EEA Financial Mechanism 2021-2028

PROGRAMME AGREEMENT

between

The Financial Mechanism Committee
established by Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway

and

The National Management Unit,
hereinafter referred to as the "National Focal Point",

representing Portugal,
hereinafter referred to as the "Beneficiary State"

together hereinafter referred to as the "Parties"

for the financing of the Programme "Blue Growth"
hereinafter referred to as the "Programme"

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Chapter 1
Scope, legal framework, and definitions

Article 1.1
Scope

This Programme Agreement between the Financial Mechanism Committee (hereinafter referred to as the FMC) and the National Focal Point lays down the rights and obligations of the Parties regarding the implementation of the Programme and the financial contribution from the EEA Financial Mechanism 2021-2028 to the Programme.

Article 1.2
Legal Framework

1. This Programme Agreement shall be read in conjunction with the following documents which, together with this Programme Agreement, constitute the legal framework of the EEA Financial Mechanism 2021-2028:

a) Protocol 38d to the EEA Agreement on the EEA Financial Mechanism 2021-2028;

b) the Regulation on the implementation of the EEA Financial Mechanism 2021-2028 (hereinafter referred to as the "Regulation");

c) the Memorandum of Understanding on the Implementation of the EEA Financial Mechanism 2021-2028, entered into between the Donor States and the Beneficiary State; and

d) any guidelines adopted by the FMC in accordance with the Regulation.

2. In case of an inconsistency between this Programme Agreement and the Regulation, the Regulation shall prevail.

3. The legal framework is binding for the Parties. An act or omission by a Party to this Programme Agreement that is incompatible with the legal framework constitutes a breach of this Programme Agreement by that Party.

Article 1.3
Definitions

Terms used and institutions and documents referred to in this Programme Agreement shall be understood in accordance with the Regulation, in particular Article 1.6 thereof, and the legal framework referred to in Article 1.2 of this Programme Agreement.

Article 1.4
Annexes and hierarchy of documents

1. Annexes attached hereto form an integral part of this Programme Agreement. Any reference to this Programme Agreement includes a reference to its annexes unless otherwise stated or clear from the context.

2. The provisions of the annexes shall be interpreted in a manner consistent with this Programme Agreement. Should the meaning of any provision of the said annexes, so interpreted, remain inconsistent with this Programme Agreement, the provisions of the annexes shall prevail, provided that these provisions are compatible with the Regulation.

3. Commitments, statements and guarantees, explicit as well as implicit, made in the preparation of the programme are binding for the National Focal Point and the Programme Operator unless otherwise explicitly stipulated in this Programme Agreement.

Chapter 2
The Programme

Article
2.1 Co-operation

1. The Parties shall take all appropriate and necessary measures to ensure fulfilment of the obligations and objectives arising out of this Programme Agreement.

2. The Parties agree to provide all information necessary for the good functioning of this Programme Agreement, including risk assessment and response analysis, and to apply the principles of implementation as set out in the Regulation.

3. The Parties shall promptly inform each other of any circumstances that interfere or threaten to interfere with the successful implementation of the Programme.

4. In executing this Programme Agreement the Parties declare to counteract corrupt practices. Further, they declare not to accept, either directly or indirectly, any kind of offer, gift, payments or benefits which would or could be construed as illegal or corrupt practice or giving rise to a conflict of interest. The Parties shall immediately inform each other of any indication of corruption or misuse of resources related to this Programme Agreement.

Article 2.2
Main responsibilities of the Parties

1. The National Focal Point is responsible and accountable for the overall management of the EEA Financial Mechanism 2021-2028 in the Beneficiary State and for the full and correct implementation of this Programme Agreement. In particular, the National Focal Point undertakes to:

a) comply with its obligations stipulated in the Regulation and this Programme Agreement;

b) ensure that the Certifying Authority, the Audit Authority and the Programme Operator properly perform the tasks assigned to them in the Regulation and this Programme Agreement;

c) take all necessary steps to ensure that the Programme Operator is fully committed and able to implement and manage the Programme, including ensuring the appropriate allocation of staff and other resources, throughout the programme period;

d) take the necessary measures to remedy irregularities in the implementation of the Programme and ensure that the Programme Operator takes appropriate measures to remedy irregularities in projects within the Programme, including measures to recover misspent funds; and

e) make all the necessary and appropriate arrangements in order to strengthen or change the way the Programme is managed.

