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CALL ANNOUNCEMENT

2023 JOINT TRANSNATIONAL CALL “AQUATIC ECOSYSTEM SERVICES”

Including modalities of
EARLY CAREER RESEARCHERS
and
EXPRESSION OF INTEREST FOR THE KNOWLEDGE HUB

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Glossary

- **Associated Countries:** Associated Countries are countries who signed an association agreement with the European Union and its Members. In Horizon Europe, legal entities from Associated Countries can participate under the same conditions as legal entities from the Member States. The list of Associated Countries is available [here](#)
- **Call Secretariat (CS):** The Call Secretariat, hosted by the French National Research Agency (ANR), will be in charge to prepare, coordinate and follow-up the joint call processes, both electronically and physically. It will work in cooperation and consultation with the Call Steering Committee (CSC) and provide the CSC with all documents needed for decisions. It is the central contact point for applicants regarding all technical and general issues of the submission.
- **Call Steering Committee (CSC):** The Call Steering Committee (CSC) will be composed of one representative per FPO and will be the decision-making body in the framework of this call.
- **Consortium/Consortia:** Transnational group(s) of partners, submitting a collaborative Research, Development and Innovation (RDI) proposal.
- **Consortium Coordinator (CC):** Coordinator of the transnational collaborative RDI proposal. Coordinates the submission of the proposal prepared by the partners in the online submission system, represents the Consortium before the CSC and the CS and, if funded, is responsible for the internal project management.
- **Early Career Researchers (ECR):** Refers to the [Modality of Early Career Researcher](#) of the 2023 Joint Transnational Call aimed at project proposals coordinated by early career researchers, who have obtained their PhD less than 10 year.
- **European Commission (EC):** European Commission is acting as a Funding Authority in the Water4All Partnership, co-funding the Transnational Projects selected for funding in the 2023 Joint Transnational Call
- **Evaluation Panel (EP):** Panel of internationally recognised scientific, industry and policy experts which will evaluate and rank the pre/full proposals submitted in the 2023 JTC in order of merit. EP members will not submit or participate in proposals within this 2023 JTC and will sign declarations on confidentiality, absence of conflict of interest and code of conduct. The members of the EP consist of Evaluators, Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson.
 - **EP Chairperson:** Leads the EP meeting, by: ensuring active, all-inclusive and rich participation of all members; managing the collective decision-making by the EP; launching voting procedures if necessary; approving the EP meeting agenda and the minutes, proposed by the CS.
 - **EP Vice-Chairperson:** Takes the duties of the Chairperson if the Chairperson is absent, for example, due to a conflict of interest.
- **External expert:** Independent expert appointed for its independent evaluation of the submitted pre and full proposals to the 2023 JTC in case an expertise is missing within the EP. External experts are not members of the EP.
- **Funding Partner Organisation (FPO):** Party that has committed national/regional funds to participate in the 2023 Joint Transnational Call, to the modality of Early Career Researchers and the Knowledge Hub, if relevant.
- **Independent Observer:** External expert invited as observer to the EP meetings to assess the conformity of the evaluation procedure.
- **Joint Transnational Call (JTC):** A call for the funding of excellent transnational research and innovation projects, co-funded by the FPOs supporting the call and the European Commission.

- **Knowledge Hub (KH):** A network of experts jointly working on the dissemination of their project outcomes in various formats with the aim of supporting evidence-based decision-making processes for targeted stakeholders.
- **National Contact Point (NCP):** Each participating FPO in the 2023 Joint Transnational Call, the modality of Early Career Researchers and the Knowledge Hub has nominated NCP(s) to provide information on national/regional funding rules and procedures.
- **Principal Investigator (PI):** Researcher/Leader of the research team of a Project Partner in a Transnational Project.
- **Project Coordinator:** The Principal Investigator leading the consortium of Project Partners in a Transnational Project and is in charge of submitting the proposal in the call.
- **Project funding:** The total sum of the funding, which will be granted by the FPOs to the Project Partners. The amount of funding that each project partner can receive depending from the national funding rules.
- **Project Partner:** Independent legal entity participating in the Transnational Project.
- **Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA):** A key document of the Water4All Partnership that defines the strategic orientations of the programme.
- **Transnational Project costs:** The total sum of the project costs which is necessary for the implementation of the foreseen activities.
- **Transnational Project:** A project funded in the frame of the 2023 Joint Transnational Call and its modalities.

1. Introduction

1.1. The Joint Transnational Calls in the context of Water4All partnership

The [Water4All partnership](#) started in 2022 under the auspices of the European Union Horizon Europe programme for research and innovation, to concentrate research and innovation on water in Europe and beyond. Water4All's Vision is to “boost the systemic transformations and changes across the entire research – water innovation pipeline, fostering the matchmaking between problem owners and solution providers for ensuring water security for all in the long term”.

Water security stands for the capacity of a population to safeguard sustainable access to adequate quantities of acceptable quality water for sustaining livelihoods, human well-being, and socio-economic development, for ensuring protection against water-borne pollution and water-related disasters, and for preserving ecosystems in a climate of peace and political stability. Water security and ‘Just’ access to clean water for all of society are an essential aspect for Sustainable Development. This is reflected specifically in the UN Sustainable Development Goals¹ (SDGs), in first instance SDG 6 “Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all”, which is interconnected with SDGs addressing Poverty (1), Hunger (2), Health (3), Clean Energy (7), Cities (11), Responsible Consumption and Production (12), Climate (13), Life below Water (14) and on Land (15), Peace, justice and strong institutions (16) and Partnership for the Goals (17).

Reaching Water4All's objectives require an inclusive and systemic approach, with a logical chain from problem analysis and the identification of knowledge gaps to the uptake of solutions and their concrete applications by the relevant stakeholders. The direct connection between stakeholders and problem owners with solution providers from the RDI field is required to make decisive contributions towards the objectives of Water security: *improved access to water; availability of adequate water supplies for all economic uses; ecosystems health and delivery of ecosystem services; resilience to global changes and water-related hazards*. This approach will be implemented through a broad range of activities, aiming together at achieving the following outcomes:

- Deliver sound knowledge, tools, and evidence basis on water for policy- & decision-making.
- Improve consideration of water impacts in all relevant policies.
- Enhance the field/market use of innovative solutions to water challenges.
- Increase citizens' awareness and engagement for an inclusive water governance.

Among its activities to produce these outcomes, Water4All will launch a series of annual co-funded Joint Transnational Calls (JTCs) pooling national financial resources through the participation of ministries, authorities and funding organisations, together with the support of the European Commission (EC). These calls primarily aim at strengthening the water RDI collaboration and producing and sharing top class water-related knowledge and data. The topics for the calls are drawn from the water challenges identified in the [Water4All Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda](#) (SRIA) (Figure 1).

¹ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>



Figure 1 – Water4All RDI themes, drivers and enablers

The 2023 Joint Transnational Call (JTC) is the second in the series of the Water4All co-funded calls. It is jointly launched by 36 Funding Partner Organisations (FPOs) from 30 countries responsible for funding research and innovation actions in the field of water, with the financial support from the EC.

With the aim of developing the capacities of the talented young researchers and giving them the opportunity to act as leaders of the project consortia, Water4All also integrates an independent modality of the Early Career Researchers (ECR) in this JTC. The thematic focus of the ECR modality is aligned with the JTC topics. The applicants can choose whether to apply under the regular JTC or under the modality of ECR, provided they comply with the requirements.

This call also foresees a modality to support the activities of the Knowledge Hub (KH) for the researchers from Transnational Projects funded in the JTC and the ECR modality. The KH will function as a networking platform for the researchers with the aim to synthesize and disseminate the JTC and ECR projects' outcomes in various formats to support evidence-based decision-making processes for targeted stakeholders. The thematic scope of KH is bounded by the JTC topics. The applicants submitting their proposals under the regular JTC and the ECR modality can choose if they wish to include the KH activities in their proposal, provided they comply with the requirements.

1.2. Objectives of the 2023 Joint Transnational Call

Ecosystems provide environmental, health, social and economic benefits to humans called ecosystem services (Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MEA) in 2005). Goods and services provided by ecosystems are diverse, including i) Provisioning services, such as the production of food and water; ii) Regulating services, e.g., flow regulation during flooding episodes; iii) Supporting services, e.g., nutrient cycles and retention; and iv) Cultural or recreational services, such as navigation or bathing. The value of healthy and functioning ecosystems in providing these free services to beneficiaries has been demonstrated and there is growing recognition of their importance to human well-being at multiple scales (TEEB, 2010, Dasgupta, 2021).

