

## ANNEX C - EVALUATION PROCEDURE AND CRITERIA

Proposals will be checked for eligibility by the TA Management Working Group (see criteria defined in Section 4.6).

### 1.1 Scientific Evaluation

Eligible proposals will be sent for scientific evaluation, that will be carried out by three independent individual evaluators of the International Evaluation Panel (IEP), who will be assigned by matching experts' profiles, including technical expertise on RI management and ethics, with the need for proposals evaluation. One of the IEP members will be nominated as a Rapporteur.

The evaluation of each proposal will be based on the following criteria:

- *Excellence (Threshold: 3/5)<sup>1</sup>*
- *Impact (Threshold: 3/5)*
- *Implementation (Threshold: 3/5)*

Once the individual experts to whom proposals have been assigned have completed their individual evaluations, a Consensus meeting is convened to enable joint evaluation of proposals. During the Consensus meeting the appointed rapporteurs will present the evaluation results of each eligible proposal and the IEP will agree on the final scores for each criterion and an overall score for the proposal.

The final score will be calculated by summing up the calculated average scores of the three criteria given by the IEP members for each criterion.

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<sup>1</sup> It has to be noted that a proposal that does not comply with ethical requirements will get a score below 3 for Excellence, which implies that it is not ranked by the IEC, and cannot be selected.

The threshold on the final score is 10/15: projects with a lower score could be subject to further analysis by the IEP.

The final ranking list will be produced based on the final scores, including only proposals that meet the minimum threshold, *i.e.*, 3 out of 5 in each criterion, and threshold on the final score *i.e.*, 10 out of 15.

Projects over the threshold will then be set by the Chair and Vice-Chair of the IEP, with the support of the TA Management WG and the Executive Committee of the Partnership, for the following categories:

A – High priority

B – Low priority

Proposals falling in the category A will then be ranked by infrastructure according to their overall score.

## 1.2 **Logistic Evaluation and Validation**

After the final recommendation of the IEP, high ranked proposals will be examined and validated by RI providers' contacts point (**Annex B**) to determine the logistical feasibility regarding typology, equipment, area of operation and timing of access, in compliance with the need to optimise the use of infrastructure time, including matching overall the available day/time set for providing the RIs and by suggesting possible coupling of activities/projects. In this context, applicants may be requested to access to the RI indicated as second choice.

## 1.3 **Decision: feedback and negotiation of successful proposals**

Following the validation by the RI providers, in case of projects with the same final scores, they will be prioritised by the IEP, with the support of the TA Management Working Group, taking into consideration the following principles to be used uniformly for all proposals:

- *Maximising the use of RIs and thus optimising the amount of EU contribution to the shared RIs of the Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership.*

- *Maximising the number of countries/regions involved in the projects;*
- *Ensuring a balance between sea-basins involved in the projects;*
- *Assuring a good balance among different intervention areas.*
- *Giving priority to team members that:*
  - *have not previously used the installation, and*
  - *are working in countries where no equivalent RI exists or that is presently unavailable for use.*

It has to be noted that access for team members of a single proposal selected for access with a majority of users not working in an EU Member State or Horizon Europe Associated country is limited to 20% of the total amount of units of access provided.

Results of the eligibility/evaluation process are expected to be communicated mid-September 2025. Information will be available on the Partnership website and all applicants whether successful or not will be directly contacted. No information on the eligibility/evaluation process/outcome will be made available prior to this date.

Successful applicants will be invited, through official letters on evaluation results sent by the TA Management Working Group, to enter the negotiation phase to conclude a user agreement with the relevant provider, with whom the Project Leader Principal Investigator will be put in contact.

Successful applicants may be asked to make minor changes to their proposals during the access negotiation phase to accommodate the indications related to the logistics on access planning and possible integration with other projects.

## **1.4 Evaluation criteria and scoring system**

Eligible proposals will be evaluated using the following criteria.

The evaluation criteria (and sub-criteria) used by the IEP are summarised in the table below.

