



DEMONSTRATING INNOVATIVE PATHWAYS
ADDRESSING WATER POLLUTION IN THE
MEDITERRANEAN AGRO♦HYDRO♦SYSTEM

**Open Call for Financial Support to Third Parties as a
mechanism to showcase the feasibility, replicability and
scalability of innovation solutions through Public
Authorities in the Mediterranean**

ANNEX 4

Open Call Applicants Guide



**Co-funded by
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1. Introduction

This document provides guidance information regarding the Path4Med Open Call addressed to public authorities to reproduce the solutions developed/used by the project and demonstrate their functionality for future uptake at different scales and across different regions. The document in its entirety and all associated documents of the Open Call kit must be read carefully before the submission of an application.

1.1. About the Path4Med Project

Path4Med is an interdisciplinary and participatory initiative designed to set clear pathways towards tackling water and soil pollution. By promoting novel agricultural practices, integrated monitoring techniques, and evidence-based solutions, the project empowers local communities and public authorities to tackle environmental pollution proactively. The project, integrates technologies at Demonstration Sites using the Living Labs approach, facilitates the exchange of knowledge, and supports the effective communication of data, findings, and best practices through dedicated digital platforms and tools. This approach includes a collaborative, real-life testing environment where farmers, irrigators, advisors, water user associations (WUAs), public authorities, and other local stakeholders work together as equal partners.

These Living Labs are based on site-specific demonstration farms that are part of broader systems (e.g., watersheds), allowing the project to examine how agricultural practices affect water and soil quality — from the farm to rivers and all the way to the sea. The aim is to co-develop, test, adapt, and promote innovative solutions that are relevant to local conditions and directly shaped by those who will use or be affected by them. This ensures stronger impact, practical relevance, and long-term adoption of results.

Path4Med implementation will be based on **seven (7)** concept-based, multiscale, and multidisciplinary groups of Demonstration Sites involving **eleven (11)** large scale demonstration sites (river basin scale) organised by the project partners using the Living Labs (LLs) approach. The Demonstrations will be used:

- i) as testbeds for the testing, evaluation, and adaptation of the examined technologies and solutions at various scales on local conditions;
- ii) as sources of constructed and documented datasets to assist the adaptation, calibration and validation of the tools, models and systems integration;
- iii) to test and evaluate the integrated communication platform in real-life conditions, ensuring it delivers spatially explicit and user-relevant information to stakeholders in the field;
- iv) as sources of educational material, and
- v) to showcase and advocate the effectiveness and viability of the proposed pathways and solutions to farmers, local actors, and policy makers.

The Demonstration Sites are organised in concept-based demonstration groups (DGs) targeting specific regions and conditions in order to better coordinate activities and to make it more concise (Table 1).

Table 1. Path4Med Demonstration Sites

DG1 - East-Med (Greece/ Turkey/ Cyprus)		
1	DG1.1	Sperchios River basin, Greece
2	DG1.2	Seyhan River basin, Turkey
3	DG1.3	Ezousa / Diarizos River basin, Cyprus
DG2 - Nordic (Norway/Denmark)		
4	DG2.1	Mjørdre, Skuterud, Time & Vasshaglona catchments, Norway
5	DG2.2	Fillerup treatment wetland (NBS), Denmark
DG3 - Ukraine		
6	DG3.1	Dnipro Basin
DG4 - Spain		
7	DG4.1	Navarra Region
8	DG4.2	Lleida and Segre river watershed
DG5 - Portugal		
9	DG5.1	Tagus Vulnerable Zone & Dao River basin
DG6 - Italy		
10	DG6.1	Basilicata
DG7 - France		
11	DG7.1	Maugio

The following categories represent the main types of solutions that will be developed within Path4Med:

Table 2. Path4Med Solution categories

1	Novel monitoring strategies (including IoT, water sampling and DNA extraction protocols)
2	Integrated indicators for water management and water quality/quantity monitoring
3	Earth Observation data sources and analysis techniques representing states and fluxes of the Agro-Hydro System.
4	Innovative data aggregations and interpretation methodologies (incl. digital twins, modelling, AI) improving capacity on risk assessment and response.
5	Framework of effective cascades of solutions/toolbox of agricultural approaches, practice and technologies
6	Location-based information services for farmers and advisors
7	Technologies to reduce presence of excess nutrients and agrochemical residues in water bodies.
8	Policies design and evaluation through the integrated, policy enabled modelling platform
9	Information based precision irrigation and nutrient management system.

To achieve long-term adoption and integration of the solutions described above, it is essential for Path4Med to secure the support and endorsement of decision-makers and public authorities across Europe. Therefore, the project will not only provide theoretical recommendations but also facilitate the practical implementation of the solutions by making them accessible to public authorities through an Open Call (OC). This Open Call will create a valuable opportunity to further evaluate, rigorously test, and refine the developed solutions in real-world scenarios. Additionally, it will serve as a platform to garner support and advocacy for the scaling up and widespread promotion of these solutions, ensuring their long-lasting impact and sustainability.

1.2. Path4Med Objectives

Path4Med aims to reduce water and soil pollution from agricultural sources, starting in the Mediterranean region and expanding to other European and associated areas. The project is built around four core objectives:

1. Reduce soil pollution and enhance restoration

Encourage practices and solutions that limit pollutant accumulation in soils and support the restoration of soil health and functionality.

2. Reduce fertiliser use by at least 20%

Promote efficient nutrient management strategies and tools to lower fertiliser inputs while maintaining agricultural productivity.

3. Reduce nutrient losses by at least 50%

Implement measures that minimise the loss of nutrients from agricultural systems to surrounding environments.

4. Prevent, minimise, and remediate pollution of marine and freshwater ecosystems

Support actions that address the prevention and reduction of pollution in both freshwater and marine ecosystems, particularly from agricultural sources.

These objectives guide all Path4Med activities, including the development of Demonstration Sites and the identification of solutions to be tested through the Open Call.

1.3. Path4Med Open Call

Path4Med plans to implement Demonstration Sites throughout the Mediterranean region to evaluate the project's solutions and pave the way for their broader adoption. For sustained long-term use, however, it is essential to secure backing from decision-makers across Europe. Therefore, the project will extend beyond theoretical suggestions and empower public authorities through a single Open Call. This initiative will offer a chance to further evaluate, refine, and enhance the solutions while garnering support for their expansion.

The selected subprojects will have an implementation timeframe of 9 months. The 9-month implementation period will be divided into three (3) phases:

Table 3. Path4Med Open Call: subproject implementation phases

Phase	Duration	Payment schedule	Deliverable
Phase 1 Feasibility	1 month Jul. 2026 (M1)	Payment of 20% of the total grant	Feasibility Plan
Phase 2 Replicability	6 months Aug. 2026 - Jan. 2027 (M2-M7)	Payment of 60% of the total grant	Demonstration report
Phase 3 Scalability	2 months Feb. 2027 - Mar 2027 (M8-M9)	Payment of 20% of the total grant	Scale-up Plan

Important note: Payments will take place after the submission and evaluation of each deliverable and within one (1) month after final acceptance has occurred.

Targeted applicants:

Each subproject will be composed from single applicants. For the purposes of this Open Call, **only local and/or regional public authorities** are eligible to apply.

- **Public authorities** acting on a regional or local level are governmental or administrative bodies established under public law that operate within a specific sub-national geographical area (region, city, town, etc.) and are responsible for exercising public functions and providing services to the population within that area.
The Path4MED open call seeks applications from public authorities with clearly defined responsibilities including (but not limited to): Water management, Soil management, Environmental protection, Meteorology, and Agricultural policies. Public authorities active in other domains relevant to the implementation and testing of the innovative solutions described in the applicant's guide and Annex 10 are also welcome to apply.
- This category **does not include public bodies without regulatory or administrative authority**, such as universities and research institutes even if they are publicly owned or established by public law.
Universities and research organisations may still be involved in the subprojects, but only through subcontracting with eligible public authorities.
- If a public university or research institution also exercises regulatory or administrative authority, it may be considered eligible provided this mandate is clearly defined in the organisation's establishment documents or relevant national legislation.