Ecosystem services and water security are closely related, as healthy ecosystems provide services related to water availability and quality, playing a critical role in the regulation of water cycles and flows. There are no clear boundaries in the type of ecosystems contributing to services, such as nature-based solutions, ecological infrastructure, built or hard infrastructure, etc. However, in this case the call focuses specifically on ecosystem

services relevant to water security. At the same time, water quality and availability are fundamental for ensuring the ecosystem services and ecosystem health, considering that many ecosystems are not only water-related but also water dependent. This applies for both surface water and groundwater dependent ecosystems. The degradation of aquatic ecosystems due to climate change, pollution, biodiversity loss, hydrological alterations, the overexploitation of resources for rising demands and the combination of multiple stressors is currently jeopardising their ability to deliver essential goods and services to beneficiaries. Measures for coping with pressure(s) include mitigation through reduction of stressors, adaptation to stressors, and providing solutions to increase resilience for going back to functioning. Some of the mechanisms are developed naturally as an evolutionary response to pressure, whereas in other cases intervention such as restoration is mandatory for ecosystems continuing to provide services to beneficiaries. Likewise, the creation of new aquatic habitats, e.g., in urban areas where natural ecosystems are already lost, can serve as a partial compensation, and effectively fulfil similar roles as natural habitats depending on how they are managed.

Given the importance of ecosystem services to human well-being, environmental quality, and economic prosperity, it is crucial to consider them in all the different stages of the decision-making process, i.e., definition of policy targets at the conception phase, prioritisation of investments, and the systematic review of the consequences of policy measures for services beyond conventional assessments. In this context, the assessment/mapping of ecosystem services as well as their status and social and economic valuation are of particular relevance. Whereas the biophysical status of aquatic ecosystems is regularly monitored, the status of aquatic ecosystem services is not ([Water JPI AquaTAP-ES Policy Brief, 2020](#)). Integration of ecosystem services approach into policy and management requires recognition of their values at appropriate scales. Also, transboundary regulations related to water, biodiversity and habitats do not always take into consideration ecosystem services due to diplomatic and governance issues. Despite the progress made to map, monitor, assess and achieve good ecosystem conditions, there are still significant gaps as regards the status and trends of aquatic ecosystems².

Water4All's 2023 Joint Transnational Call aims to deliver knowledge, models, approaches, tools, and methodologies to better achieve:

- The integration of ecosystem services into the governance and management of water resources in the context of changes, from local to global.
- Mitigation, adaptation and resilience of aquatic ecosystems and the corresponding ecosystem services.
- Support to the implementation of EU and international water and biodiversity policies and strategies, such as the European Commission 'Biodiversity Strategy to 2020', the United Nations Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, the EU proposal for a Nature Restoration Law, and the establishment of an international natural capital accounting initiative.
- Enhancement of the participation of stakeholders, communities, and society at large in the co-design of water governance and management systems related to ecosystem services. This includes activities in the field of communication, public awareness and education, and involvement of stakeholders, indigenous communities, and citizen scientists in research.
- More comprehensive approaches for the valuation of ecosystem services, with mapping and assessment as a crucial step in the achievement of policy objectives.

² The MAES (Mapping and Assessment of Ecosystems and their Services) initiative was launched in 2012. MAES has benefited from the work carried out in several EU-funded projects such as ESMEALDA, OpenNESS or OPERA, and the ERA-NET Cofund BiodivERsA.

2. Description of the aims and themes of the 2023 Joint Transnational Call and its modalities

IMPORTANT: The aim and the thematic framework are the same for the proposals submitted in the regular 2023 Joint Transnational Call and for the proposals submitted under the Early Career Researchers modality, both with the optional expression of interest for participation in the Knowledge Hub. **More information on the call structure is included in Chapter 3.**

2.1. Strategic aim of the Joint Transnational Call and its modalities

The 2023 Joint Transnational Call “Aquatic Ecosystem Services” within the Water4All partnership is aimed at research and innovation to improve water security in the long term. In line with the strategic objectives of Water4All, the results should contribute to the implementation of evidence-based, global, EU and national water management policies and strategies, including the Green Deal, the Water Framework Directive (WFD), Just Transition and the Water Action Agenda for UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Proposals should show cognisance of appropriate legislation and policy frameworks at national and international levels that are meant to alleviate global change impacts on aquatic ecosystem services.

2.2. Theme of the Joint Transnational Call and its modalities

The general theme of the call is “Ecosystem Services”, with aquatic ecosystems as the focus, including inland surface water, groundwater, transitional and coastal water, and having water security on top of the objectives. Research and innovation proposals submitted under the Water4All 2023 Joint Transnational Call and its modalities are required to address at least one of the following topics:

Topic 1. Mapping, monitoring, and assessment for a better understanding of ecosystem services in a context of changes, from local to global change. Proposals may cover the following subtopics:

- 1.1 Enhancing the added value of data on the state and trends of ecosystem services: promoting meta-analyses across scales and syntheses of existing data sets.
- 1.2 Supporting a transnational network of harmonized monitoring schemes building upon the work conducted under other initiatives (MAES - <https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC120383>; TEEB - <https://teebweb.org/>) and previous EU projects.
- 1.3 Developing, testing, and comparing methodologies for the biophysical and monetary valuation of ecosystem services in aquatic ecosystems, including intrinsic social and economic values. Valuation methodologies should reflect stakeholders’ perceptions of value and ensure that users of ecosystem services are involved in the process.
- 1.4 Identifying operational ecosystem services metrics that consider the interactions between people and ecosystems.

Topic 2. Understanding and predicting multiple pressures (including anthropogenic pressures) - impact – response relationships in ecosystem services through advanced methods and techniques. Proposals may cover the following subtopics:

- 2.1 Assessing the effect of different anthropogenic pressures from human activities and cumulative effects on ecosystems and ecosystem services.

- 2.2 Improving/Developing approaches aimed at improving our understanding of the impacts of policy interventions for the protection or restoration of ecosystem services at relevant temporal and spatial scales.
- 2.3 Developing innovative approaches for the restoration of aquatic systems (e.g. habitat dynamics, nutrient cycling, trophic relations, morphological conditions, river continuity and connectivity, sediment flows, hydraulic connectivity, groundwater flow, and ecological flow) and ecosystem services. Opportunities provided by new technological developments should be seized.
- 2.4 Analysing the potential for upscaling in space and time successful ecosystem services restoration approaches.

Topic 3. New tools and solutions for a better integration of ecosystem services into the management of water resources. Proposals may cover the following subtopics:

- 3.1 Innovative management and governance strategies for integrating ecosystem services into conservation policies and restoration measures. Proposals should build upon the ecological knowledge of indigenous and local communities to enable their involvement in the co-design and co-implementation of proposed solutions, as well as the “One Health” approach to better understand existing links between ecosystem services and human well-being.
- 3.2 Assessing the performance of different governance systems in supporting ecosystem services (resilience, adaptation to global changes, key lessons, failures) and of developing our understanding of existing barriers or resistance in the implementation of ecosystem services frameworks.

The context for the general call topics are described in Theme II of the [Water4All Strategic and Innovation Agenda \(SRIA\)](#), “Water for ecosystems and biodiversity”. Likewise, Themes VI and VII in the SRIA on “International cooperation” and “Governance”, respectively, must be considered as they are cross-cutting issues to all other themes. Applicants are encouraged to check links in the SRIA between ecosystem services and themes, subthemes, drivers and enablers. This comprehensive approach must be reflected in the proposals.

Please note:

- These call topics are overlapping and non-exclusive. Proposals can therefore address one or several topics;
- It is not compulsory to address all subtopics within a topic in the proposals;
- It is possible to submit comprehensive proposals addressing more than one topic and subtopic.

ANNEX A provides a list of national contact points (NCPs) and a matrix of the topics and modalities funded by each participating country/region.

2.3. Expected approach from the proposals

The proposals can focus on the development of new knowledge, solutions, and tools through basic research and/or the implementation of new solutions and tools for governance, management, and evidence-based policy making leading to mitigation, adaptation, and increased resilience of aquatic ecosystems and ecosystem services to global changes, from local to global. Proposals built on existing solutions must demonstrate additional progress and impact.

New knowledge should help to develop a better understanding of the socio-economic aspects, governance and human well-being associated with the impact of global changes on ecosystems services and people. Thus, supporting strengthening socio-economic approaches to assess ecosystem services and actions to cope with

pressures. Delivered knowledge needs to cover existing gaps and have the clear potential to be used in new and improved options and tools for the integration of ecosystem services into the management of water resources. Consideration should be given to understanding the social and governance barriers that prevent or delay adoption and implementation of existing ecosystem services frameworks and how to overcome these.