2. The FMC shall, subject to the rules stipulated in the legal framework referred to in Article 1.2 of this Programme Agreement, make available to the Beneficiary State a financial contribution (hereinafter referred to as "the programme grant") to be used exclusively to finance the eligible cost of the Programme.

Article 2.3
Objective(s) of the Programme

1. This Programme Agreement sets out the objective(s), outcome(s), outputs, indicators and targets for the Programme.

2. The National Focal Point shall ensure that the Programme Operator implements and completes the Programme in accordance with the objective(s), outcome(s), outputs, indicators and targets set for the Programme.

Article 2.4
Programme grant

1. The maximum amount of the programme grant, the programme grant rate, and the estimated eligible cost of the Programme shall be as specified in this Programme Agreement.

2. The programme budget annexed to this Programme Agreement shall:

a) contain a breakdown between the Programme's budget headings; and

b) indicate the agreed advance payment, if any.

3. The management cost of the Programme Operator shall not exceed the amount specified in this Programme Agreement.

Article 2.5
Special conditions and programme specific rules

1. This Programme Agreement shall list any conditions set by the FMC with reference to Article 6.3.2 of the Regulation. The National Focal Point shall ensure compliance with these conditions and take the necessary steps to ensure their fulfilment.

2. The National Focal Point shall ensure compliance with any other programme specific rules laid down in this Programme Agreement.

Article 2.6
Reporting

The National Focal Point shall ensure that the Programme Operator provides financial reports and a Final Programme Report in accordance with Chapter 9 and Article 6.8 of the Regulation as well as other reporting in accordance with guidelines adopted by the FMC.

Article 2.7
Monitoring and audits

The monitoring and audits referred to in Chapter 10 and Chapter 11 of the Regulation shall not in any way relieve the National Focal Point or the Programme Operator of their obligations under the legal framework regarding monitoring of the Programme and/or its projects, financial control and audit.

Article 2.8
Modification of the Programme

1. Unless otherwise explicitly stipulated in this Programme Agreement, any modification of the Programme is subject to prior approval by the FMC.

2. Budget reallocations to and from calls and pre-defined projects (both within the same outcome and between outcomes) are permitted without a modification of the Programme Agreement or prior approval by the FMC for an amount of up to 10% of the total allocation for each planned call or pre-defined project.

3. Changes to the Programme which have been agreed in their entirety through a modification of the relevant Memorandum of Understanding do not require a modification of the Programme Agreement. In such cases, the Programme Agreement shall be updated by the FMC.

4. Programme specific exceptions from paragraph 1, if any, are set in the annexes to this Programme Agreement.

5. Expenditures in breach of this Article are not eligible.

6. Should there be a doubt as to whether a modification of the Programme Agreement is

required, the National Focal Point shall consult the FMC before such modifications take effect.

7. Requests for modifications shall be submitted and assessed in accordance with Article 6.7 of the Regulation.

Article 2.9
Communication

1. All communication to the FMC regarding this Programme Agreement shall take place in English and be directed to the Financial Mechanism Office (hereinafter referred to as the FMO), which represents the FMC towards the National Focal Point and the Programme Operator in relation to the implementation of the Programme.

2. To the extent that original documents are not available in the English language, the documents shall be accompanied by full and accurate translations in English. The National Focal Point shall bear the responsibility for the accuracy of the translation that it provides and the possible consequences that might arise from any inaccurate translations.

Article 2.10
Contact information

1. The contact information of the Programme Operator is as specified in this Programme Agreement.

2. The contact information for the FMC and the Financial Mechanism Office are:

Financial Mechanism Office

Att: Managing Director

EFTA House

Avenue des Arts, 19H

1000 Brussels

Telephone: +32 (0)2 286 1701

E-mail: fmo@efta.int

3. Changes of or corrections to the contact information referred to in this Article shall be given in writing without undue delay by the Parties to this Programme Agreement.

Article 2.11
Representations and warranties

1. This Programme Agreement and the awarding of the programme grant is based on information provided by, through, or on behalf of the National Focal Point to the FMC prior to the signing of this Programme Agreement.