The table below contains the key numbers of the Open Call:

Table 4. Path4Med Open Call | Key Numbers

Path4Med Open Call	Total amount	Max. budget per sub-project	No. of sub-projects	Partners per sub-project
	500k Euros	100k Euros	5	1

The submission timeline of the Open Call is from the **29th of October 2025 to the 30th of January 2026.**

1.4. Purpose and Objectives of Open Call

The purpose of the Path4Med Open Call is to build the **capacity of public authorities to implement and test innovative solutions** that aim to reduce fertilizer use and prevent, minimise, or remediate pollution caused by excess nutrients. Through this Open Call, the project seeks to transfer and scale the solutions developed within Path4Med's Demonstration Sites, while fostering local ownership and adaptation in diverse Mediterranean and associated regions. Associated regions are understood as areas with ecosystems that can benefit from the demonstration activities and/or less developed regions.

The OC aims to:

- Reproduce the approaches developed by the project and demonstrate their functionality for future uptake at different scales and across different regions.
- Promote and empower public authorities and citizens to take action against soil, water and ocean pollution.
- Accelerate the uptake of innovative solutions, particularly in less developed regions.

Each category (Table 2) includes a set of specific technologies, methods, or tools (referred to as “solutions”), developed within the Path4Med project. Applicants must select at least one category and implement one or more solutions from it, based on the needs and priorities of their region. Applicants are encouraged to combine solutions either within the same category or across different categories, provided this approach aligns with their regional needs and remains feasible within the project scope.

Please note: Proposals addressing multiple solutions will not be evaluated favourably. A proposal implementing one solution will be evaluated equally with a proposal implementing several, using the same criteria according to the Remote Evaluation key points outlined in Section 3.5.2 of the Open Call Applicants Guide (Annex 4).

Detailed descriptions and examples of the categories can be found in Annex 10.

Indicative examples:

- **One category and one solution**

Applicant A chooses the category **Novel Monitoring Strategies** and focuses on IoT-based monitoring systems.

- **One category and two solutions from the same category**

Applicant B chooses the category **Novel Monitoring Strategies** and focuses on the combination of DNA-based indicators and real-time water quality monitoring.

- **Two categories and two solutions**

Applicant C chooses the category **Novel Monitoring Strategies** and focuses on DNA extraction protocols and also chooses the category **Earth Observation data sources and analysis techniques** to focus on the monitoring of chlorophyll-a concentrations.

Subprojects are expected to **implement and demonstrate the selected solution(s)** in a real-world setting within their region. Their role is to apply the solution(s) in context, gather feedback, and contribute to the assessment of feasibility, adaptability, and impact.

Subgrantees are also expected to collaborate with relevant local stakeholders (e.g. farmers, advisors, water managers, citizens) and ensure that their activities:

- Address local challenges related to water and soil pollution
- Support knowledge sharing and stakeholder engagement
- Provide insights that contribute to the validation, improvement, and potential scale-up of the selected solution(s)
- Deliver environmental and societal benefits aligned with Path4Med’s goals

Subprojects are not expected to develop new solutions but to apply, adapt, and test the ones developed within the project, helping ensure their relevance and replicability across regions

1.5. Call Expected Outcome

Through the Path4Med Open Call five (5) subprojects will be funded. Each subproject should propose the following activities cumulatively:

- **Address at least one (1) Path4Med Solution**
 - Applicants should propose to implement, test, transfer, and scale **at least one (1) solution** already developed within Path4Med's Demonstration Sites.
- **Demonstration in an event with at least 30 Stakeholders**
 - Plan and organise a public demonstration event to showcase the solution(s)' functionality, outcomes, and benefits.
 - Engage at least 30 stakeholders, including (indicatively) policymakers, industry representatives, researchers, and community leaders.
- **Feasibility Study**
 - Assess the suitability of the selected solution(s) in the local/regional context.
 - Analyse technical requirements and compatibility with existing infrastructure or practices.
 - Evaluate economic viability, including estimated costs and required resources.
 - Review legal and regulatory considerations relevant to implementation.
 - Identify potential barriers or risks (e.g. organisational, environmental, or societal) and propose mitigation measures.
- **Plan for Upscaling**
 - Present a roadmap for scaling the solution(s) to a broader audience.
 - Include strategies for the adoption of the proposed solution(s) in other regions or sectors, focusing on their sustainability and replicability.
 - Identify potential barriers for scaling and propose measures to overcome them (e.g., regulatory challenges).
 - Demonstrate how the solution(s) will remain relevant and financially sustainable beyond the project's funding period.

To summarise:

OC applicants

- Each subproject will be composed from single applicants. For the purposes of this Open Call, **only local and/or regional public authorities** are eligible to apply.
- **Public authorities** acting on a regional or local level are governmental or administrative bodies established under public law that operate within a specific sub-national geographical area (region, city, town, etc.) and are responsible for exercising public functions and providing services to the population within that area.
The Path4MED open call seeks applications from public authorities with clearly defined responsibilities including (but not limited to): Water management, Soil management, Environmental protection, Meteorology, and Agricultural policies. Public authorities active in other domains relevant

	to the implementation and testing of the innovative solutions described in the applicant's guide and Annex 10 are also welcome to apply. ➤ This category does not include public bodies without regulatory or administrative authority, such as universities and research institutes even if they are publicly owned or established by public law. Universities and research organisations may still be involved in the subprojects, but only through subcontracting with eligible public authorities. ➤ If a public university or research institution also exercises regulatory or administrative authority, it may be considered eligible provided this mandate is clearly defined in the organisation's establishment documents or relevant national legislation.
Purpose	➤ Provide financial support to public authorities to showcase the feasibility, replicability and scalability of the project's innovation solutions.
Budget	➤ 500.000€ OC total budget ➤ 5 subprojects to be selected x 100.000€ max budget per subproject
Requirement	No. of solutions per proposal: ≥1 No. of feasibility studies: 1 No. of demonstrating events per proposal: 1 No. of stakeholders engaged in demonstrating event per proposal: ≥30 No. of plans per proposal for upscaling the solution(s): 1

2. Open Call General Conditions and Guidelines

2.1. General Information

The Path4Med Open Call is a key mechanism to support the real-life testing and demonstration of the innovative solutions that will be developed within the project. It is designed to empower public authorities—particularly in the Mediterranean basin and associated regions—to take an active role in reducing nutrient-related pollution and promoting sustainable agricultural practices.

Through this Open Call, the Path4Med consortium will provide Financial Support to Third Parties (FSTP), selecting five (5) proposals in total. The call aims to showcase the feasibility, replicability, and scalability of the Path4Med solutions in diverse regional and environmental contexts.

Applications will be accepted only from single applicants that will be public authorities (no consortia), acting on a regional or local level as governmental or administrative bodies with clearly defined responsibilities, as defined in the Call. Selected public authorities will be expected to:

- Implement and test at least one (1) of the Path4Med solutions in real-world settings within their region.
- Demonstrate the applicability and value of the solution(s) in reducing excess nutrient pollution and improving soil and water management.
- Engage local stakeholders (e.g., farmers, citizens, service providers) to promote knowledge sharing, co-creation, and wider awareness.
- Provide feedback and insights that will support the broader adoption, adaptation, and policy alignment of the tested solution(s) across Europe.

Path4Med will accept applications submitted by local or regional public authorities from associated regions that are eligible to participate in Horizon Europe excluding those with partners in the Path4Med consortium as described in paragraph 3.2.2. To ensure associated regions have the opportunity to work with the most relevant and impactful solutions, a list is provided for the applicants to choose from. Applicants must select at least one category and implement one or more solutions from it, based on the needs and priorities of their region. Applicants are encouraged to combine solutions either within the same category or across different categories, provided this approach aligns with their regional needs and remains feasible within the project scope.

Table 5. Path4Med Solution Categories¹

1	Novel monitoring strategies (including IoT, water sampling and DNA extraction protocols)
2	Integrated indicators for water management and water quality/quantity monitoring
3	Earth Observation data sources and analysis techniques representing states and fluxes of the Agro-Hydro System.
4	Innovative data aggregations and interpretation methodologies (incl. digital twins, modelling, AI) improving capacity on risk assessment and response.
5	Framework of effective cascades of solutions/toolbox of agricultural approaches, practice and technologies
6	Location-based information services for farmers and advisors
7	Technologies to reduce presence of excess nutrients and agrochemical residues in water bodies.
8	Policies design and evaluation through the integrated, policy enabled modelling platform
9	Information based precision irrigation and nutrient management system.