The proposals are also expected to contribute to the acceleration of the adoption of measures and to connect actors to improve coordination of actions. In all cases, knowledge transfer and impact of the deliverables must be demonstrated. Likewise, it should be clearly indicated how local scale projects could/should 'scale up' (e.g., local to regional, national to transboundary/international, etc.) and also consider cross-scale interactions.

Proposals are expected to address barriers to the adoption of proposed solutions and to the application of key lessons from other disciplines in the implementation of results. The proposals will be required to describe how results from the research can be applied and which stakeholders should be involved to achieve the desired impact. Collaboration with active projects on the topic will be welcomed to achieve synergies and avoid duplications. Links with other projects funded by Horizon Europe, the LIFE Programme, Partnerships and Missions are encouraged. Projects can build upon the results of previously funded projects such as ESMERALDA or DRYVER, or of self-funded initiatives, e.g., PEER's PRESS project. Applicants are encouraged to use existing resources and infrastructures for their project. However, proposals must not duplicate past efforts and results delivered by projects and other actions funded by other instruments, e.g., Horizon 2020, Water JPI, Biodiversa+ and PRIMA calls. Therefore, approaches built on the results of previous projects must demonstrate that they include improved and/or new ideas and approaches.

2.4. Impact of the proposals

Proposals are expected to identify challenges and provide solutions to beneficiaries at local to global scale. Furthermore, EC aims for Horizon Europe to create significant societal and environmental impact. Therefore, proposals are expected to clarify the impact their research is expected to achieve in the long term and how they contribute to the overall impacts defined for this call:

- Integration of ecosystem services approach and accounting approaches in policy and practice;
- Improved governance of ecosystems for the delivery and protection of their ecosystem services;
- Mitigation and adaptation to global changes, and improved resilience of aquatic ecosystems for securing delivery of services;
- Supporting the implementation of the UN SDGs and ensuring a Just Transition for all, EU Green Deal, Biodiversity Strategy;
- Maintenance or restoration of natural ecosystems for preservation of ecosystem services;
- Providing guidelines for the creation and management of habitats in regions where they were previously lost (e.g., in urban areas) to restore lost ecosystem services.

Credible societal impact will require input from stakeholders when formulating the knowledge gaps to be addressed in the proposal (co-design) and actively working together on the project with those stakeholders while exchanging knowledge (co-creation). Diversity of stakeholders, spanning the entire research and innovation chain, is important to accurately describe the problem and develop solutions to better guarantee policy implementation of the results, e.g., representatives from water agencies, the business and financial sectors, water authorities, NGOs, ministries, academia, citizens etc. Consortia should also crosscut scientific disciplinary boundaries (multi- or interdisciplinarity).

Applicants are highly encouraged to use a “Theory of Change” to help define their project, both for analysis of the problem to be addressed and to indicate via what route the expected results of the project could eventually lead to societal impact.

“Theory of Change” can be found in ANNEX B, including a link to an online workshop applicant can use.

3. Call Structure

3.1. 2023 Joint Transnational Call Structure, including its modalities

Applicants are invited to submit their proposals under the Joint Transnational Call or one of its modalities, provided they comply with the general and national/regional eligibility requirements:

- **Joint Transnational Call** – the annual Water4All call for funding of excellent research and innovation proposals
- **Early Career Researchers modality** – aimed at projects coordinated by early career researchers. The thematic framework described in Chapter 2, the proposal structure and the evaluation process are the same as for the JTC.
- **Modality of participating in the Knowledge Hub** - project proposals submitted under the JTC and the ECR modality have an option of including the participation of one researcher in the KH activities. The participation of consortia under the KH is encouraged, nevertheless, these proposals will not be favoured to other proposals not participating.

IMPORTANT: Applicants mark in the submission tool under which modality they are applying (regular JTC or ECR, both with the option of participating in the KH, provided they comply with the criteria). The thematic framework, the evaluation criteria and the pre-proposal template are the same for the JTC and for the ECR except for the eligibility criteria for the Consortium Coordinator. The applicants who include the KH option in their proposal have to provide information in a separate section of the Submission tool. The applicants must comply with the General eligibility criteria as stated in Chapter 4, as well as with the [national/regional regulations](#) for each of the modalities. **Not all FPOs financially support all three modalities** (see ANNEX A).

3.1.1. The Water4All Knowledge Hub in the context of the 2023 Joint Transnational Call

The researchers coming from the JTC and ECR projects selected for funding and who chose to join this modality in their application (one expert per project) will take part in the Water4All KH, whose aim is to contribute to knowledge synthesis, dissemination, and networking activities. The KH will thus have the same timeline as the funded Transnational Projects and is expected to produce specific activities and outputs, including but not limited to the following:

- Knowledge synthesis outputs, including policy briefs, state-of-the art reports, concept notes, fact sheets, position papers, etc. that appeal to different target groups, ranging from the general public to policy makers at various levels;
- Foresight exercises (events, workshops...) (e.g., in response to new policy priorities or societal challenges);
- Short summaries of any published articles;
- Joint peer-reviewed publications from Water4All funded projects;
- Online thematic events on Water4All JTC themes;
- Learning and training content to increase/ maximize use of Water4All outputs;
- Feedback and Input into the update of the Water4All SRIA;

The added value of the KH for the participating researchers is to:

- Enable the valorisation of research project results and foster knowledge transfer to relevant stakeholders;
- Allow researchers to contribute to Water4All SRIA updates and inform the contents of the Strategic Research & Innovation needs for future funding;
- Provide researchers with opportunities for networking, knowledge exchange and uptake of research outcomes;
- Facilitate cooperation resulting in high-impact publications;
- Contribute to a greater number of scientific outputs (publications, patents, license, etc.) through collaboration;
- Build researchers' capacity through integrated, transnational and multi-disciplinary approaches and exchange of good practices;
- Contribute to the EU legislation evolution.

The Terms of Reference in ANNEX C describe in details the aim and the implementation of the 2023 Water4All Knowledge Hub, including further details on the expected activities, outputs, and the KH governance.

3.1.2. Modality of Early Career Researchers

The ECR modality focuses on developing capacities for talented early career researchers by giving them an opportunity to act as project Coordinators in this call. The principle criterion for the early career researcher acting as Coordinator is to have obtained their PhD less than 10 years before the call launch³. The aim of this modality is to support early career researchers to conduct basic or applicable research related to JTC topics and to provide them with a platform to present their research as well as forge valuable international connections with other researchers in a similar field.

The ECR modality is governed by the same thematic framework and evaluation criteria as the JTC, but under different general eligibility criteria for the Consortium Coordinator of the proposal. **The Consortium Coordinators complying with the ECR criteria may choose to apply under the JTC or ECR, but not under both JTC and ECR.**

While the evaluation and ranking of the proposals submitted in the JTC and ECR will be done under a single call process and subject to the same rules, the funding organisations participating in the ECR modality with available budget will prioritize the funding of ECR proposals, in cases of equal ranking of several projects.

3.2. Participating countries

A total of 36 Funding Partner Organisations (FPOs) from 30 countries have agreed to launch a Joint Transnational Call for RDI proposals on the topic "Aquatic Ecosystem services". In addition, a total of 17 FPOs from 15 countries will support the Knowledge hub activities and 18 FPOs from 16 countries will support the Early Career Researcher modality.

The research teams applying for funding shall comply with **national/regional regulation of their respective FPO**. The participation of applicants from other countries is allowed, provided they have their own separate source of funding or if funds by another source are guaranteed (i.e., by a national or international funding organisation). In this case, the commitment of these partners must be provided upon submitting the full proposal.

³ Unless the FPOs calculate any exemption (e.g. maternity leave) as specified in the national/regional regulation annex.

For more information on eligibility of international research institutions please see section 4.3 Eligibility of international research institutions.

Applicants should note that in some countries, several funding organisations participate in the call with different organisational rules and priorities. Applicants must pay attention to the [national/regional regulations](#) and if questions arise, it is highly recommended to contact the NCPs before submitting a pre-proposal and full proposal (see list in ANNEX A).

3.3. Financial Commitment

A total of approx. 34 million Euros has been provisionally allocated for the 2023 JTC and its modalities by the participating FPOs with the support of the EU (Table 1). These funds will be used for RDI activities carried out by researchers, institutions and companies according to the funding rules and legal frameworks of their respective FPOs.

Partners applying in a consortium cannot request more funding per modality than their relevant FPO stated in the [national/regional regulations](#) to this Call Announcement.