2. The National Focal Point represents and warrants that the information provided by, through, or on behalf of the National Focal Point, in connection with the implementation or conclusion of this Programme Agreement are authentic, accurate and complete.

Chapter 3
Projects

Article 3.1
Selection of projects and award of grants

1. The National Focal Point shall ensure that the Programme Operator selects projects in accordance with Chapter 7 of the Regulation and this Programme Agreement.

2. Eligibility of Project Promoters and project partners is stipulated in Article 7.2 of the Regulation and, in accordance with paragraph 4 thereof, subject only to the limitations stipulated in this Programme Agreement.

3. Pre-defined projects shall be outlined in this Programme Agreement.

4. The National Focal Point shall take proactive steps to ensure that the Programme Operator complies fully with Article 7.5.2 of the Regulation.

Article 3.2
Project contract

1. For each approved project a project contract shall be concluded between the Programme Operator and the Project Promoter.

2. In cases where a project contract cannot, due to provisions in the national legislation, be made between the Programme Operator and the Project Promoter, the Beneficiary State may instead issue a legislative or administrative act of similar effect and content.

3. The content and form or the project contract shall comply with Article 7.9 of the Regulation.

4. The National Focal Point shall ensure that the obligations of the Project Promoter under the project contract are valid and enforceable under the applicable law of the Beneficiary State.

Article 3.3
Project partners and partnership agreements

1. A project may be implemented in a partnership between the Project Promoter and project partners as defined in point (y) of Article 1.6 of the Regulation. If a project is implemented in such a partnership, the Project Promoter shall sign a partnership agreement with the project partners with the content and in the form stipulated in Article 7.10 of the Regulation.

2. If one of the parties to the agreement is an entity from the Donor States, the partnership agreement

shall be in English and shall be based on a template provided by the FMC.

3. The eligibility of expenditures declared by a project partner is subject to the same rules as would apply if the expenditures were declared by the Project Promoter.

4. The National Focal Point shall ensure that the Programme Operator verifies that the partnership agreement complies with this Article. A draft partnership agreement or letter of intent shall be submitted to the Programme Operator before the signing of the project contract.

Chapter 4
Finance

Article 4.1
Eligible expenditures

1. Without prejudice to Article 8.9 of the Regulation, eligible expenditures of this Programme are:

a) management costs of the Programme Operator in accordance with the detailed budget in the financial plan;

b) payments to projects within this Programme in accordance with the Regulation, this Programme Agreement and the project contract; and

c) payments to activities funded by the bilateral funds allocated to the programme.

2. Expenditures of Project Promoters and project partners are eligible provided that they are in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 8 of the Regulation and any further provisions contained in this Programme Agreement.

3. The first date of eligibility of expenditures in projects shall be set in the project contract in accordance with Article 8.14 of the Regulation. The first date of eligibility of any pre-defined project shall be no earlier than the date of entry into force of the Programme Agreement.

4. The maximum eligible costs of the categories referred to in paragraph 1 are set in this Programme Agreement. Programme specific rules on the eligibility of expenditure set in this Programme Agreement shall be complied with.

Article 4.2
Proof of expenditure

Costs incurred by Programme Operators, Project Promoters and project partners shall be supported by documentary evidence as required in Article 8.12 of the Regulation.

Article 4.3
Proof of conditions fulfilled for simplified cost options

Costs of the Programme Operators, Project Promoters and project partners that are covered by simplified cost options shall be supported by the proof of conditions fulfilled in accordance with Article 8.13 of the Regulation.

Article 4.4
Payments

1. Payments to the Programme shall be made when all relevant conditions for payments stipulated in this Programme Agreement and the Regulation have been fulfilled.

2. Payments to the Programme shall take the form of an advance payment, interim payments and payment of the final balance and shall be made in accordance with Articles 9.2, 9.3 and 9.5 of the Regulation.

3. Payments of the project grant to the Project Promoters may take the form of advance payments, interim payments and payments of the final balance.

4. The National Focal Point shall ensure that payments are transferred in accordance with Article 9.1.2 of the Regulation.