2.2. Specific requirements for the subprojects

The selected applicants will receive funding for showcasing the feasibility, replicability and scalability of the project's innovation solutions targeted by their application. Applicants must ensure that the submitted proposals satisfy the following requirements:

- Address the challenges of water and soil pollution, particularly related to fertilizer use and nutrient runoff.
- Be feasible for deployment within the duration and scope of the subproject.
- Have the potential to be replicated or scaled in other regions.
- Deliver long-term environmental and societal benefits aligned with Path4Med's objectives.

Proposals must consist of original work by the applicants and their anticipated developments do not infringe upon any third-party rights. Any disputes or legal challenges stemming from third-party claims resulting from the subgranted projects are the sole responsibility of the applicant. The Path4Med consortium holds no responsibility for verifying IP ownership of complementary technologies or methods introduced by the subgranted projects.

This requirement applies specifically to the content of the proposal document, not necessarily to the activities within the project. Applicants may incorporate existing third-party technologies (e.g., detection equipment, software, or analytical tools) in their activities, provided they have

¹ More detailed information, including descriptions, implementation considerations, and examples for each category, can be found in Annex 10 – Solution Descriptions.

the proper rights, permissions, or licenses to use them. However, applicants must not falsely claim ownership of intellectual property they do not develop.

The proposals, deliverables and all official communication related to the sub-projects must be submitted in English.

The Path4Med Open Call (including the whole OC kit) and the respective Call for Evaluators will be launched in October 2025. Before assigned to external Evaluators, each proposal will be verified by the Path4Med OC Advisory Board (AB) and the Open Call Manager, for eligibility according to the predefined criteria of the OC. The proposal evaluation and Subgrant Agreement preparation will take place between February 2026 and June 2026. Selected subprojects will be launched in July 2026 having an implementation timeframe of 9 months (until March 2027). The implementation period will be divided into 3 phases:

- **Phase 1 – Feasibility (Duration: 1 month / July 2026):** Payment of 20% of the total grant [Deliverable: Feasibility study]
- **Phase 2 - Replicability (Duration: 6 months / August 2026 – January 2027):** Payment of 60% of the total grant [Deliverable: Demonstration report]
- **Phase 3 - Scalability (Duration 2 months / February 2027 – March 2027):** Payment of the final 20% of the total grant [Deliverable: Scale-up plan].

An initial timeline for Path4Med Open Call can be seen in the following figure. The dates may change due to unforeseen events and situations. The dates are not legally binding. The Path4Med OC will be carried out in compliance with the basic principle calls of the European Commission, which are: Excellence, Transparency, Fairness, Impartiality, Confidentiality, Efficiency and Speed.

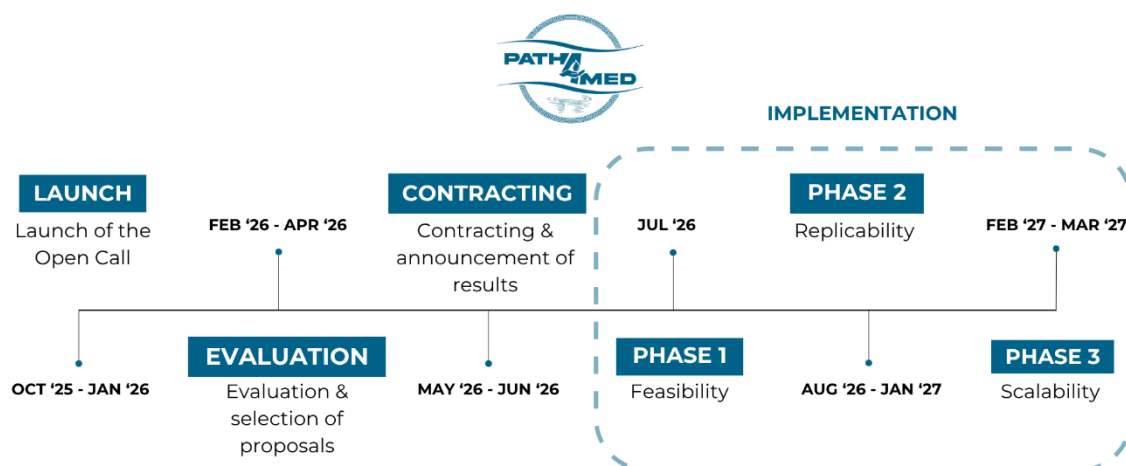


Figure 1. Path4Med Open Call timeline

2.3. Submission procedure

Applications must be submitted electronically via the opencalls.fund (OCF) platform. Interested Applicants should visit Path4Med's website (<https://www.path4med.eu/open-call/>) for any updates and the FAQ section available in the opencalls.fund as well as on the project website.

Submissions received through any other channel will not be considered and will be automatically discarded.

Documents required in subsequent phases will be submitted via dedicated channels indicated by the Path4Med consortium in the contracting phase. (e.g. via email or via the OCF).

In case multiple versions of the same application are submitted, only the last version will be evaluated. All the previous ones will not be considered and will be discarded.

Throughout the entire process, the confidentiality of applicants' identities and the contents of their proposals will be strictly maintained. Information related to the selected Path4Med solution(s) and their planned implementation will be treated with the outmost discretion

By applying to Path4Med Open Call, Applicants (single entities) automatically accept the terms and conditions of the Open Call as described in the Open Call Kit.

2.4. Language

English is the official language for the Path4Med Open Call. Applications submitted in any other language will not be evaluated. English is also the only official language throughout the whole execution of the Path4MED project. This means all requested contributions (documents of the OC kit) must be submitted in English to be eligible. In the case of official documents as a proof of the legal existence of the applicant, they can be submitted in original language, however if it is deemed essential to facilitate the eligibility check, Applicants may be requested to provide additional documentation (i.e., a translation of the relevant sections of the official document into English—this does not have to be a formal, certified translation) in a timely manner.

2.5. Documentation Format

Any document requested by the Applicants in any of the phases (e.g. submission, eligibility check) must be submitted electronically in PDF format without restrictions for printing. The structure of the provided proposal template must be followed when preparing the proposal and should not exceed the limit of **15 pages**. All tables, figures, references, and any other element pertaining to the application must be included as an integral part of the application and are thus counted against this page limit with the exception of the budget tables. The budget tables provided in Annex 9 do not count towards the 15-page limit. However, please aim to limit the budget section to one page. Excess pages will not be considered during the evaluation of the proposal.

The reference font for the body text of applications is Calibri and the minimum font size allowed is 11 points. Paragraph spacing of 6 pts and a minimum of single line spacing is to be used. This applies to the body text, including text in tables. Text elements other than the body text, such as headers, foot/end notes, captions, formula's, may deviate, but must be legible. The page size is A4, and all margins (top, bottom, left, right) must be at least 15 mm (not including any footers or headers). The cover page and the ToC are not included in the limit of the 15 pages. Removing explanatory text in the proposal template, located below the paragraph sub-titles is allowed.

Incomplete applications or applications that do not comply with these requirements will be excluded from evaluation as non-eligible.

2.6. Origin of the funds

All subgrantees will sign a dedicated Subgrant Agreement with the Path4Med Open Treasurer (AUA) and Open Call Manager (RFF). The funds provided to the Subgrant Agreement originate from the funds of the European Project Path4MEd which is funded by the European Commission under Grant Agreement Number 101156867, and remain therefore, property of the EU until the balance is paid, whose management rights have been transferred to the project partners of Path4Med. This relation between the subgrantees and the European Commission through the Path4MEd project carries a set of obligations to the subgrantees with the European Commission. It is the responsibility of the subgrantees to fulfil these, and of the Path4Med consortium partners to inform them on these.

More details on the obligations of subgrantees can be found in Chapter 5.

2.7. Opencalls.fund platform

The [opencalls.fund](#) platform is a digital platform for the management of the applications for financial support to third parties and accelerator programs, developed and maintained by reframe.food. The Path4Med Open Call for Financial Support to Third Parties (FSTP) will be published through the [opencalls.fund](#) platform.

3. Proposal submission and Selection

All Open Call selected beneficiaries must meet the eligibility criteria outlined in the present Section (Proposal Submission and Selection), sign and submit the same documents. **At the time of submission, Applicants** must submit the following document per public **authority** (single entity):

- **Declaration of Honour (DoH).** The document must be filled in appropriately, signed by the entity's legal representative and stamped (with the institution's stamp if applicable).