TABLE 1: WATER4ALL FPOs PARTICIPATION IN THE 2023 JTC AND ITS MODALITIES

	Country	Funding Partner Organisation		JTC	ECR (for Consortium Coordinator)	KH	National budget for the JTC and its modalities (tentative)
1	Austria	Fonds zur Förderung der wissenschaftlichen Forschung	FWF	X	No	No	500 000
2	Belgium	Flanders foreign investment office	FIO	X	No	X	800 000
3	Belgium	Fonds Voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek-Vlaanderen	FWO	X	X	X	700 000
4	Belgium	Fonds de la Recherche Scientifique	F.R.S.-FNRS	X	X	X	300 000
5	Brazil	Brazilian National Council of State Funding Agencies	CONFAP	X	X	X	1 990 000
6	Brazil	Brazilian National Council for Scientific and Technological Development	CNPq	X	No	No	100 000
7	Czechia	Technology Agency of the Czech Republic	TA CR	X	No	X	450 000
8	Denmark	Innovation Fund Denmark	IFD	X	No	No	1 000 000

9	Estonia	Sihtasutus Eesti Teadusagentuur	ETAg	X	No	No	300 000
10	Finland	Suomen Akatemia	AKA	X	X	X	850 000
11	Finland	Ministry of the Environment	YM	X	X	No	150 000
12	France	Agence Nationale de la Recherche	ANR	X	X	X	1 700 000
13	Greece	General Secretariat of Research & Innovation	GSRI	X	No	No	500 000
14	Hungary	Nemzeti Kutatási, Fejlesztési és Innovációs Hivatal	NKFIH	X	<i>Pending</i>	<i>Pending</i>	330 000
15	Ireland	Environmental Protection Agency of Ireland	EPA	X	X	X	500 000
16	Italy	Ministero dell'Università e della Ricerca	MUR	X	X	X	2 000 000
17	Italy	Ministero delle Imprese e del Made in Italy	MIMIT	X	No	No	3 000 000
18	Israel	Ministry of Energy	MoE	X	No	No	400 000
19	Latvia	Latvijas Zinātnes padome	LZP	X	X	No	Pending
20	Lithuania	Lietuvos mokslo taryba	LMT	X	X	No	200 000
21	Luxembourg	Luxembourg National Research Fund	FNR	X	X	No	350 000
22	Malta	Ministry for Environment, Energy and Enterprise	MEEE	X	X	X	300 000
23	Moldova	National Agency for Research and Development	NARD	X	X	X	100 000
24	Netherlands	Dutch Research Council	NWO	X	No	X	1 500 000
25	Norway	Research Council of Norway	RCN	X	X	X	1 000 000
26	Poland	Narodowe Centrum Badań i Rozwoju	NCBR	X	No	No	1 000 000
27	Portugal	Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia	FCT	X	X	X	500 000
28	Romania	The Executive Agency for Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation Funding	UEFISCDI	X	No	No	1 000 000

29	Slovak Republic	Slovak Academy of Sciences	SAS	X	No	No	240 000
30	South Africa	Water Research Commission	WRC and DSI	X	No	No	90 000
31	Spain	Agencia Estatal de Investigación	AEI	X	X	X	1 500 000
32	Spain	Centre for the Development of Industrial Technology	CDTI	X	No	No	1 200 000
33	Sweden	The Swedish Research Council for Environment, Agricultural Sciences and Spatial Planning	FORMAS	X	X	X	2 000 000
34	Switzerland	Swiss National Science Foundation	SNSF	X	X	No	1 100 000
35	Turkey	Turkiye Bilimsel Ve Teknolojik Arastirma Kurumu	TUBITAK	X	No	No	500 000
36	United Kingdom	Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council and Natural Environment Research Council	EPSRC UKRI and NERC	X	No	X	1 450 000
Estimated EU contribution (in Euro)							6 899 220
Total national commitments (in Euro)							30 200 000
Total contribution (in Euro)							37 099 220
EU Member States and Associated countries				Third countries and other countries			

3.4. Call Process

The application process consists of two consecutive steps. **The submission of a pre-proposal in Step 1 is mandatory.** It is not possible to enter the application procedure at a later stage.

STEP 1

The Consortium Coordinator must submit a pre-proposal on behalf of the consortium, providing key data on the proposed project.

The Consortium Coordinators fulfilling the condition of eligibility of the modality of ECR (see section 3.1.2) are invited to mark it in the submission tool. Their pre-proposals are submitted as part of the ECR modality.

The deadline for the submission of the pre-proposal is 13/11/2023, 15h00 CET.

STEP 2

The Consortium Coordinator must submit a full proposal on behalf of the consortium. The deadline for full proposal submission is 29/04/2024, 15h00 CET. Deadline to be confirmed after Step 1.

ANNEX A provides the contact information of the NCPs in each participating country/region for the 2023 JTC and its modalities. It is required that each partner in a consortium checks their [national/regional regulations](#)

for each modality prior to submission of a pre-proposal and full proposal and confirms their eligibility with the NCPs.

3.5. Dates and deadlines

Tentative Time Schedule of the Water4All 2023 Joint Transnational Call and its modalities	
First Step: Submission of pre-proposals	
July 2023	Call Pre-announcement
12 Sept. 2023	Call Publication and 1 st Step opening
13 Nov. 2023, 15.00 CET	Deadline for submission of the pre-proposals
End of Feb. 2024	Notification to the applicants of the 1 st Step outcomes
28 Feb. - 12 Mar. 2024	Period for request to redress
Second Step: Submission of full proposals	
28 Feb. 2024	2 nd Step opening
29 Apr. 2024, 15.00 CEST	Deadline for submission of the full proposals
September 2024	Notification to the applicants of the 2 nd Step outcomes
September/October 2024	Period for request to redress
September/October 2024	Communication of the decision after request to redress
Last quarter 2024 / 1 st quarter 2025	Start of the Transnational Projects
Last quarter 2027 / 1 st quarter 2028	End of the Transnational Projects

3.6. Confidentiality & Conflict of interest

Research plans (pre-proposals and full proposals), abstracts, and evaluation statements are confidential documents. Proposal documents are therefore handled and stored with due care and confidentiality.

Water4All consortium and its Call Secretariat ensure complete confidentiality to applicants during the evaluation process, i.e., the proposals will only be available to the national/regional funding organisations and the mandated experts responsible for the evaluation of the proposal. Experts appointed for the evaluation will sign a confidentiality agreement and will be asked to declare any conflict of interest. The proposals will be handled by the Water4All Call Secretariat. Each of the funding organizations will subsequently handle projects approved for funding. Accordingly, national law will govern. Projects approved for funding will be governed by the applicable law on confidentiality, including, where relevant, national law of the participating funding organisations.

The publishable information of the Transnational Projects selected for funding, as listed in below section 3.7, will be published at the end of the call process.

3.7. Publishable Information

A list of the funded Transnational Projects will be published at the end of the call process (once the projects have been selected). Therefore, applicants should be aware that the following information from the proposals may be published by Water4All and FPOs for promotional purposes: (1) Project Title and Project Acronym, (2) Publishable abstract, (3) Duration of the project, (4) Total costs and total funding of the research project, (5) Organisation name and country of each partner, (5) Name of the Project Coordinator.

3.8. Privacy Policy

By submitting the application, the Consortium Coordinator and partners agree to the use, to the share (for specific purposes: e.g., evaluation, for future nomination of experts, Water4all specific communication) and to the storage of projects related information according to the Privacy Policy and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Further information on Privacy Policy⁴ is presented on the Online Submission Tool.

4. Eligibility criteria

Partners should note that the general eligibility criteria (section 4.1) and the [national/regional regulations](#) are decisive for the initial evaluation of proposals, at both first and second steps.

A proposal that does not fulfil all the general eligibility criteria will be declined without any further review. Ineligibility of a partner applying for funding may cause the rejection of the entire proposal without further review. Therefore, before submitting an application, the Consortium Coordinator should verify that all partners of the consortium have read their corresponding [national/regional regulations](#). Coordinators and project partners must be aware that some national funding agencies require the submission of national documents in addition to the international pre-proposal.

Proposals passing the general and national eligibility checks will be assessed by the Evaluation Panel (EP). The Call Secretariat (CS), on behalf of the Call Steering Committee (CSC), will communicate the results of the eligibility check and the decisions taken to the Coordinator of each consortium.

Eligibility of Water4All Partnership beneficiaries

Research teams from some beneficiaries of Water4All partnership may exceptionally participate to this co-funded call; the list of the beneficiaries of Water4All partnership and those allowed to participate in the projects' consortia are indicated in ANNEX D. **For those beneficiaries, measures have been foreseen to mitigate the risk of, perception of, or de facto conflict of interest or unequal treatment of applicants.** No other beneficiary of Water4All partnership may apply for funding under the 2023 JTC or its modalities.