5. Chapter 9 of the Regulation shall apply to all aspects related to payments, including currency exchange rules and handling of interests on bank accounts.

Article 4.5
Transparency and availability of documents

The National Focal Point shall ensure an audit trail for financial contributions from the EEA Financial Mechanism 2021-2028 to the Programme in accordance with Article 9.8 of the Regulation.

Article 4.6
Irregularities, suspension and reimbursements

The FMC has the right to make use of the remedies provided in the Regulation, in particular Chapter 13 thereof. The National Focal Point has a duty to take all necessary measures to ensure that the provisions in Chapter 12 and 13 of the Regulation regarding irregularities, suspension of payments, financial corrections and reimbursement are complied with.

Chapter 5
Final provisions

Article 5.1
Dispute settlement

1. The Parties waive their rights to bring any dispute related to the Programme Agreement before any

national or international court and agree to settle such a dispute in an amicable manner.

2. If a demand for reimbursement to the FMC is not complied with by the Beneficiary State, or a dispute related to a demand for reimbursement arises that cannot be solved in accordance with paragraph 1, the Parties may bring the dispute before Oslo Tingrett.

Article 5.2
Termination

1. The FMC may, after consultation with the National Focal Point, terminate this Programme Agreement if:

a) a general suspension decision according to Article 13.6 of the Regulation or a decision to suspend payments according to point (h) of Article 13.1.1 of the Regulation has not been lifted within 6 months of such a decision;

b) a suspension of payments according to Article 13.1 of the Regulation, other than under point (h) of Article 13.1.1, has not been lifted within one year of such a decision;

c) a request for reimbursement according to Article 13.2 of the Regulation has not been complied with within one year from such a decision;

d) the Programme Operator becomes bankrupt, is deemed to be insolvent, or declares that it does not have the financial capacity to continue with the implementation of the Programme; or

e) the Programme Operator has, in the opinion of the FMC, been engaged in corruption, fraud or similar activities or has not taken the appropriate measures to detect or prevent such activities or, if they have occurred, nullify their effects.

2. This Programme Agreement can be terminated by mutual agreement between the Parties.

3. Termination does not affect the right of the Parties to make use of the dispute settlement mechanism referred to in Article 5.1 or the right of the FMC to make use of the remedies provided in Chapter 13 of the Regulation.

Article 5.3
Waiver of responsibility

1. Any appraisal of the Programme undertaken before or after its approval by the FMC, does not in any way diminish the responsibility of the National Focal Point and the Programme Operator to verify and confirm the correctness of the documents and information forming the basis of the Programme Agreement.

2. Nothing contained in the Programme Agreement shall be construed as imposing upon the FMC or the FMO any responsibility of any kind for the supervision, execution, completion, or operation of the Programme or its projects.

3. The FMC does not assume any risk or responsibility whatsoever for any damages, injuries, or other possible adverse effects caused by the Programme or its projects including, but not limited to inconsistencies in the planning of the Programme or its projects, other project(s) that might affect it or that it might affect, or public discontent. It is the full and sole responsibility of the National Focal Point and the Programme Operator to satisfactorily address such issues.

4. Neither the National Focal Point, the Programme Operator, entities involved in the implementation of projects, nor any other party shall have recourse to the FMC for further financial support or assistance to the Programme in whatsoever form over and above what has been provided for in the Programme Agreement.

5. Neither the European Free Trade Association, its Secretariat, including the FMO, its officials or employees, nor the FMC, its members or alternate members, nor the EFTA States, can be held liable for any damages or injuries of whatever nature sustained by the National Focal Point or the Beneficiary State, the Programme Operator, Project Promoters or any other third person, in connection, be it direct or indirect, with this Programme Agreement.

6. Nothing in this Programme Agreement shall be construed as a waiver of diplomatic immunities and privileges awarded to the European Free Trade Association, its assets, officials or employees.

Article 5.4
Entry into force and duration

1. This Programme Agreement shall enter into force on the date of the last signature of the Parties.

2. This Programme Agreement shall remain in force until five years have elapsed after the date of the acceptance of the Final Programme Report.

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This programme agreement is drawn up in two originals in the English language.