Important:

As a general rule, all documents that require to bear stamps and signatures must be signed by the legal representative of the Applicant. **In the case of parties coming from a country where**

the use of stamps is not mandatory, it is required to provide relevant justification documents in English. E-signatures are also acceptable and in this case the existence of stamps is not required. PDF Advanced Electronic Signatures (PadES) and CMS Advanced Electronic Signatures (CadES) are acceptable e-signature formats for the Path4Med OC.

Although there is no requirement for letters of support, Applicants can include references about their existence in their proposal.

During the contracting phase, all selected Applicants must provide their bank account information and three signed copies of the Subgrant Agreement (indicative model given as an Annex 7), which will be sent to them following the evaluation and selection phase.

3.1. Open Call Publication

The Path4Med Open Call will be published on the Funding and Tenders portal of the European Commission, and Path4Med website (<https://www.path4med.eu/open-call/>), it may also be publicised via the Path4Med project partners' websites/ dissemination portals on Wednesday, October 29th, 2025 and it will remain open until Friday, January 30th, 2026, at 17:00 CET. The OC will be widely communicated through the Path4Med social media channels and the Path4Med partners' networks and channels.

The publication will be supported by the Open Call Kit, which includes the following documents:

- **Open Call Text (Fiche)**
- **Open Call Hand Out Summary**
- **Open Call Applicants' Guide**, (present document).
- **Declaration of Honour (DoH)**, which confirms the ability of the single applicant to execute the subproject (if selected), exclusion of conflict of interest, etc. (signed and submitted as .pdf in the submission phase)
- **Open Call Proposal template**, word document to be completed by the Applicant, saved, and submitted as .pdf in the application phase.
- A **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)** document (which will be updated throughout the entire OC duration)
- **Open Call Budget template**, excel document to be completed by the Applicant, saved and submitted as .pdf in the application phase.
- An **indicative Subgrant Agreement contract**, just as a reference for the Applicants (only applicable at the contracting stage and subject to changes by the OC Treasurer/Coordinator and the OC Manager).
- **Solution descriptions**, which includes detailed information, descriptions, implementation considerations, and examples for each category.

Interested Applicants have to regularly check the FAQ section in the opencalls.fund platform and/or [Path4Med's website](https://www.path4med.eu).

3.2. Eligibility Criteria

3.2.1. Overall eligibility criteria

An automatic filtering to discard non-eligible proposals will be based on the following criteria:

- Legal entity in eligible country within the associated regions², based on section 3.2.2;
- The proposal is submitted by a single applicant (consortia are not allowed);
- The proposal is unique, and the applicant has not submitted any other proposal to this Open Call. If any applicant is found to participate in multiple applications, all respective applications will be rejected.
- In case multiple versions of the same application are submitted, only the last version will be evaluated. All the previous ones will not be considered and will be discarded
- The proposal addresses at least one (1) of the Path4Med's solutions, as listed in Tables 2 and 5.
- Proposals are not pre-selected in the other projects' open calls funded under the same topic (HORIZON-MISS-2023-OCEAN-SOIL-01-01), i.e. SEACURE
- Proposed work to be carried out after the selection process;
- Existing Path4Med consortium members and their affiliates are not eligible for the Open Call.
- The proposal must be delivered before the defined deadline, applying the requested submission procedure, and only through the opencalls.fund platform.
- Proposals shall only ask for funding for the part of the work that is not yet accomplished and will be carried out once having been selected for funding. Of course, this does not exclude the usage of e.g., results, IP, infrastructures or approaches already held by the applicants.
- All Applicants must have a valid VAT number and be active and operational. However, if obtaining a VAT number is not mandatory according to the national legislation of the applicant's country, applicants should provide an official identification or registration number issued by the competent national or regional public authority (e.g. ministry, public administration register, or equivalent body) confirming their legal status as a public authority.

Path4Med Open Call team reserves the right to ask for additional explanations from the applicants during the eligibility check.

Proposals that comply with these criteria are eligible to move on to the evaluation round.

The Advisory Board will be formed to run the eligibility check of the submitted proposals and select the external experts who will evaluate the proposals.

3.2.2. Definition of eligible countries

Path4Med will accept applications submitted by **local** or **regional public authorities** from **specific** associated regions that are eligible to participate in [Horizon Europe](#) excluding those with

² Associated regions are understood as areas with ecosystems that can benefit from the demonstration activities and/or less developed regions.

partners in the Path4Med consortium. Table 6 provides the full list of eligible countries within the 4 targeted regions and Table 7 the excluded countries.

The grouping of the countries has been made considering both geographical regions and hydrological connectivity to the European seas to secure replication of Path4Med solutions to broader geographical regions. As an example, Serbia is included in the West Balkans despite being hydrologically connected to the Black Sea. Inland countries have been included based upon their connection to major rivers such as the Danube.

Table 6. OC Eligible countries

Eligible Countries			
South Mediterranean	West Balkans	Black Sea	Baltic Sea
Algeria	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Austria	Estonia
Egypt	Croatia	Bulgaria	Finland
Israel	Montenegro	Hungary ³	Latvia
Jordan	Kosovo ⁴	Georgia	Lithuania
Libya	Slovenia	Moldova	Sweden
Lebanon	North Macedonia	Romania	
Morocco	Serbia	Slovakia	
Palestine			
Syria			
Tunisia			

The following Table 7 lists the countries that are excluded and therefore applicants located in these countries **are not eligible to submit** a proposal under the Path4Med Open Call. This exclusion arises due to the concentration of the consortium partners in these countries. Path4Med seeks to expand its geographical reach to enhance its overall impact and foster inclusivity in diverse regions.

³ At the time of writing, Hungary is not eligible. The Open Call will adhere to the Council Implementing Decision 2022/2506 stipulating that legal commitments must not be entered into with any public interest trusts established on the basis of the Hungarian Act IX of 2021 or any entity maintained by such a public interest trust. Path4Med will adhere to any subsequent changes to the decision during project implementation.

⁴ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

Table 7. Excluded countries

Excluded countries based on partner participation in the consortium			
Albania	France	Netherlands	Turkey
Cyprus	Germany	Norway	Ukraine
Czech Republic	Greece	Poland	Spain
Denmark	Italy	Portugal	Switzerland

3.3. Eligible costs

The Path4Med project follows the guidelines of the European Commission in terms of cost eligibility for financing within its open calls. Payments will follow the “General eligibility conditions for lump sum costs” according to the EU Grants: AGA — Annotated Model Grant Agreement: V2.0– 01.04.2025 and specifically Article 5 and 6.1.e.

As mentioned above (Section 1), each selected entity will receive the funding on a lump sum basis. To justify the lump sum, applicants need to provide a detailed explanation with cost estimations. The cost estimations are subject to the basic eligibility rules of Horizon Europe, that is the proposed budget may be adjusted to exclude costs that are deemed ineligible. If the evaluators find overestimated costs, this is recorded in the Evaluation Summary Report and will be reflected in a modified lump sum amount in the sub - grant agreement. Should the sub-grantee disagree with the grant amount offered, they may choose to withdraw their proposal.

The following cost categories are considered eligible:

- **Personnel costs** – Costs of the personnel realising the work and preparing the deliverables/reports during each of the 3 phases. Applicants must calculate personnel costs according to the rules and regulations of their country and real labour market data regarding the relevant positions. For the proposal template, only the final amount allocated to personnel costs is necessary. Personnel costs are considered direct costs and can't be managed as indirect costs.
- **Subcontracting** - Subcontracting should be clearly justified. Costs must be reasonable and comply with the principle of sound financial management. Coordination tasks cannot be subcontracted. Applicants should ensure that there are sufficient details for the action tasks, the estimated budget, and the procedure that will be followed to ensure best value-for-money. Any kind of organisation could be subcontracted, provided that they are not part of the Path4Med consortium. The evaluators will assess the scope and value-for-money aspects of subcontracting, and their assessment will be reflected in the score of each proposal. Subcontracting is allowed for up to a **maximum of 25%** of the proposed budget when properly justified. When submitting the proposal, Applicants should only write the total amount for subcontracting. Selected Applicants should follow the standards for subcontracting set by the European Commission, ensuring best value for money and absence of conflict of interest, during the project

implementation. Procurement must comply with the national and European regulations applicable to each applicant's institution.

- **Purchase costs:**
 - **Travel costs** – Travel costs necessary for the execution of the subproject.
 - **Equipment costs** – Borrowing or lending the necessary equipment is not eligible. Only depreciation costs for purchased equipment are eligible.
 - **Other goods & services** – Other goods and services include, for instance, consumables and supplies, dissemination (including open access), protection of results, certificates on the methodology, translations, and publications.
- **Indirect costs** - Indirect costs (overheads) could be up to 25% of the direct cost. Subcontracting is not included in the calculation of the 25% ceiling for indirect costs.