4.1. General eligibility criteria

The general eligibility criteria for the JTC and the ECR modality (which both may or may not include the Knowledge Hub modality) are summarized in Table 2. In case of not fulfilling these requirements, the proposal will not be considered for funding. The KH modality itself is not subject to general eligibility criteria, however, the [national/regional regulations](#) must be respected by the nominated experts.

TABLE 2: GENERAL ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR THE JTC AND THE ECR MODALITY

⁴ <https://www.water4all-partnership.eu/privacy-policy>

<p>Scope</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposals must address at least one main topic, even though it is not compulsory to address all subtopics within a topic in the proposals.
<p>Consortium composition</p>	<p>General consortium composition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each consortium must be composed of at least a minimum of three (3) eligible partners that request funding from participating Funding Partner Organisations (FPOs) from three different countries. In addition to the abovementioned condition, the projects must involve at least two independent legal entities from two different EU Member States or Horizon Europe Associated Countries* as recipients of the financial support. * <i>at the time of the closing of the call by 13 November 2023 / 29 April 2024.</i> The upper limit of eligible project partners per consortium is seven (7) (including 1 self-funded partner) for the projects submitted as JTC as well as for those under the ECR modality. The national/regional regulations may limit the maximum number of partners from the same country within the consortium. For proposals involving up to five (5) partners, maximum two (2) entities that are also involved in the Water4All partnership (listed in ANNEX D) may participate in the same proposal. Larger proposals may involve up to three (3) entities that are also involved in the Water4All partnership (listed in ANNEX D). <p>Consortium Coordinator in JTC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In each proposal, one of the entities must act as the Consortium Coordinator who has the responsibility for submitting the proposal. The Consortium Coordinator must be eligible for funding by a FPO of this call. The Principal Investigators (PI) of the entity acting as Consortium Coordinator can only participate in one proposal of either JTC or the ECR modality (i.e., if the PI is the Consortium Coordinator of a proposal, he/she cannot participate in any other proposal of the JTC or ECR, neither as a Consortium Coordinator nor as PI of a partner). <p>Consortium Coordinator in ECR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Consortium Coordinator must have obtained his/her PhD less than 10 years prior to the call launch. The other PIs in the Consortium do not need to be early career researchers. A Consortium Coordinator who complies with the ECR criteria may decide whether they wish to participate in the JTC or in the ECR, however, participation in both modalities is incompatible. In each proposal, one of the entities must act as the Consortium Coordinator which has the responsibility for submitting the proposal. The Consortium Coordinator must be eligible for funding by a FPO of this call. The PI of the entity acting as Consortium Coordinator can only participate in one proposal of either JTC or the ECR modality (i.e., if the PI is the Consortium Coordinator of a proposal, he/she cannot participate in any other proposal of the JTC or ECR, neither as a Consortium Coordinator nor as PI of a partner). <p>Workload</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The workload distribution within a consortium must be balanced, and no partner (including a self-funded partner) shall have more than 50% of person months.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partners from the same country shall not have, altogether, more than 50 % of person months <p>Partners not requiring funding (self-funded partners)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No more than one self-funded project partner per consortium is allowed. The applicants have to prove their willingness to self-fund their own activities or the willingness of other partners to fund their activities by sending a letter of intent/commitment together with the full proposal. They have to follow the rules given in this Call Announcement and have to be part of the project consortium agreement. A self-funded partner cannot coordinate a project. They are not considered in the minimum requirement of eligible partners and countries in the Water4All eligibility criteria. They are counted for the requirement of the maximum number of partners in a project.
Duration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Transnational Projects duration must be 36 months. Start date and end date of the researcher groups within the consortium must be aligned as far as possible.
Submission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-proposals and full proposals must be submitted before the deadlines. Pre-proposals and full proposals must be submitted correctly and completely via the Online Submission Tool as outlined in Chapter 6. Pre-proposals and full proposals must be written in English.

4.2. Nomination of expert for participation in Knowledge Hub modality

Each Consortium submitting a proposal in the JTC or ECR modality is encouraged to nominate **one expert** (maximum) amongst the researchers involved in the project to participate to the KH activities on behalf of the consortium if the project is finally selected for funding. The consortia are strongly advised to check their [national/regional regulations](#) to see which funding organisations are supporting this activity, the budget available depending on the role in the KH. Consortia who decide to participate in the KH activities must fill out a dedicated section on the KH activities, and join the CV of the nominated expert and a budget request. The applicants will be able to apply for the roles of experts, scientific coordinator, or facilitator. More information on the organisation and the roles of the KH can be found in the Terms of Reference (ANNEX C).

4.3. National/regional eligibility criteria

In addition to the general eligibility criteria, each project partner must ensure that his/her contribution to the overall project conforms to the [national/regional regulations](#) of their respective FPO for the JTC and its modalities:

- Where applicable, relevance of the proposal to the topic(s)/subtopic(s) funded by national/regional FPOs;
- Compliance with national/regional funding criteria and regulations;
- Compliance with limits to budget requests;
- Where requested by the national/regional FPO, submission of additional national documents in accordance with national rules.

4.4. Eligibility of international research institutions

The following eligibility rules count for international research institutions:

- **The Joint Research Centre (JRC)** can participate in a proposal as a partner. Coordinating the proposal is not possible, since they do not “belong” to any FPO country. They will have to participate at their own expenses. They will not count in the “three different eligible entities” rule from three different FPO countries for eligibility purposes. The formal signed letter of availability of funds should be included in the full proposal as an Annex.
- **Partners from countries not participating in the call** may join consortia only as partners (not as coordinator). Participation will be at the institutions' own expense. Moreover, such partners will have to demonstrate that they will achieve the related tasks in the proposal. The formal signed letter of availability of funds should be included in the full proposal as an Annex.
- **International institutions**, e.g. UN institutions, need to investigate their respective national eligibility guidelines for national and/or global funding and make sure they would be able to fulfil the duties of funded projects (i.e. signature of consortium agreement).

4.5. Recommendations for the applicants

All partners within a consortium should take into consideration the following recommendations for setting up their project proposals:

Scope

- Proposals should go beyond the state of the art by providing high quality RDI and, when appropriate, make use of innovative technologies, approaches and concepts to do so;
- Proposals should consider on-going research activities funded by other instruments, programmes or projects. Identification and cooperation with these activities is of high importance;
- Proposals should consider and incorporate appropriate cross-cutting issues, such as socio-economic and/or capacity development.

Consortium composition

- All proposals are encouraged to consider geographical balance and implementation in appropriate geographic settings and according to the objectives of the proposal, including in low- and middle-income countries/regions, and less performing countries.
- Project partners may participate in more than one proposal provided this is in line with the national/regional regulations.
- Participation of legal entities from countries (and/or regions) not participating in the call, at the entities' own expense, is welcome.
- Project partners that are not eligible for funding may participate at their own expense or if they have their own separate source of funding. They have to comply with requirements set out in Table 2 for partners not requiring funds.
- It is encouraged but not compulsory to involve stakeholders (i.e., small and medium enterprises (SMEs), industries, authorities, public administrations, associations, as well as civil society organisations) as partners or self-funded partners. The participation of stakeholders is subject to [national/regional regulations](#) if eligible for funding.
- All proposals should integrate the gender dimension⁵ of RDI activities.
- Every partner in a proposal, including a self-funded partner and subcontracted partner, needs a Participant Identification Code (PIC) from the EC to be included in the submission. The applicants have to check their PIC or ask for the creation of a PIC well in advance of the submission⁶.

⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants_manual/hi/gender/h2020-hi-guide-gender_en.pdf

⁶ 9-digit number serving as a unique identifier for organisations (legal entities) participating in EU funding programmes / procurements. If needed, one can apply for a temporary PIC on: <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/how-to-participate/participant-register>. A search tool for organisations and their PICs is available on <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding->

Budget

- There is no specific limit of total budget per proposal.
- The requested total budget of proposals is only limited by the number of eligible partners and by the budget of each partner. **Please consider the national regulations of each FPO with regard to the specific budget limitations.**

Duration

Duration of the Transnational Projects must be **36 months**. Funded consortia will be asked to agree on a starting date no later than 31 March 2025 and an end date no later than 31 March 2028.