For the Donors

Signed in Lisbon on 2 July

Hanne Bruslette

For the National Focal Point

Signed in Lisbon on 2nd July

Jes Fenhann

Annex I to the Programme Agreement

Roles	
Programme Operator:	Directorate General for Maritime Policy (DGPM)
Donor Programme Partner:	Directorate for Higher Education and Skills (HK-DIR) National Agency for International Education Affairs (AIBA) Icelandic Centre for Research (RANNIS) Innovation Norway (IN) Research Council of Norway (RCN)
IPO:	-
Other Programme Partner(s):	Agency for Research and Innovation (AI²) Institute for Higher Education (IES, I.P.)

Indicator	Disaggregation	Unit of measurement	Data source	Baseline	Planned Target[1]
PA02 objective: Green value creation and competitiveness.					
Outcome 1: Enhanced competitiveness of businesses in the blue and green economy					
Estimated revenue generated from new or improved products, services or production processes (EUR)		Cumulative number	Project promoter records	0	2,600,000
Number of businesses that increased their revenue from new or improved products, services or production processes		Cumulative number	Project promoter records	0	35
Number of new or improved products or services ready for the market		Cumulative number	Project promoter records	0	15
Number of businesses that developed new or improved products or services ready for the market		Cumulative number	Project promoter records	0	15
Number of jobs created or sustained	Gender	Cumulative number	Payroll records, employment or commercial contracts/agreements	0	40
Estimated amount of Greenhouse Gas emissions avoided (tonnes CO2eq)		Cumulative number	Project promoter records	0	50
Output 1.1: Businesses are more efficient and innovative					

[1] Planned targets included in the above table represent the level of ambition at the time of Programme Agreement conclusion or following major modifications of the Programme. These targets shall not be used to measure the level of success of the programme. Actual targets following project contracting shall be reported on annually in the Country Reports and the Final Programme Report.

Number of new or improved products and services developed		Cumulative number	Project promoter records	0	35
Number of businesses that developed new or improved products and services		Cumulative number	Project promoter records	0	35
Number of digital technologies applied in production processes		Cumulative number	Project promoter records	0	10
Number of registered applications for Intellectual Property Protection		Cumulative number	Project promoter records	0	5
Output 1.2: Businesses are more environmentally sustainable					
Number of circular solutions applied to reduce, reuse or recycle waste		Cumulative number	Project promoter records	0	10
Number of businesses that applied more sustainable production processes		Cumulative number	Project promoter records	0	15
Number of businesses that reduced their Greenhouse Gas emissions		Cumulative number	Project promoter records	0	15
Output 1.3: Businesses are better connected					
Number of female entrepreneurs mentored		Cumulative number	Project promoter records	0	14
Number of businesses that exchanged knowledge or technology with partner institutions		Cumulative number	Project promoter records	0	35
PA03 objective: Enhanced excellence in research and research-based innovation, strengthening the foundations for the green and digital transitions, democracy, rule of law, human rights, social inclusion and resilience.					
Outcome 2: Strengthened research excellence for the blue and digital transitions					
Number of projects that submitted joint applications for further European or international funding		Cumulative number	Project promoter records	0	5
Number of new technologies, solutions or research methods developed		Cumulative number	Project promoter records	0	5
Output 2.1: Scientific knowledge is produced and research outputs disseminated					
Number of joint, peer-reviewed, scientific publications submitted		Cumulative number	Journals, websites PP records	0	20
Number of researchers supported	Gender	Cumulative number	Project promoter records	0	50
Number of early-stage researchers leading work packages	Gender	Cumulative number	Project promoter records	0	10
Number of researchers in leadership roles	Gender	Cumulative number	Project promoter records	0	10
Output 2.2: Increased valorisation skills of researchers and stronger integration between science and society					
Number of policy briefs, guidance and other materials developed and disseminated		Cumulative number	Project promoter records	0	30

