Procedure is available online.
What happens after approval?	• Subsidy contracts are prepared by the joint secretariat. • Project expenditure is eligible from the date of approval of the application or from the start date of the project listed in the application (should this be dated after the date of the decision; see

also the special conditions for preparation costs). It is not necessary to wait for the signed contract to start the project.

- All partners in the project must sign a Partnership Agreement no later than by the time of submission of the first progress report (small-scale projects operate under a different timeline. Small-scale project lead partners should get in touch with their project advisor for further information.) The Partnership Agreement must describe the most important working processes in the project and confirm the deliverables to which each partner has committed. It should also set out arrangements for sharing costs for any activities implemented on behalf of the whole partnership, and for recovering any funds incorrectly paid to a partner for ineligible expenditure. There is an outline agreement in Fact Sheet 15.

- All partners in the project must appoint a controller to check all expenditure. This must be done no later than by the time of submission of the first progress report. Arrangements for appointing controllers vary between countries. In most cases projects will have to remember to set aside a budget for control work and will have to run a public procurement procedure to select the controller. Please note that Sweden has a centralised system for control and that there are specific rules for Swedish partners to follow, and in Flanders pre-tendering is undertaken at the national level and a list of providers is made available to project partners. No payment will be made to any project that has not appointed controllers for all partners.

Running your project

- All projects must be implemented in accordance with the approved application.

- All projects must submit a progress report every six months. (Small-scale projects report on a different schedule. See Fact Sheet 27 for more information.) They must submit a claim for payment at least once every year. Details of timing and the different types of reports can be found in Fact Sheet 20 on Reporting.

- All reports must be submitted through the programme's online monitoring system (OMS).

- Some projects appoint a consultant or company for project administration and management tasks. It is important to remember that this kind of contract needs to be awarded through a public procurement procedure.

	- All claims for payment must be checked and approved by each partner's appointed controller. - An overview of detailed rules and procedures for project implementation can be found in the fact sheets.
What kind of assistance is available during implementation?	- Every approved project is assigned to a project advisor. As far as possible the same advisor will stay with your project for the whole implementation period. Your advisor can clarify programme rules and procedures for you, as well as advising on general project implementation issues. - The joint secretariat runs regular events for approved projects to explain issues that seem to be causing problems, provide information and guidance on the latest developments in the programme, and allow you to meet and exchange views with other projects. - Whenever a new progress report is due, you will be provided with an overview of any changes or issues you need to be aware of. However, programme rules in place when your project was approved will be applicable to your project throughout the duration. - National Contact Points are the starting point for information on national rules and regulations.
Changes to your projects	- You must implement the project as described in the approved application. This means that if there are important changes to any part of your project, you will need to get approval from the programme before going ahead. Your changes will need to be assessed, which takes time. Therefore, requests for changes should only be made when there are unavoidable and unforeseeable changes in the project's operating environment. - Agreeing to be part of a project should be seen as a commitment until the end of the project. If partners leave, the project may be terminated. Funds already paid to the partner leaving may have to be repaid to the programme if the partner has not delivered on its commitments in the application form.
Keeping records	- It is very important for all partners to keep good records of the project's work and for lead partners to ensure that partner record-keeping is up to date and adequate. There is a list of essential

	documents for the audit trail, but as a general rule you should be able to document exactly why you claimed every amount (invoices, staff salary documents etc.), why it was necessary for the project, and what steps you took to live up to other rules like the providing value for money. You can find all the rules in the relevant fact sheets. In the event of an audit, failure to keep good records may result in a demand to pay back some or all of the grant.
Control and audit	• The lead partner must ensure that every partner's claim for payment has been checked and approved by the appointed controller.
Communication	• Communication is essential to ensuring that the most relevant stakeholders are aware of what the project is doing and how they can become involved. Communication of final results is essential if the benefit from each project is to spread beyond the partnership. • There are a small number of programme rules on publicity. These can be found in Fact Sheet 24 (to be published very soon). The most important rule is the requirement to display clearly on all publications and products that the project has been funded by the European Union. This also applies to digital publications. • Each work package must include activities related to communications and how well these are reflected in the project as a whole is part of the assessment of the full application. Even good project proposals can be rejected if communication activities appear too weak to achieve communication objectives.
Open access to all results	• It is a requirement that every project partner disseminate the results it produces as early as possible.

Special information for Call 2

- All project application types will be welcome in this call: small-scale projects (one-step procedure) and regular projects. For regular projects, both expressions of interest (EoI, the first of a two-stage procedure, as described on page 3) and full applications may be submitted. In Call 2 the programme will accept full applications that are the result of an EoI approved in Call 1 or that are applying directly, without having gone through the EoI stage. Expressions of interest that are approved in Call 2 can expect to move to the full application stage in Call 3 or 4. Call 3 will open in early March 2023.

- The deadline for all applications is **17:00 CET, Monday, 14 November 2022**. The Monitoring Committee meeting at which decisions on these applications will be made will be held in the first half of March 2023.

- There are no specific guidelines on content for this call – projects are welcome under any programme theme. Applicants are also encouraged to incorporate one or more of the programme's three spotlight themes in their project proposal, but not including them will *not* be grounds for rejection. There is no special focus for small-scale projects in this call; applications across the priorities are welcome. The purpose of small-scale projects at this point is to kick-start the programme, as explained on page 4.

- Quality is the focus of the assessors and Monitoring Committee members. All potential lead partners, even those with experience in the North Sea Programme, are **strongly recommended** to seek advice and assistance from the joint secretariat staff and national contact points to increase their chances of a successful application.

- Programme rules and procedures are described in the fact sheets, which you can find on the programme website. The joint secretariat is currently working on transitioning from the current to a new website, which will be announced when it is launched. Registration for and access to the programme's online monitoring system is also available through the website.