4.6. Further considerations

Applicants should also take into consideration the following:

- All Partners and the Consortium Coordinator must comply with the applicable national and EU rules and legal provisions, for instance about competition and EU State aid rules, environment, utilisation of genetic resources, equal opportunity and gender, and public contracting whenever applicable.
- Plan and complete the application process as soon as possible to avoid an overload of the system near the deadline and ensure the support by the CS or the NCPs in case of need.
- The financial plan and allocation of resources (table available in the electronic submission system and filled in by the Consortium Coordinator following the instructions given by all Partners) should be coherent with the work plan proposed. Funding requests which are not adequately justified may affect the evaluation score given to the proposal.

4.7. Ethical Issues

Ethical issues will be taken into account in the scientific evaluation of proposals and when making the funding recommendation. Applicants should always describe any relevant ethical aspects in their research plans. If a research permit or a statement by an ethics committee is required for the implementation of the project, applicants should provide information on the permits or permit proposals.

Any proposal which seems to contravene fundamental ethical principles will not be selected and may be excluded from the evaluation and selection procedure. Judgment of the significance of ethical issues will be made by using the criteria published by the European Commission in its guidelines on How to Complete your Ethics Self-Assessment⁷.

The Transnational Project must comply with the EU "Do no significant harm" principle (DNSH).

5. Evaluation of Proposals

5.1. Evaluation Procedures

A two-step evaluation procedure will apply, for the pre-proposals (step 1) and the full proposal (step 2) respectively. The evaluation procedure will be common for all proposals submitted under the JTC and ECR modality. The KH modality in the proposals is optional and as such not subject to the evaluation procedure. The CSC will set up an Evaluation Panel (EP), which will be comprised of international scientific experts from the relevant research areas covered in this call. Its composition will consider the gender and geographical

[tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/how-to-participate/participant-register-search](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/how-to-participate/participant-register-search). We suggest validating the PICs via the public available Partner Search – Organisation Profile service. This allows use to fill out some requested data inputs automatically, which is less error-prone and provides much better user experience.

<https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/support/apis>

⁷ Link: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/how-to-complete-your-ethics-self-assessment_en.pdf

balance. The EP members cannot be applicants in the joint call and cannot evaluate proposals with which they declared a conflict of interest, to ensure a fair evaluation process and equal treatment of applicants.

The CS will check that no Conflict of Interest exists concerning the proposals evaluated.

The EP will be headed by a Chair and a Vice-Chair. The Chair and Vice-Chair will be in charge of moderating the EP meetings and conveying the results of the discussions to the CSC.

All proposals, either submitted under the JTC or the ECR modality will be evaluated by the same EP and in accordance with the same evaluation criteria (see section 5.2) and ranked in the same ranking list.

An independent observer will be invited as external observer to the EP meetings to assess the conformity of the general procedure with the EU regulation.

Step 1 (Pre-proposal stage)

Pre-proposals submitted correctly and within the deadline will be checked for eligibility by the CS against criteria defined in Chapter 4 and by the FPOs according to their national/regional criteria.

All eligible pre-proposals should be subject to a scientific evaluation by three (3) EP members, as far as possible, based on two criteria - 'Excellence' and 'Impact' (see Table 3). One of the EP members will act as the rapporteur during the EP meeting.

During the EP meeting, the evaluation results of each pre-proposal will be presented by the rapporteur. The EP will discuss the pre-proposals and agree on the final scores for each criterion. All applicants will receive a consensus report from the EP.

A ranking list of pre-proposals will be produced, including only those pre-proposals that meet the minimum threshold, i.e., 3 out of 5 in each criterion. The final score will be agreed by the EP for each criterion, and afterwards, the two criteria will be summed up to produce the final score.

The objective of this first step is to identify the best proposals to proceed to Step 2 and to ensure balance between requested and available funds at the national/regional level. The ranked eligible pre-proposals will be sent to the CSC and divided in 3 groups, according to their scores: Group A (highest evaluation scores), Group B (medium evaluation scores) and Group C (low evaluation scores). All pre-proposals in Group A, will be invited to Step 2. Among the pre-proposals in Group B, proposals will be selected to Step 2, taking into account the ranking list, the representativeness of all FPOs, the participation in the ECR modality and the funding ratio limits. Pre-proposals in Group C will be dismissed for their low classification.

Consortium Coordinators will be informed of the outcomes by the CS and, if appropriate, invited to submit a full proposal.

Step 2 (Full proposal stage)

After the submission deadline for full proposals, the submitted full proposals will be checked to ensure that they meet the formal call criteria and have not changed substantially from the respective pre-proposals. Full proposals not meeting the formal conditions will be rejected without further review.

As in Step 1, each full proposal will be reviewed by three (3) members of the EP based on three criteria - 'Excellence', 'Impact' and 'Quality and Efficiency of Implementation'. The EP members will assess the full proposals in advance of the EP meeting and prepare individual evaluation reports. In case of a missing expertise in the EP for some full proposals, the CS will identify and mobilize external experts to obtain three (3) individual evaluation reports.

The evaluation results for each full proposal will then be presented by the rapporteur during an EP meeting and discussed by the Panel members. The EP meeting will complete the evaluation procedure by agreeing on the final individual score for each criterion, and the overall score for each proposal. Due to the large number of proposals evaluated, the EP could decide to focus on those proposals that report divergent scores from the evaluators. Any proposal where there is a consensus between the evaluators on any of the three criteria being below the threshold (i.e. 3 out of 5 in each criterion) may not be discussed and ranked by the EP (regardless if

there is divergence or not in other scores). The overall threshold on the final score is 10/15: no project with a lower score will be funded.

The decisions of the EP should be taken collectively, preferably by consensus or by simple majority of the panel members, in case consensus cannot be reached. The rapporteur will produce a common consensus report on behalf of the EP for each full proposal, which will be transmitted to the applicants.

A ranking list of proposals will be produced based on the final scores, following the same methodology as in Step 1. The final ranking list will be forwarded to the CSC, which will meet to decide on the projects to be recommended for funding by FPOs. For this decision, the CSC will strictly follow the order of the ranking list from the EP until the available funding is exhausted.

The projects with the same final scores will be prioritised by the CSC taking into consideration a number of principles. The CSC may decide how to use these principles providing that they are used uniformly for all proposals:

- Maximizing the total number of projects funded and thus optimizing the amount of EC financial support to the Water4All call;
- Prioritizing the projects submitted under the ECR modality;
- Maximizing the number of countries/regions involved into the projects funded;
- Assuring a good balance between different topics of the call;
- Promoting the allocation of the EC financial support pro rata, based on the actual contributions of the Funding Organisations involved in the proposals.

Once the available EC funding is exhausted, in case funds remain available for some FPOs supporting the ECR modality, a second step of selection will apply to a short list of proposals submitted under the ECR modality, following strictly the order of the ranking list from the EP for proposals submitted under the ECR modality and provided that these projects are of sufficient quality (i.e., threshold in section 5.3).

The applicants will be informed about the final outcome of the call.

5.2. Evaluation Criteria

If a pre-proposal or a full proposal passes the general and national/regional eligibility checks, it will be evaluated following the procedures reported in the previous section 5.1. The following evaluation criteria will be applied by the EP members (as well as the external experts, if needed) in order to assess each proposal:

TABLE 3: EVALUATION CRITERIA

Excellence	Impact	Implementation
Threshold: 3/5	Threshold: 3/5	Threshold: 3/5
<p>1.1 Clarity and pertinence of the project’s objectives to the Water4All 2023 JTC topics and extent to which the proposed work is ambitious, and goes beyond the state of the art.</p> <p>- Is the proposal contributing to and/or increasing the advancement of the Science & Technology knowledge?</p>	<p>2.1 Credibility of the pathways to achieve the expected outcomes and impacts specified in the call text, and the likely scale and significance of the contributions from the project.</p> <p>- Is the plan for impact clear and does it follow logically from the expected results of the project?</p>	<p>3.1 Quality and effectiveness of the work plan, assessment of risks, and appropriateness of the effort assigned to work packages, and the resources overall.</p> <p>- Is the proposed organization and management of the scientific project effective and efficient?</p>