Number of researchers trained in valorisation or technology transfer	Gender	Cumulative number	Project promoter records	0	50
Number of non-academic entities involved as partners in research projects		Cumulative number	Project promoter records	0	10
PA04 objective: Enhanced quality, access and relevance of education and training for the digital and green transitions, human rights, democracy, and youth employment.					
Outcome 3: Enhanced blue skills, ocean literacy, and youth employment					
Number of people employed following completion of professional training	Age	Cumulative number	Project promoter records	0	30
Output 3.1: Increased ocean literacy awareness					
Number of schools or educational institutions implementing ocean literacy activities		Cumulative number	Project promoter records	0	10
Number of digital learning tools developed		Cumulative number	Project promoter records	0	5
Number of students trained in blue skills and ocean literacy	Gender	Cumulative number	Project promoter records	0	1,000
Number of students in vulnerable situations trained in blue skills and ocean literacy		Cumulative number	Project promoter records	0	100
Output 3.2: Enhanced knowledge and blue skills					
Number of advanced trainings, technical courses, and professional certifications developed		Cumulative number	Project promoter records	0	5
Number of professionals that completed a certified training	Gender	Cumulative number	Project promoter records	0	100
VET training programme developed		Binary	Project promoter records	No	Yes
Number of post-graduate courses developed and certified		Cumulative number	Project promoter records	0	1
Number of students that completed certified GWO and OPITO		Cumulative number	Project promoter records	0	20
Bilateral Outcome: Enhanced collaboration between beneficiary and donor state entities involved in the programme					
Level of relevance of the partnership		Scale 1-5	FMO survey	N/A	4
Level of efficiency of the partnership		Scale 1-5	FMO survey	N/A	4
Level of effectiveness of the partnership		Scale 1-5	FMO survey	N/A	4
Level of added value of the partnership		Scale 1-5	FMO survey	N/A	4
Level of sustainability of the partnership		Scale 1-5	FMO survey	N/A	4
Level of involvement of the donor project partner in project activities		Scale 1-5	FMO survey	N/A	4
Level of trust between partners		Scale 1-5	FMO survey	N/A	4
Level of overall satisfaction with the partnership		Scale 1-5	FMO survey	N/A	4

Conditions

General

Not applicable

Pre-eligibility

No costs shall be eligible under pre-defined project 2 "Strengthening ENIDH's capacity for advanced maritime training, research and innovation" before the description of the project activities has been agreed between the parties, all requested information on the budget has been submitted by the Programme Operator and the FMC has confirmed the grant to the project.

Pre-payment

Not applicable

Pre-completion

Not applicable

Post-completion

Not applicable

Eligibility of costs - period	**First date**	**Final date**
Eligibility of costs	08/07/2025	30/04/2032
Grant rate and co-financing		
Programme eligible expenditure (€)		€ 58,047,058.83
Programme grant rate (%)		85.00 %
Maximum amount of Programme grant - EEA Financial Mechanism (€)		€ 49,400,000.00
Maximum amount of Programme grant - Norwegian Financial Mechanism (€)		-
Maximum amount of Programme grant - Total (€)		€ 49,400,000.00

PA	Budget Heading	EEA Grants	Total grant	Programme grant rate	Programme co-financing	Programme eligible expenditure	Grant advance payment
PM	Programme management	€ 3,572,000.00	€ 3,572,000.00	85.00 %	€ 630,352.94	€ 4,202,352.94	€ 714,400.00[2]
PA02	Outcome 1 (EEA Grants)	€ 21,987,152.00	€ 21,987,152.00	85.00 %	€ 3,880,085.65	€ 25,867,237.65	€ 1,099,358.00
PA03	Outcome 2 (EEA Grants)	€ 17,580,636.00	€ 17,580,636.00	85.00 %	€ 3,102,465.18	€ 20,683,101.18	€ 879,032.00
PA04	Outcome 3 (EEA Grants)	€ 5,860,212.00	€ 5,860,212.00	85.00 %	€ 1,034,155.06	€ 6,894,367.06	€ 293,011.00
BF	Bilateral funds at programme level	€ 400,000.00	€ 400,000.00	n/a[3]	n/a[4]	€ 400,000.00	€ 40,000.00
Total		**€ 49,400,000.00**	**€ 49,400,000.00**	**85.00 %**	**€ 8,647,058.83**	**€ 58,047,058.83**	**€ 3,025,801.00**

Retention of management costs	
Retention of management costs - Percentage of the management costs	10.00 %
Retention of management costs - Planned Euro value	€ 420,235.29

[2] In addition to the amount of € 714,400.00, an amount of € 115,000.00 for programme development activities has been disbursed in accordance with Article 9.1.1 of the Regulation prior to the signature of this Agreement.