The budget must be filled in for each proposal using the excel template provided. Applicants will then save the excel sheet as pdf and upload it on the opencalls.fund platform.

Applicants should take into consideration that adequate budget must be allocated to dissemination activities. A minimum 7% of the funding will be allocated to the deployment of dissemination activities such as organisation of information/field days, workshops and informal events to promote the selected Path4Med solution(s).

Applicants **should explain and justify the budget (for each budget category separately)**. For personnel costs, indicate the number of person months, and link such personnel effort to the contents (tasks, goals) of the proposal. If Applicants use subcontracting, they must justify it, and specify the role of subcontractor.

Important:

In terms of financial monitoring of the subprojects implementation, no financial justification is required by the project, however the Subgrantee shall keep the originals or, in exceptional cases, duly authenticated copies – including electronic copies – of all documents relating to the Contract for at least three years after final payment. These shall be made available to the EC when requested during any audit under the Grant Agreement.

3.4. Application process

3.4.1. Applicant's registration

Applicants should register at the Path4Med Open Call page on the opencalls.fund platform. This will be the central interface for managing the proposal applications for the remainder of the Open Call.

The information on the Path4Med Open Call will be available on the Path4Med website ([Open Call Section](#)) as well as on the EU Funding & Tenders Portal.

It is important to note that only individuals registered on the opencalls.fund platform will be in a position to apply for the Path4Med Open Call and submit questions on the dedicated FAQ section on the opencalls.fund platform.

Questions can be submitted until January 28th, 2026 at 17:00 CET through email to the Path4Med support team at path4med@opencalls.fund or the FAQ section of the opencalls.fund platform. Answers will be provided using the same channel through which the question was posed.

Important:

Applicants should be aware that the email address that will be used for the submission of the application will be used as the primary contact email for any formal communication during the eligibility and evaluation phases.

3.4.2. Application preparation

Applicants should follow the steps below:

1. Applicants must register on the platform prior to the submission of the proposal.
2. Applicants are required to prepare and submit their applications online through the opencalls.fund platform, providing all necessary information and uploading all requested documents. Applicants must ensure that the complete application, including all required documents, is submitted before the deadline. Late submissions will not be accepted.

Important note: The platform supports only files in .pdf format. The size of each file can be up to 10MB. Compressed files (such as .zip, .rar, etc.) are **not acceptable**.

3. Applicants that do not accept the terms and conditions and do not upload the completed documents to the platform in .pdf format(as mentioned in Section 3), will not be able to submit the application.
4. In case applicants have any technical difficulties, they should contact the Path4Med OC support team at: path4med@opencalls.fund

It is strongly recommended not to wait until the last minute to submit the application. Failure of the application to be submitted in time for any reason, including network communications delays or working from multiple browsers or multiple browser windows, is not acceptable as an extenuating circumstance. The time of receipt of the application as recorded by the submission system will be definitive.

Technical issues may occur with large documents in different formats. The Path4Med project does not bear responsibility for technical problems at any stage. Make sure to check and test upload on time. If technical issues do arise, Applicants may contact the Path4Med OC team for support, via email: path4med@opencalls.fund until January 28th at 17:00 CET.

3.4.3. Reception of applications

Applications will ONLY be submitted via the opencalls.fund platform. The application reception will close at 17:00 CET (Brussels time) on January 30th, 2026.

3.4.4. Use of generative AI in proposal preparation

The Path4Med project follows the same guidelines regarding generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) in proposal preparation as is stated in the applications for Horizon Europe projects.

Applicants are expected to exercise caution and carefully consider the use of generative AI in the preparation of their proposal. Content generated in such a manner should be thoroughly reviewed and validated by the applicant to ensure accuracy, appropriateness, and compliance with IP regulations. Applicants are fully responsible for the content of the proposal, including those elements generated by AI and must be transparent in disclosing which tools were used and how.

Specially, applicants must:

- Verify the accuracy, validity and appropriateness of AI generated content and citations, and correct any errors or inconsistencies.
- Provide a list of sources used to generate the content and citations. Make sure sources are properly cited.
- Be aware of potential plagiarism. Check original sources to avoid plagiarism.
- Acknowledge the limitations of the tool, such as potential of error, bias and/or gaps

3.5. Evaluation process

3.5.1. Eligibility check

Once the Open Call is closed (January 30th, 2026) and before assigning the applications to external evaluators, each proposal will be checked against the overall eligibility criteria. During February 2026, the eligibility check will be carried out by the Path4Med OC Advisory Board (OCAB), consisting of representatives from: (i) project coordinator (AUA); (ii) agricultural nutrient management, socio-economic policy and integrated systems modelling expert (NIBIO); as well as (iii) agriculture, water quality and soil erosion expert (UPNA) and the OC Manager (RFF). Please note that only complete applications will be considered, those with missing or incomplete information will be discarded.

This procedural part of the evaluation will check the eligibility of the submitted proposals against the overall eligibility criteria according to section 3.2.1.

Proposals that do not comply with these criteria are not eligible to move on to the evaluation round.

During the eligibility check, the Applicants might be requested to provide additional explanations if their application raises questions such as, but not limited to, ambiguity of the information, inconsistencies which are obvious errors, among others. In that case, Applicants will have three (3) working days starting from the day after receiving the notification to provide clarifications or additional documents to complete their initial application. If the requested clarifications / documents are not provided in the specified time, their application will be discarded and will not move on to the evaluation round.

Important note: The designated contact person in the opencalls.fund, will be responsible for all communication during the eligibility phase. If further clarification is required, the Open Call team will notify the applicant via the email address provided. Failure by the contact person to respond within the specified deadline for submitting the requested clarifications will result in the rejection of the application, and the OC team will not be held accountable.

3.5.2. Remote Evaluation key points

Each proposal will be reviewed by two (2) external evaluators with specific technical and/or business expertise related to the topics of the call. The evaluators will have to evaluate each proposal under the specific evaluation criteria.

All eligible proposals will be assessed by two expert evaluators against the following **award criteria**:

Excellence [Scoring 1-5; threshold 3] Proposals must align with the Call objectives.

- **Relevance and Alignment with Path4Med Objectives.** To what extent does the proposal align with the objectives, priorities, and expected results of the Path4Med Open Call? Does it clearly address the specific challenges and focus areas outlined in the call, including water and soil pollution in the agro-hydro system? Does the proposed solution(s) present an ambitious and context-relevant approach?
- **Feasibility of concept:** Is the implementation of the proposed solution(s) practical and achievable within the project's timeline and budget?
- **Work plan coherence:** How well thought out is the proposal's strategy and implementation approach? Is the project plan well-structured, with clear tasks, milestones, deliverables, and timelines?
- **Ethics and compliance:** Does the proposal address ethical concerns and adhere to relevant legal and regulatory frameworks?
- **Gender and inclusivity:** Does the project promote diversity, inclusion, and equal opportunities?
- **Environmental protection:** Does the project apply environmental stewardship principles?

Impact [Scoring 1-5; threshold 3] Applicants must demonstrate the project's potential to deliver measurable social, economic, or environmental benefits and outline strategies for scaling, sustainability, and stakeholder engagement.

- **Impact and Sustainability:** What is the expected social, environmental, and economic impact of the proposed solution(s) implementation? Does the project demonstrate a clear potential for long-term benefits, and does it take into account key aspects of sustainability, including environmental, financial, and social dimensions?
- **Demonstration of impact on the Path4Med ecosystem:** Describe how the proposed activities will generate impact within the Path4Med ecosystem, particularly on relevant stakeholders such as farmers and land managers, environmental agencies, policy makers, research institutions, and the general public. Highlight how the implementation of the

selected solution(s) can support improved practices, increased awareness, policy alignment, or long-term adoption at local or regional level.

- **Dissemination and Policy Uptake:** Does the proposal include effective strategies to share results, promote the adoption of the solution(s), and inform local or regional policies?
- **Scalability and replicability:** Can the proposed solution(s) be scaled up or replicated in other regions or contexts?
- **Community Engagement:** How is the involvement of local stakeholders ensured?

Capacity [Scoring 1-5; threshold 3] Applicants must provide credible evidence that the project delivery team has the necessary skills, resources and capacity to effectively deliver the project in the timeframe and budget as specified.