**Table A: Evaluation criteria**

<b>Excellence</b>	<b>Impact</b>	<b>(Quality and efficiency of the) Implementation (plan)</b>
Threshold: 3/5	Threshold 3/5	Threshold 3/5
<p><i>Fit to the scope</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Are project's objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) pertinent to the Intervention Area(s) of the Partnership and their respective key thematic areas?</li> <li>b) pertinent to European Sea basins/regional European areas?</li> <li>c) clearly stated and achievable from a scientific point of view?</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Is the need to use the selected RI to achieve the project's objectives clearly explained?</li> <li>- Does the project refer to the possible contribution to the relevant initiatives, strategies and programmes set as context for the call?</li> </ul> <p><i>Sound background</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Is the current state of knowledge in the research area well described?</li> </ul> <p><i>Novelty of research/approach</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Is the proposed topic of high scientific quality and does it</li> </ul>	<p><i>Credibility of the impact pathways</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Are the pathways outlined to achieve the expected outcomes and impacts credible?</li> <li>- Is the plan for impact clear and does it follow logically from the expected results of the project?</li> </ul> <p><i>Suitability and quality of the measures to maximise expected outcomes and impacts, as set out in the dissemination and exploitation measures</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Does the application comply with the Partnership data policy?</li> <li>- Are there feasible exploitation and dissemination measures of the project results (including data management and Intellectual Propriety Rights (IPR)?</li> <li>- Are the expected results or the knowledge acquired of importance for economic/ societal sectors?</li> <li>- Are there clear communication, dissemination and outreach measures to support achieving the impact?</li> </ul>	<p><i>Quality and effectiveness of the work plan, including appropriateness of the use of the infrastructure and other self-provided resources.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Is the work clearly described and well defined, including in terms of feasibility?</li> <li>- Is the proposed organisation and management of the project effective and efficient to reach the objectives?</li> <li>- Are the resources assigned to the activities in line with their objectives and outcomes?</li> <li>- Does the proposed project maximise the use of the selected RIs?</li> <li>- Has the proposal assessed any likely risks (e.g. provisions for downtime/bad weather to RIs/access typology if applicable) and related mitigation measures?</li> </ul> <p><i>Capacity and role of the PIs and team members, and the extent to which it brings together the necessary scientific, technical and /or professional expertise.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Is the Project Leader PI scientific/ technical expertise suitable to conduct the project using the relevant RI?</li> </ul>

<p>provide innovative aspects, including by going beyond the state of the art?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Is the proposal contributing to and/or increasing the advancement of its field and across different fields?</li> </ul> <p><i>Methodology and design</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Are the following sound and adequately addressed? Proposed concepts, models, assumptions, interdisciplinary approaches, consideration of the ethical issues, gender dimension in research and innovation content, and the quality of open science practices, including sharing and management of research outputs and engagement of stakeholders where appropriate.</li> <li>- Are the methodology and research design clear, feasible and suitable to answer the identified knowledge gaps and/or achieve the proposed objectives?</li> </ul>	<p>Is the target audience clearly addressed?</p> <p><i>The added value of European transnational cooperation and networking</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Does the proposal identify the right actors to make successful use of the results possible?</li> <li>- Are interactions with /exchange and transfer of results within the team and towards stakeholders envisaged?</li> <li>- To what extent are team members with limited access to marine research infrastructures integrated?</li> <li>- What is the potential for a long-term collaboration at international level? E.g., is the project linked/complementary to other relevant ones?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Are the team members well-suited to the assigned tasks (necessary expertise)?</li> <li>- Is the combined expertise of the team members suitable to achieve the research objectives of the project? Is their role equally valid and well-defined and do they complement each other well also in terms of career stage (e.g. are PhD students / early career scientists / young professionals involved)?</li> <li>- If present, is(are) the participating legal entity(ies) from third countries that are not Member States neither associated to Horizon Europe essential for the implementation of the action?</li> </ul> <p><i>Technical capability to carry out the activity and data exploitation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Is all necessary equipment available to carry out the proposed project?</li> <li>- Is a clear concept presented how the gathered data will be shared, analysed and published?</li> <li>- Is the opportunity to exploit additional funding available to support the analysis of gathered data and samples presented?</li> <li>- Will data be fed into international/national data bases, banks or models?</li> </ul>
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		<p><i>Preliminary Data Management Plan</i></p> <p>Is the Preliminary Data Management Plan (DMP) drafted according to the guidelines?</p>
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Individual scores will be attributed only to the three main criteria, even though the IEP experts will evaluate all sub-criteria described below in the scoring system.

Each criterion will be scored out of 5 (no half marks allowed) based on the following scoring system. The threshold for each criterion is 3 out of 5. Any project with a lower score for one of the criteria or an overall score lower than 10 will not be considered for access.

Evaluators will identify strengths and weaknesses (if any) and provide context for their comments based on the application, *i.e.*, evaluators will be asked to score proposals as they were submitted, rather than on their potential if certain changes were to be made. When an evaluator identifies substantial shortcomings, he/she must reflect this by awarding a lower score for the criterion concerned. There should be consistency between the numerical scores and written comments.

**Scoring system:**

**0 – LIMITED** - The proposal fails to address the criterion or cannot be assessed due to missing or incomplete information.

**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 several 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.