[3] Grant amount of Bilateral fund at programme level is not relevant for the calculation of programme grant rate

[4] Grant amount of Bilateral fund at programme level is not relevant for the calculation of programme co-financing

Blue Growth

Operational rules (Annex II)

1. Programme summary

This Annex sets out the operational rules for the programme. The Programme Agreement is based on the MoUs, the Concept Note, and comments made by the FMC. Commitments, statements and guarantees, explicit as well as implicit, made in the Concept Note, are binding for the National Focal Point and the Programme Operator unless otherwise explicitly stipulated in the annexes to this Programme Agreement.

The Programme aims to foster sustainable, inclusive and innovation-driven development within Portugal's blue economy, contributing to the green and digital transition. The Programme's objective will be attained through three outcomes, under three Programme areas.

Outcome 1 contributes to the Programme area objective of *Green value creation and competitiveness* (Programme area 2) and will be implemented through three calls for proposals. Call 1 *Women Entrepreneurs in the Blue and Green Economy* focuses on strengthening the competitiveness of female-led enterprises. It aims to advance gender equality by increasing women's participation in innovation, entrepreneurship, and leadership within Portugal's sustainable blue economy. Call 2 *Market-Ready Start-ups for Blue and Green Innovation* seeks to accelerate the market deployment of innovative solutions in the blue and green sectors. It targets start-ups with technically mature solutions that are ready to scale and enter the market. Call 3 *Blue Business and Innovation* will support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in developing and scaling blue and green technologies, with a particular emphasis on SMEs that demonstrate clear potential for growth and ability to accelerate market uptake.

Outcome 2 contributes to the Programme area objective of *Enhanced excellence in research and research-based innovation, strengthening the foundations for the green and digital transitions, democracy, rule of law, human rights, social inclusion and resilience* (Programme area 3). The outcome will be implemented through one call for proposals — Call 4 *Collaborative Blue Research and Innovation for Societal Impact*. The call will support high-quality collaborative research and innovation projects that enhance Portugal's scientific excellence, accelerate the blue and digital transitions, and generate tangible societal, environmental, and policy impacts.

Outcome 3 contributes to the Programme area objective of *Enhanced quality, access and relevance of education and training for the green and digital transitions, human rights, democracy and youth employment* (Programme area 4) and will be implemented through two calls for proposals and two pre-defined projects. Call 5, *Blue Skills and Ocean Literacy*, aims to strengthen students' blue skills, ocean literacy, and climate awareness by supporting curriculum-aligned resources, teacher training, and experimental learning opportunities. Call 6, *Blue Careers and Advanced Training for the Green and Digital Transition*, will address labour-market shortages by supporting advanced training, reskilling and upskilling pathways aligned with identified employer demand in the marine and maritime sectors contributing to the green and digital transition.

The pre-defined project *New Masters of the Sea – Revitalization and Valorisation of Wooden Shipbuilding in Portugal* aims to revitalise the wooden shipbuilding sector by establishing a certified vocational training programme that transfers traditional craftsmanship to a new generation of skilled craftspeople, with particular focus on women and disadvantaged youth.

The activities under the pre-defined project *Strengthening ENIDH's Capacity for Advanced Maritime Training, Research and Innovation* are to be determined and agreed between the Parties to this Programme Agreement (see the pre-eligibility condition in Annex I).

Projects addressing challenges experienced as a result of the invasion of Ukraine shall be encouraged within the Programme, as relevant.

2. Selection of projects

2.1 Calls and availability of funds (including number of calls, duration of calls, and estimated size):

The project grant rate shall in all cases be set at a level that complies with the State Aid rules in force and takes into account any and all other forms of public support granted to projects. Any remaining costs of the project shall be provided or obtained by the Project Promoter.