- **Team Expertise and Roles:** Does the team have the necessary technical, managerial, and domain-specific expertise?
- **Quality of the team as a whole:** Including complementarity, gender balance and diversity
- **Budget Allocation:** Is the budget realistic, transparent, and appropriately allocated to project tasks?
- **Use of Resources:** Are the proposed resources, including equipment, data, and expertise, adequate and effectively utilised?
- **Risk Management:** Are potential risks identified, and is there a mitigation plan in place?

All award criteria have the same weight. Each award criterion can be scored from 1 to 5 with a threshold of 3 points in each category, and a minimum of 9 points in total.

Interpretation of scores:

- 1 - Poor.** The criterion is inadequately addressed, or there are serious inherent weaknesses.
- 2 - Fair.** The proposal broadly addresses the criterion, but there are significant weaknesses.
- 3 - Good.** The proposal addresses the criterion well, but a number of shortcomings are present.
- 4 - Very Good.** The proposal addresses the criterion very well, but a small number of shortcomings are present.
- 5 - Excellent.** The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion. Any shortcomings are minor

A 'minor shortcoming' is an issue that relates only to a marginal aspect of the proposal with respect to the criterion and/or can easily be rectified (it will not impact the scoring).

A 'shortcoming' is a problem that relates to an important aspect of the proposal. It impacts the scoring but does not render the proposal inappropriate for funding, i.e. the proposal is still expected to lead to useful results with positive impact.

A 'significant weakness' means that the proposal addresses the criterion in a limited and/or not sufficiently effective way (will lower the score below threshold). This can also be the case when the proposal includes a large number of shortcomings, each one of them not rendering the

proposal inappropriate for funding, though all together make the proposal not addressing the criterion sufficiently in an effective way

The evaluators' scores for each criterion will be averaged, and these averaged scores will then be summed to calculate the total score.

Scores must pass the individual threshold AND the overall threshold if a proposal is to be considered for funding within the limits of the available call budget.

Important note:

From the pool of eligible proposals, the highest-scoring proposal from each of the four regions (South Mediterranean, West Balkans, Black Sea, Baltic Sea) and eligible counties as listed in paragraph 3.2.2, will be selected for funding, provided that each selected proposal addresses different Path4Med solution(s) to avoid overlaps.

If two or more top-ranked proposals from different regions propose the same solution(s), the proposal with the highest overall score will be selected. The other region(s) will then be represented by the next highest-scoring proposal that:

- Implements different solution(s) , and
- Meets all evaluation thresholds

In addition to the four regional selections, a fifth proposal will be selected based on the next highest overall score, with the condition that it comes from a country not already represented among the four previously selected proposals, regardless of regional classification.

Indicative Example

- **Proposal A (West Balkans)** – Score: 13 – Implements: **DNA-based indicators**
- **Proposal B (South Mediterranean)** – Score: 12 – Implements: **DNA-based indicators**
- **Proposal C (Black Sea)** – Score: 11 – Implements: **Water quality sensors**
- **Proposal D (Baltic Sea)** – Score: 10 – Implements: **Soil nitrogen sensors**
- **Proposal E (South Mediterranean)** – Score: 10 – Implements: **IoT-based monitoring**

In this case:

- **Proposal A** is selected for **West Balkans**
- **Proposal B** is not selected due to overlap with Proposal A's solution
- **Proposal E** (next eligible in South Mediterranean) is selected instead
- **Proposals C and D** are selected for **Black Sea** and **Baltic Sea**, respectively

The **fifth proposal** will be selected from the next highest-scoring proposals, **ensuring** that it:

- Is from a **non-represented country**
- Meets thresholds
- Implements **different solution(s)**

All Applicants will receive their Evaluation Summary Report (ESR).

3.5.3. Redress procedure

Applicants may submit a written request for redress to the Path4Med OC Advisory Board and the OC Manager via email at path4med@opencalls.fund within five (5) working days of receiving the Evaluation Summary Report (ESR). This request can be made if applicants believe there was a shortcoming in the way their proposal was evaluated, which may have affected the final decision on whether they were selected as beneficiary or not, or if they believe the results of the eligibility checks are incorrect.

The Path4Med OC Advisory Board and the OC Manager will examine the requests for redress.

The Path4Med OC Advisory Board's and the OC Manager's role is to ensure a coherent interpretation of such requests and an equal treatment of all applicants. Requests for redress must:

- Relate to the evaluation process or eligibility checks;
- Clearly describe the complaint and reasons for potential consideration;
- Be received within the time limit (5 working days) from the reception of the Evaluation Summary Report (ESR);
- Be sent by the same applicant's legal representative that submitted the proposal.

The Path4Med OC Advisory Board and the OC Manager will review the complaint within five (5) working days and will recommend an appropriate course of action. If there is clear evidence that a shortcoming(s) could have affected the eventual funding decision, it is possible that all or part of the proposal will be re-evaluated by newly appointed evaluators.

The redress process is concerned with the evaluation and/or eligibility checking process:

- The Path4Med OC Advisory Board will not call into question the scientific or technical judgement of the evaluators.
- Any redress request that calls into question the scientific or technical judgement of the evaluators will be automatically rejected.
- A re-evaluation will only be carried out if there is evidence of a shortcoming that could have affected the final decision on whether to fund it or not. This means, for example, that a problem relating to one evaluation criterion will not lead to a re-evaluation if a proposal has failed anyway to meet other criteria.
- The evaluation score following any re-evaluation will be regarded as definitive. This score could be lower than the original score. Only one request for redress per proposal will be considered by the Path4Med OC Advisory Board and the OC Manager. All requests for redress will be treated with the utmost confidentiality.

3.5.4. Contracting

Based on the evaluator comments in each ESR, the OC Manager and the OC Advisory Board will start negotiations for the contract preparation with the representatives of the selected (winning) proposals (if shortcomings were identified and changes are needed in the proposals). If the negotiations do not finish successfully, the proposal will be rejected and the next highest ranked proposal will be selected. Contract preparation will go via an administrative and financial

checking. On a case-by-case approach, a phone call or teleconference may be needed for clarification.

Reframe.food (RFF) is assigned as the OC Manager and the Agricultural University of Athens (AUA)-Coordinator as the OC Treasurer and are committed to ensuring a competitive and transparent OC process, ensuring confidentiality, equal treatment and no conflict of interest.

The objective of the contract preparation is fulfilling the legal requirements between the Path4Med consortium and every beneficiary of the call. The items covered will be:

- To validate the status information of the Applicant, the following documents will be required from the Applicant:
 - o **Legal existence:** Official Gazette or other official document per country showing the name of the organisation, the legal address and registration number and a copy of a document proving VAT registration (in case the VAT number does not show on the registration extract or its equivalent. However, in case having VAT number is not mandatory according to the national legislation of the applicant's country, applicants should provide an official identification or registration number issued by the competent national or regional public authority (e.g. ministry, public administration register, or equivalent body) confirming their legal status as a public authority.
 - o **Legal proof** that the applicant is not under liquidation or has filed for bankruptcy (Public authorities are generally not subject to commercial liquidation or bankruptcy procedures. However, the Path4Med consortium may request a formal declaration or legal status confirmation to ensure that the applicant is a functioning public authority, as recognised under national law).
 - o **Bank Account Information:** The bank account to which the funds will be transferred must be indicated using the official form, signed by both the legal representative of the applicant organisation and a bank representative. The account should be an institutional account registered under the applicant organisation's name. (Public authorities are not required to use commercial business accounts; however, the account must be clearly traceable to the organisation and capable of receiving international transfers.). The provided financial information must be issued within the last three (3) months.

The Subgrantee assumes full responsibility on the bank account info they provided. For instance, if they provide a wrong IBAN, and the Treasurer proceeds with the transfer to that account, they will assume responsibility for any costs related to the transfer (expenses with the return of the amount from the wrong bank account and/or expenses with the new transfer will be deducted from their grant transfer). Ultimately, in a worst-case scenario, if the Treasurer does not manage to recover the amount transferred to the wrong bank account, the beneficiary who provided a wrong IBAN will not be able to claim that payment.

The request, by the Path4Med consortium, of the above documentation will be done within designated deadlines. The subproject contract negotiations will be carried out from May 2026

to June 2026. In case negotiations have not been concluded within the above period, the application is automatically rejected and the next application in the reserve list is invited.