<p>- Does the proposal take scientific and/or technological risk? (Please comment...)</p> <p>- Does the proposal have a potential breakthrough despite this risk-taking?</p> <p>1.2 Addressing the knowledge gaps:</p> <p>- Are the methodology and research design clear, feasible and suitable to answer the identified knowledge gaps and/or achieve the proposed objectives?</p> <p>- Are risks properly identified and managed?</p> <p>1.3 Soundness of the proposed methodology, including the underlying concepts, models, assumptions, inter-disciplinary approaches, appropriate consideration of the ethical issues according to the EU "Do no significant harm" principle (DNSH), appropriate consideration of the gender dimension in research and innovation content, and the quality of open science practices, including sharing and management of research outputs and engagement of citizens, civil society and stakeholders where appropriate.</p>	<p>- Is it suitably ambitious with regards to solving the problem addressed?</p> <p>- Is there strategic impact on reinforcing competitiveness and/or on solving societal or environmental problems at European and international level?</p> <p>2.2 Suitability and quality of the measures to maximise expected outcomes and impacts, as set out in the dissemination and exploitation plan, including communication activities.</p> <p>- Are there feasible exploitation and dissemination plans of the scientific project results (including management and IPR)</p> <p>- Are the expected results or the knowledge acquired of importance for economic/ societal sectors and the economic development?</p> <p>- Is there a clear communication plan?</p> <p>2.3 Added value of European transnational co-operation and networking</p> <p>- Does the proposal identify the right actors to make successful use of the results possible?</p> <p>- Is there are clear plan for interactions with /exchange and transfer of results within the consortium, to stakeholders or society?</p>	<p>- Are the management structures and procedures, including risk and innovation management, appropriate?</p> <p>- Are the resources assigned to the work packages in line with their objectives and deliverables?</p> <p>3.2 Capacity and role of each participant, and the extent to which the consortium as a whole brings together the necessary expertise.</p> <p>- Are participants in the proposal well-suited to the tasks assigned to them (necessary expertise)?</p> <p>- Is their role well-defined and do they complement each other well?</p> <p>- Are tasks well balanced among partners?</p> <p>3.3 Appropriateness of the partners and justification of the resources to be committed (budget, staff, equipment ...)</p> <p>- Is the estimated effort/allocation of resources appropriate?</p> <p>- Is it ensured that all participants have a valid role and adequate resources in the project to fulfil that role?</p> <p>- Do the work and financial plans plus the time schedule show prospects for success?</p> <p>- Is there a balance of scientific and financial contributions from respective countries' partners?</p>
<p>Overall Score Threshold: 10/15</p>		

5.3. Scoring system

Evaluation Panel members will address all sub-criteria described in Table 3, but individual scores will be attributed only to the three main criteria. Each criterion will be scored from 0 to 5 (no half marks allowed) based on the scoring system. The threshold for each criterion is 3 out of 5: no project with a lower score for one of the criteria, or an overall score lower than ten (10) at Step 2 will be funded.

TABLE 4: 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 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.

EP members will identify strengths, shortcomings and weaknesses (if any) and provide context for their comments based on the application, i.e., EP members will be asked to score proposals as they were submitted, rather than on their potential if certain changes were to be made. When an EP member identifies substantial shortcomings and weaknesses, 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.

5.4. Funding recommendation

Transnational Projects will be recommended for funding by the CSC, based on the ranking lists of the full proposals described above and in accordance with budgetary considerations.

Final funding decisions are made by the participating FPOs.

5.5. Redress procedure

Applicants can request to redress the evaluation outcome if they suspect a breach in the application of the evaluation and selection procedures. This redress procedure only covers the procedural aspects of the evaluation and/or eligibility checks, including the national eligibility checks. The request to redress will not call into question the scientific or technical judgement of appropriately qualified experts.

In this case they shall submit their appeal to the Partnership Coordination Team of Water4All (redress_water4all@agencerecherche.fr) and the CS (Water4All-CallsFR@agencerecherche.fr) via email, up to 14 calendar days after the date of dispatch of the evaluation outcome email by the CS at the end of each stage (first or second step). The proposal outcome email containing the results of the evaluation will give information on the appeals procedure, which is described below.

Admissibility of request to redress

For a request to redress to be admissible the following conditions must be met:

- The request must be submitted by the Consortium Coordinator of the proposal to which the request to redress relates
- Only one request to redress per proposal will be considered
- The request must be addressed to the Water4All Vice-Chair
- The request must be submitted via email within the 14 calendar days deadline

- The request must contain the following minimum information:
 - The name of the call for proposals;
 - The proposal number;
 - The title of the proposal;
 - A description of the alleged shortcomings of the evaluation procedure.

The request to redress must demonstrate a procedural irregularity, factual error, manifest error of assessment, misuse of powers, or a conflict of interests. Requests to redress that do not meet the above conditions, do not deal with the evaluation of a specific proposal or merely express disagreement with the result or the reasoning of the evaluation will not be considered suitable for redress.

Procedure

Upon receipt of a request to redress, an acknowledgement of receipt will be sent by the CS within 7 calendar days. The acknowledgement will report the redress process and the anticipated date by which a decision on the request to redress will be communicated to the appellant.

All requests to redress received by the 14 calendar days deadline will be processed together and the decision will be communicated to the appellant within 14 calendar days from the deadline for submitting the requests. The Water4All Vice-Chair will establish an internal “Redress Committee” chaired by the Water4All Vice-Chair and comprised of the Independent Observer, one representative from the Ethics and Deontology Board of Water4All and one representative of the Water4All consortium (Pillar B leader / representative of the Water4All Partnership Coordination Team / FPO not involved in the 2023 JTC). The role of the “Redress Committee” is to evaluate the requests to redress according to the procedure, ensuring fair and equal treatment of applicants.

They will examine the requests with support of the CS and one representative per FPO concerned by the requesting projects, if needed. The “Redress Committee” will provide its opinion on the implementation of the evaluation procedure, on the basis of the available information related to the proposal and its evaluation, and will make recommendation to the Water4All Vice-Chair, who is in charge of deciding, except for national eligibility.

A negative national eligibility check of a FPO cannot be overruled by the Vice-Chair. Requests to redress on national eligibility decisions will be assessed by the FPO responsible for the national eligibility check, that will provide justification about its decision to the Vice Chair, in order to prove that national funding rules listed in the Call Announcement have been applied correctly.

For Step 1: Pre-proposals which were originally considered ineligible or not admissible to submit a full proposal, but which the Water4All Vice-Chair found to be eligible, will be allowed to participate in Step 2. This will not lead to a change of the deadline for the full proposal submission.

For Step 2: The redress procedure may lead to a re-evaluation of all or part of the proposal by independent experts not involved in the previous evaluation or to the confirmation of the initial evaluation.

A re-evaluation will only be carried out if the request to redress shows that the selection procedure was flawed by a breach which affects the evaluation outcome and the final decision on whether to fund a proposal. This means, for example, that a problem relating to one evaluation criterion will not lead to a re-evaluation if the proposal has failed anyway on another criterion or if even by adding the maximum points for this criterion, the final score still remains below the funding threshold.

The score following any re-evaluation will be regarded as definitive. It may be lower than the original score.

All requests to redress will be treated in confidence and will not prejudice future applications.

6. Application procedures

A two-step application procedure will apply equally for the JTC and its modalities. Pre-proposals and full proposals must be submitted electronically via a specifically designed web platform, the [Electronic Proposal Submission System \(EPSS\)](#), using the templates provided.

Applicants should note that the online system may experience high traffic volumes in the last hours before the submission deadline and it is therefore highly recommended to submit the final version of the pre / full-proposal well in advance of the deadline to avoid any last-minute technical problems. Requests for extensions of the deadline due to last minute technical problems will not be considered.

6.1. Online Submission Tool

The Electronic Proposal Submission System (EPSS) is available at the following address: <https://proposals.etag.ee/water4all/>

Step 1 (Pre-proposal stage)

1. The Consortium Coordinator creates an account on the [EPSS Section](#) for the Water4All 2023 JTC
2. The Consortium Coordinator should choose under which modality they wish to participate: the JTC or the ECR. In all proposals (JTC and ECR), the interested consortium partner (one partner per consortium) will be able to mark their participation in the KH modality (not obligatory).
3. The coordinator can enter, edit and save the electronic forms, add partners to the consortium, upload the project description and submit the proposal. Partners can enter and edit their own data only. Coordinator can edit partner's data only after a partner has created an EPSS user account and has agreed to join the proposal
4. It is possible to update and submit the pre-proposal as many times as necessary until the submission deadline (13/11/2023, 15:00 CET).

Applicants should note that any core data change (such as the partner institutions, applicants' personal data and budget) after pre-proposal submission will need to be approved by the concerned FPO should the proposal be invited to Step 2 (See section 6.2).

The submission of a pre-proposal is mandatory. It is not possible to enter the application procedure at a later stage. The information given in the pre-proposal will be used to check for eligibility and to evaluate the pre-proposal.

Please note, that **some of the partners will also need to submit an application directly to their respective national/regional FPOs.** For further details about these procedures and schedule, please consult the [national/regional regulations](#) and/or your NCP (ANNEX A).