After successful negotiations, the legal representative of the open call winner Applicant will be invited to sign a contract, which will then be signed by the Path4Med Open Call Manager (RFF) and Open Call Treasurer/Coordinator (AUA). The final list of accepted proposals will then be published.

4. Implementation of Path4Med Open Call

Selected projects will be launched in July 2026 having an implementation timeframe of 9 months (until March 2027). The implementation period will be divided in 3 phases:

- **Phase 1 - Feasibility** [Deliverable: Activity plan] (July 2026) - Payment of 20% of the total fund
- **Phase 2 - Replicability** [Deliverable: Demonstration Report] (August 2026 - January 2027) - Payment of 60% of the total fund
- **Phase 3 - Scalability** [Deliverable: Scale-Up Plan] (February 2027 – March 2027) - Payment of the final 20% of the total fund

In all selected projects, payments are deliverable based, meaning that the subgrantees have to deliver a specific report after the end of each phase in order to receive the payment (**no pre-financing is foreseen**).

5. Applicant's responsibility

The selected Subgrantees are indirect beneficiaries of European Commission funding. As such, they are responsible for the proper use of the funding and ensure that they comply with the obligations set out in HE specific requirements as described in the “Joint demonstration of approaches and solutions to address nutrient pollution in the landscape-river-sea system in the Mediterranean sea basin” ([HORIZON HORIZON-MISS-2023-OCEAN-SOIL-01-01](#)) topic. The obligations that are applicable to the beneficiaries include (but are not limited to):

5.1. Conflict of interest

The Subgrantees must take all measures to prevent any situation where the impartial and objective implementation of the Subgrant Agreement could be compromised for reasons involving family, emotional life, political or national affinity, economic interest or any other direct or indirect interest (“conflict of interests”). At the same time, Applicants cannot be affiliated with Path4Med consortium partners, nor can they be employees of the Path4Med consortium partners. All potential conflicts of interest will be assessed carefully. Please see more info [here](#).

The Subgrantees must formally notify the Path4Med consortium without delay of any situation constituting or likely to lead to a conflict of interests and immediately take all the necessary steps to rectify this situation. The Path4Med consortium may verify that the measures taken are appropriate and may require additional measures to be taken by a specified deadline.

If a Subgrantee breaches any of its obligations, the Subgrant Agreement may be automatically terminated. Moreover, if the Subgrant Agreement is terminated due to a breach made by a Subgrantee, the Path4Med consortium reserves the right to suspend further payments to the subgrantee and claim the full refund of all payments made to the Subgrantee up to date.

5.2. Ethics, Data Protection & Confidentiality

Prior to granting financial support, Path4Med will require Applicants to identify and explain any ethical issues that may arise during the subproject implementation as part of their project proposals. A dedicated chapter in the proposal template will require from the Applicants to describe how they will comply with European Union ethical rules/principles and outline how ethics principles will be integrated into the project, addressing aspects such as participant involvement, informed consent, privacy protection, data management, and any other relevant ethical considerations. All subprojects should follow an “ethics by design”-way of working, whereby ethical and legal principles, on the basis of GDPR, competition law compliance, absence of data bias are implemented since the beginning of the design process.

Once a project is selected for FSTP funding, regular monitoring and reporting will be conducted to ensure ongoing adherence to ethics principles. This monitoring mechanism contributes to the overall integrity and ethical excellence of the Path4Med project and reinforces its commitment to ethical research and innovation.

During the implementation of the subproject and for at least five (5) years after the final payment of the subproject, the beneficiaries must keep confidential any data, documents or other material (in any form) that is identified as confidential at subcontract signing time (Article 6 - Confidentiality).

If an OC beneficiary makes a request for a longer period of data protection and confidentiality, the European Commission and the Path4Med consortium may agree to keep such information confidential for an additional period beyond the initial five (5) years. This will be explicitly stated in the Subgrant Agreement.

If additional information is identified as confidential during the subproject execution or through verbal communication, it must be accepted by the Path4Med Coordinator and confirmed in writing within 15 days of its disclosure. Unless otherwise agreed between the parties, they may only use confidential information to implement the Subgrant Agreement. The OC beneficiaries may disclose confidential information to the Path4Med consortium and to the selected external reviewers, who will be bound by a specific Non-Disclosure Agreement.

Applicants must confirm that all proposed services, including the means of their delivery and upkeep, have been reviewed to ensure compliance with all relevant legislation on data protection, privacy, and fundamental rights.

OC beneficiaries will have to submit three deliverables (1. Feasibility Plan, 2. Demonstration Report, 3. Scale-Up Plan) during the subproject implementation. In these deliverables the beneficiaries will report any ethics measures in a dedicated chapter. The deliverables will be reviewed by the Path4Med OC Advisory Board and the OC Manager.

By implementing this proposed mechanism, Path4Med aims to foster ethical conduct and responsible practices in all projects funded through the FSTP. It establishes a system of checks and balances, providing assurance that the ethical commitments of Path4Med are upheld by external entities receiving financial support. This monitoring mechanism contributes to the overall integrity and ethical excellence of the Path4Med project and reinforces its commitment to ethical research and innovation.

Personal data from individuals (such as: name, last name, address, country of residence, phone number, email address) will also be gathered via the Open Call during the process of potential applicants' and evaluators' registration and application on the opencalls.fund platform (to post a question or apply to a specific open call or enter the pool of external evaluators).

No sensitive personal data will be collected (e.g. health status, race, sexual lifestyle, ethnicity, political opinions, religious or philosophical conviction, receipt of social support, victims of violence, criminal records and sexual life).

Personal information (such as IP address, device type, geographic location, etc.) may also be collected (automatically) for statistical reasons and to better understand the people who visit the opencalls.fund platform, where they come from and what content they are interested in the activities related to the Open Call, since personal information received will not be shared by default.

Access to the opencalls.fund platform is also feasible following a registration process and obtaining user credentials. With respect to the personal data protection collected during the Open Call, all collected data will be anonymised, encrypted and stored on a server, which will have server-side encryption. Only the required personnel (specifically assigned for this project) will have access to the data. GDPR rules will be applied for data protection.

According to the Grant Agreement, data will be kept for at least five (5) years after the completion of the project (or three (3) years for data related to Open Call grants of not more than EUR 60 000). However, the data will always be stored anonymously and will not be accessible by external third parties.

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

The Subgrantees must promote the subprojects, the Path4Med project and its results, by providing the description of their project upon request from the Path4Med Consortium and highlighting the financial support of the EC.

Unless the European Commission or the Path4Med Coordinator requests or agrees otherwise or unless it is impossible, communication activities of the beneficiaries related to the action (including media relations, conferences, seminars, information material, such as brochures, leaflets, posters, presentations, etc., in electronic form, via traditional or social media, etc.), dissemination activities and any infrastructure, equipment, vehicles, supplies or major results funded by the grant must:

- acknowledge EU support and display the European flag (emblem) and funding statement:
 - For communication activities: *“This subproject has received funding from the project Path4Med (Grant Agreement number: 101156867) through its Open Call, funded by the European Union’s Horizon Europe research and innovation programme”*
 - For infrastructure, equipment and major results: *“This [infrastructure][equipment][insert type of result] is part of a subproject that has received funding from the project Path4Med (Grant Agreement number: 101156867) through its Open Call, funded by the European Union’s Horizon Europe research and innovation programme”*
- display the Path4Med logo

When displayed in association with other logos (e.g., of beneficiaries), the European emblem must be displayed at least as prominently and visibly as the other logos. This obligation to use the European emblem in respect of projects to which the EC contributes implies no right of exclusive use. It is subject to general third-party use restrictions which do not permit the appropriation of the emblem, or of any similar trademark or logo, whether by registration or by any other means. Under these conditions, the Subgrantee is exempted from the obligation to obtain prior permission from the EC to use the emblem. Further detailed information on the EU emblem can be found on the European Commission’s web page. Please note that in the case of Path4Med, the co-funded logo is to be used as financial support is coming through the co-funded Path4Med project.

Any publicity made by the Subgrantee with respect to the project, in whatever form and on or by whatever medium, must specify that it reflects only the author’s views and that the EC or Path4Med consortium are not liable for any use that may be made of the information contained therein.