Step 2 (Full proposal stage)

The second step of the application consists of the submission of a more extensive full proposal. Only research consortia which successfully passed the first step will be invited to submit a full proposal.

All rules mentioned in the pre-proposal stage apply for this stage as well.

The Consortium Coordinator and the project partners should consider the following for the submission of the full proposal:

1. [The Electronic Proposal Submission System](#) will be open for invited consortia.
2. The information provided in the pre-proposal will be automatically imported into the full proposal.
3. The Consortium Coordinator can enter, edit and save all new information according to the guidelines of the full proposal in the submission tool.

4. It is possible to update and submit as many times as necessary the full proposal until the submission deadline (29/04/2024, 15:00 CEST).

Applicants should note that information on the core data (e.g., funding requested or institutions) cannot be changed in full proposals, unless explicitly requested by evaluators, by an FPO or by the CSC, or under the conditions laid down in section 6.2.

When applying, keep in mind that the submission system will close at 15:00 CET/CEST of the deadline date established for both Step 1 and Step 2. However, the CS can only ensure responses to email support requests up to 12:00 CET/CEST. The respective email contacts for the CS and NCPs are listed in the document and in ANNEX A.

For any questions regarding the submission, please contact the Water4All 2023 JTC Call Secretariat (Water4All-CallsFR@agencerecherche.fr). For any technical question regarding the EPSS, please contact the EPSS Help desk (epss.water4all@g.etag.ee).

6.2. Changes between Step 1 (Pre-proposal stage) and 2 (Full proposal stage) of the Call

Please note that the information given in the pre-proposals is binding. **No major changes regarding the proposals' content will be allowed by the Call Steering Committee (CSC) between the pre-proposals and full proposals.**

Regarding the **administrative details**, a limited number of changes may be allowed, provided they are in line with the general rules of the call and the national/regional funding rules of the FPOs. Participant shall contact the call secretariat via e-mail and their NCPs via the contacts reported in ANNEX A in order to inform them about their request to modify the project proposal data. Requests for changes shall be assessed and allowed by all the FPOs involved in the proposal.

The following changes may be accepted:

- **Minor change of budget** may be allowed by the relevant FPO.
- **Changes in the consortium composition:**
 - No changes of Coordinator (i.e., Principal Investigator of the coordinating entity) will be allowed, except in case of force majeure. A request of change of coordinator must be submitted to the Call Secretariat, at least one week before the deadline for submitting full proposals and it will be discussed on a case-by-case basis by the CSC.
 - Changes in the consortium composition are allowed (maximum 2 changes of Project Partners in proposals with more than 5 partners; maximum 1 change of project partner in proposals with 5 or less partners), provided approval by the concerned Funding Organisations. Please note that the following actions are considered as changes: addition, removal or replacement of a Partner (incl. subcontracted and self-financed partners). Please note that the maximum number of changes applies to "Partner", i.e., the independent legal entity participating in the Transnational RDI project.

7. Transnational Project funding and reporting

7.1. Negotiation of grant agreements

After a positive funding recommendation, the outcome of this process will be communicated by the CS to the Consortium Coordinators, who will then have to inform the Principal Investigator of the Transnational Project partners. The grants for the funded Transnational Projects will be awarded on a national/regional basis by the

relevant FPO according to their terms and conditions. Each FPO will thus fund its own national /regional research teams within the project.

The project partners must directly contact their NCP (see ANNEX A) in order to start the contract negotiation and accomplish the remaining steps until the research project can start. The Consortium Coordinator is responsible for synchronising the project start with the whole consortium.

7.2. Consortium Agreement

Successful consortia must sign a Consortium Agreement before commencement of the project. This should address matters such as the regulation of intellectual property rights, decision making and actions to be taken in the event of unsatisfactory performance by one or more partners. In some countries/regions, such an agreement might be required for release of the funds. Applicants must comply with the [national/regional regulations](#) regarding this issue. Support for the preparation of a Consortium Agreement can be found on the [DESCA webpage](#).

Upon request, this Consortium Agreement must be made available to the participating FPO.

7.3. Project Reporting

In addition to the reporting required by the national/regional rules, Consortium Coordinators will be required to submit a Mid-term Progress Report and a Final Report (and deliverables needed to monitor the progress) to the CSC according to common templates which will be provided to them. All partners will have to deliver input for these reports. The monitoring will be conducted during the life span of the project.

Funding recipients must ensure that all outcomes (publications, etc.) of the Transnational Projects funded by the 2023 JTC include a proper acknowledgement of the Water4All Partnership, the EC, and the respective FPOs. In addition, each Transnational Project partner must comply with the reporting requirements of its respective national FPOs.

More information on the monitoring and reporting procedures will be provided to the Consortium Coordinators of the Transnational Projects selected for funding.

7.4. Dissemination and exploitation

Water4All will organise a minimum of three events for the Transnational Projects funded in the frame of the present call (see Table 5). Relevant stakeholders will be invited to these events. Funded Transnational Projects should dedicate appropriate resources for dissemination activities including for participation in activities organised by Water4All.

TABLE 5: MEETINGS OF WATER4ALL TRANSNATIONAL PROJECTS FUNDED FROM THIS CALL.

Events	Participants	When
Water4All Kick-off meeting of the funded Transnational Projects	Coordinators and partners of funded projects, stakeholders, CSC	Spring 2025
Water4All Mid-term meeting of the funded Transnational Projects	Coordinators and partners of funded projects, stakeholders, CSC	Autumn 2026
Water4All Final meeting of the funded Transnational Projects	Coordinators and partners of funded projects, stakeholders, CSC	Spring 2028

Dissemination of Transnational Project results is essential, and the dissemination plan should propose communication routes, such as scientific papers, posters, courses or training material, web-based tools, workshops or direct intervention towards end users.

Dissemination to national end-users is necessary in all partner countries. A dissemination plan will be requested for the full proposal and should specify how the planned activities will contribute to the impact of the Transnational Project.

7.5. Open Access and Open Data

The optimisation of the impact of publicly-funded scientific research is of fundamental importance to improve conditions to i) minimise the time spent searching for information and accessing it, ii) be able to speed up scientific progress, and iii) make it easier to cooperate across and beyond the EU.

Open Access requirements for all scientific publications and long form publications produced by the Transnational Projects funded by the 2023 JTC will support Green Open Access (immediate or delayed open access provided through self-archiving), or Gold Open Access (immediate open access provided by a publisher for the most important outputs). In the case of Green Open Access, partners will (as soon as possible and at the latest on publication) deposit a machine-readable electronic copy of the published version or final peer-reviewed manuscript accepted for publication in a repository for scientific publications. In addition, partners will ensure open access to the deposited publication and bibliographic metadata. Information should be provided about all the other scholarly objects, tools and instruments that are needed to validate the conclusions of the publication.

In case of any Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) issue for some project data and products the consortium may decide to go for Opt Out Option and cover this within the project consortium agreement. Projects can opt out before or after the signature of the Consortium Agreement (thereby freeing themselves from the associated obligations) on the following grounds:

- Incompatibility with the need for confidentiality in connection with security issues;
- Incompatibility with rules on protecting personal data;
- If there are other legitimate reasons not to provide open access to research data.

Depending on the funding rules of the FPOs, the costs related to the implementation of these provisions may be eligible for reimbursement during the grant.

The funded Transnational Projects are requested to develop a Data Management Plan, according to the provisions of the HE MGA art. 17, page 110 - 112⁸. All funded projects will be requested to submit metadata on all the data resources directly generated by the project. A dedicated contact / procedure will be indicated at the launch of the project.

8. Water4All 2023 JTC - Call Secretariat contact

Claire Treignier, Sylvain Pasquier
French National Research Agency
water4All-CallsFR@agencerecherche.fr

⁸ [Horizon Europe Model Grant Agreement](#)

List of Annexes to the Call Announcement document

The most updated version of ANNEXES listed hereafter will be available for download on the 2023 Joint Transnational Call dedicated webpage, from Water4All website – www.water4all-partnership.eu.

ANNEX A: List of national contact points (NCPs) and a matrix of the topics and modalities funded by each participating country/region

ANNEX B: Theory of change

ANNEX C: Terms of Reference of the Water4All Knowledge Hub

ANNEX D: List of Water4All beneficiaries that may apply to the 2023 Joint Transnational Call

Stand-alone documents supporting the Call Announcement document

Supporting documents listed hereafter will be made available for download on the 2023 Joint Transnational Call dedicated webpage, from Water4All website – www.water4all-partnership.eu.

- **National/regional regulations**
- **Pre-proposal template**
- **Full proposal template**
- **Knowledge Hub – Expression of Interest template**
- **Frequently Asked Questions**