The EC and the Path4Med consortium shall be authorised to publish, in whatever form and on or by whatever medium, the following information:

- the name of the Subgrantee,
- contact address of the Subgrantee,
- the general purpose of the subproject,
- the amount of the financial contribution foreseen for the subproject; after the final payment, and the amount of the financial contribution actually received,
- the geographic location of the activities carried out,
- the list of dissemination activities and/or of patent (applications) related to foreground,
- the details/references and the abstracts of scientific publications related to foreground and, if funded within the subproject, the published version or the final manuscript accepted for publication,
- the publishable reports submitted to Path4Med,

- any picture or any audio-visual or web material provided to the EC and Path4Med in the framework of the subproject.

The Subgrantee shall ensure that all necessary authorisations for such publication have been obtained and that the publication of the information by the EC and Path4Med does not infringe any rights of third parties.

Upon a duly substantiated request by the Subgrantee representative, the Path4Med consortium, if such permission is provided by the EC, may agree to forego such publicity if disclosure of the information indicated above would risk compromising the beneficiary's security, academic or commercial interests.

5.4. Financial audit and controls

The European Commission (EC) will monitor that Path4Med partners and the Subgrantees comply with the conditions for financial support to third parties set out in Annex 1 of the Path4Med grant agreement and may take any action foreseen by the grant agreement in case of noncompliance vis à vis the beneficiary concerned.

Moreover, the EC may at any time during the implementation of the Path4Med project and up to 5 (five) years after final payments, arrange for financial audits to be carried out, by external auditors, or by the EC services themselves including the European Anti-Fraud office (OLAF). Such audits will be formally notified to the beneficiary concerned and will be considered to start on the date of the notification.

Such audits may cover financial, systemic and other aspects (such as accounting and management principles) relating to the proper execution of the grant agreement. They shall be carried out on a confidential basis.

The Subgrantee shall make available directly to the EC all detailed information and data that may be requested by the EC or any representative authorised by it, with a view to verifying that the grant agreement is properly managed and performed in accordance with its provisions and that costs have been charged in compliance with it. This information and data must be precise, complete and effective.

The Subgrantee shall keep all subproject deliverables and the originals or, in exceptional cases, duly authenticated copies – including electronic copies – of all documents relating to the subproject contract for up to five (5) years from the end of the project (or three (3) for grants of not more than €60,000.00). These shall be made available to the EC when requested during any audit under the grant agreement.

In order to carry out these audits, the Subgrantee shall ensure that the EC's services and any external body(ies) authorised by it have on-the-spot access at all reasonable times, notably to the subproject applicant offices, to its computer data, to its accounting data and to all the information needed to carry out those audits, including information on individual salaries of persons involved in the subproject. For on-the-spot visits, the beneficiary concerned must allow access to sites and premises (including for the external audit firm) and must ensure that

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

On the basis of the audit findings a draft audit report will be drawn up and it will be formally sent to the Subgrantee concerned, which may make observations thereon within 30 days of receiving the notification to make observations. The Commission may decide not to consider observations conveyed or documents sent after that deadline. The final audit report shall be sent to the beneficiary concerned within two months of expiry of the aforesaid deadline.

Based on the conclusions of the audit, the EC shall take all appropriate measures which it considers necessary, including the issuing of recovery orders regarding all or part of the payments made by it and the application of any applicable sanction.

The European Court of Auditors shall have the same rights as the EC, notably right of access, for the purpose of checks and audits, without prejudice to its own rules.

In addition, the EC may carry out on-the-spot checks and inspections in accordance with Council Regulation (Euratom, EC) No 2185/96 of 11 November 1996 concerning on-the-spot checks and inspections carried out by the Commission in order to protect the European Communities' financial interests against fraud and other irregularities.

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

5.5. Subprojects Communication

The Subgrantee representative should:

- Provide any notices in writing to the Path4Med consortium.
- Notify the Path4Med Coordinator immediately of any change of persons or contact details. The address list shall be accessible to all concerned.
- Notify the Path4Med Coordinator about the dissemination activities that the Open Call beneficiary will organise.

5.6. Originality of the subgranted projects

It is required that applications submitted are based on original works by the Applicants and that their foreseen developments are free from third party rights. Path4Med consortium is not obliged to verify the authenticity of the ownership of the foreseen products/services. Any issues delivered from third party claims that arise as a result of the subgranted projects are on the sole responsibility of the applicant.

5.7. IPR ownership of the subgranted projects

Each Subgrantee shall retain ownership of the Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs) attached to the results it generates during the development process, as well as any other results that do not

constitute IPRs. Each Subgrantee is individually responsible for the management and protection of its own IPRs and shall bear any associated costs.

The Subgrantees funded within the Path4Med project will be the unique owners of the technologies created within the framework of their subgranted projects. Parts of their works will be requested to be public for Path4Med dissemination purposes.

In addition, if subprojects collect in-situ data and marine observations, the subgrantees must make them openly available through the European Marine Observation and Data network (EMODnet), based on FAIR (findable, accessible, interoperable, reusable) principles, as defined in the HORIZON-MISS-2023-OCEAN-SOIL-01 call.

5.8. Liability

The Path4Med consortium and the European Commission cannot be held liable for any acts or omissions of the applicant in relation to the selected subgranted project implemented by the Subgrantee. The Path4Med consortium shall not be liable for any defaults of any products, processes or services created in the subgranted project. Including, for instance, anomalies in the functioning or performance thereof.

In case any damage is caused to a third party by the Subgrantee, the Subgrantee will assume full responsibility for the damage caused. In no way will the Path4Med Consortium be responsible for any damages caused by the Subgrantee. Subgrantees shall bear sole responsibility for ensuring that their acts within the framework of their subgranted projects do not infringe third parties' rights.

5.9. Do No Significant Harm

Subgrantees must always respect the “Do No Significant Harm Principle”. This means that the subproject’s methodology should be designed in a manner which does not significantly harm any of the six environmental objectives of the EU Taxonomy Regulation. EU Taxonomy is a science-based classification system for determining whether an (economic) activity can be considered environmentally sustainable. It establishes six environmental objectives (as listed in Article 9 of the [EU Taxonomy](#)):

- Climate change mitigation
- Climate change adaptation
- The sustainable use and protection of water and marine resources
- The transition to a circular economy
- Pollution prevention and control
- The protection and restoration of biodiversity and ecosystems.

while Article 17 specifies what can constitute a “significant harm” for these objectives. Thus, the regulation provides that no measure should lead to significant harm to any of the six environmental objectives within the meaning of Article 17 of the Taxonomy Regulation.

6. Checklist

- **Is your proposal eligible?** The eligibility criteria are given in chapter 3 “Proposal Submission and Selection”. Make sure that you satisfy the minimum participation requirements (e.g., public authorities from eligible countries, etc.). Please check Chapter 3.2.
- **Is your proposal complete?** Have you completed all mandatory fields on the Open Call Proposal Template?
- **Have you checked all technical details related to submission?** Difficulties with application and submission arising from technical aspects will not be taken into consideration by the Path4Med project. Applicants should do test rounds and make sure to submit everything on time.
- **Does your proposal fulfil questions requests/comments?** Proposals should be precise, concise and must answer requested questions, which are designed to correspond to the applied evaluation. Omitting requested information will almost certainly lead to lower scores and possible rejection.
- **Have you maximised your chances?** There will be strong competition. Therefore, edit your proposal tightly, strengthen or eliminate weak points.
- **Have you submitted your proposal before the deadline?** It is strongly recommended not to wait until the last minute to submit the proposal. Failure of the proposal to arrive in time for any reason, including network communications delays, is not acceptable as an extenuating circumstance. The time of receipt of the message as recorded by the submission system will be definitive.
- **Have you provided the Declaration of Honour (Annex 5)?**
- **Have you described the dissemination activities as 7% of your budget?**
- **Does your planned work fit with Path4Med Open Call?** Ensure that your proposal directly addresses the goals of the Open Call, particularly the implementation and demonstration of solution(s) that contribute to reducing nutrient-related pollution and promoting sustainable agricultural and water management practices.
- **Do you need further advice and support?** You can reach out to the Path4Med Open Call team via path4med@opencalls.fund. The technical team can provide assistance to the extent possible, up until the 28th of January 2026 @ 17:00 CET.

7. Points of contact

All questions concerning the Call must be in writing and be stated on the FAQ section on the opencalls.fund or sent by e-mail to path4med@opencalls.fund. The deadline for asking clarification questions or requesting additional information is 17:00 CET on 28th of January 2026.

We strongly recommend Applicants to regularly visit the FAQ section to get valuable feedback for the preparation of their proposal.

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