Modality	**Available amount (€)**	**Project grant rate (%)**	**Minimum and maximum project grant amount (€)**	**Indicative launch date and duration of call**
Outcome 1				
Call 1	€ 3,621,413	According to the state aid rules	€ 100,000 – € 250,000	Launch date: Q3/Q4 2027 Duration: min. 3 months
Call 2	€ 6,725,482	According to the state aid rules	€ 500,000 – € 800,000	Launch date: Q2/Q3 2027 Duration: min. 3 months
Call 3	€ 15,520,343	According to the state aid rules	€ 500,000 – € 1,000,000	Launch date: Q1/Q2 2027 Duration: min. 3 months
Outcome 2				
Call 4	€ 20,683,101	Up to 100% According to the state aid rules	€ 800,000 – € 2,000,000	Launch date: Q3/Q4 2026 Duration: min. 3 months

Outcome 3				
Call 5	€ 2,314,965	Up to 100% According to the state aid rules	€ 100,000– € 500,000	Launch date: Q1/Q2 2027 Duration: min. 3 months
Call 6	€ 2,829,402	Up to 100% According to the state aid rules	€ 250,000 – € 600,000	Launch date: Q4 2026/Q1 2027 Duration: min. 3 months

In cases where the budget allocated to a call is not fully committed by the conclusion of project selection, a second call may be launched.

Across all calls, evaluation criteria will reward projects that demonstrate meaningful and proportionate measures to advance gender equality and inclusion. All projects are expected to integrate gender-sensitive and inclusive approaches appropriate to their scope and objectives, promoting equal participation, leadership and access to opportunities. The Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality shall be consulted in developing the calls for proposals to ensure effective gender mainstreaming.

Specifics for Calls 1,2 and 3: Projects with bilateral partnerships shall be given priority through the award of additional points.

Specifics for Calls 4, 5 and 6: Partnership with at least one entity from a Donor State is mandatory.

For Call 5: At least one partner from a Donor State shall be an educational institution.

Call 4 specifics:

- The minimum duration of all projects shall be 36 months.
- Partnership with at least one research organisation from one of the Donor States is mandatory.[5]

2.2 Eligible applicants and project partners:

[5] The Research Council of Norway or the Icelandic Centre for Research shall confirm that partners from the Donor States are considered research organisations in Norway or Iceland, respectively.

Modality	Eligible applicants	Eligible partners
Call 1	Micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)[6] with less than 25% public ownership legally established in Portugal, driven by female entrepreneurs.[7]	Enterprises, innovation agencies, Research Organisations and clusters established as a legal entity in one of the Donor States or in Portugal.
Call 2	Start-ups legally established in Portugal.[8]	Enterprises, innovation agencies, Research Organisations and clusters established as a legal entity in one of the Donor States or in Portugal. Incubators established in Portugal.
Call 3	SMEs with less than 25% public ownership legally established in Portugal.	Donor State enterprises, Beneficiary State enterprises, clusters and Research Organisations.
Call 4	Research Organisations established in Portugal.[9]	Donor State entities. National Research Organisations, enterprises, NGOs and public entities established in Portugal. Public or private entities, commercial or non-commercial, as well as non-governmental organisation, established as a legal person in a country other than the Donor States or Beneficiary State may participate as project partners if such participation is justified in terms of the enhanced contribution made to the aims of the Programme.
Call 5	Educational institutions (schools, vocational education and training providers, higher education institutions and maritime academies).	Educational institutions (schools, vocational education and training providers, higher education institutions and maritime academies) and NGOs established in Portugal or in one of the Donor States. Local and regional education authorities in Portugal or in one of the Donor States.

[6] SMEs referred to in this table: SMEs as defined in Annex I to Commission Regulation (EU) No 651/2014 of 17 June 2014 declaring certain categories of aid compatible with the internal market in application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty, or as defined in subsequent EU legislation amending or replacing the former.

[7] This shall be understood as any entity registered in Portugal and engaged in economic activity, which is, according to the entity registration certificate, managed or co-managed by a woman who is engaged in the decision-making process (e.g. as a member of the board) and is an owner of at least 51% of the company.

[8] Start-ups as defined in Article 22 of Regulation (EU) No 651/2014 of 17 June 2014 declaring certain categories of aid compatible with the internal market in application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty, or as defined in subsequent EU legislation amending or replacing the former.

[9] For this table: "Research Organisations" as defined in Annex I of the Commission Regulation (EU) No 651/2014 of 17 June 2014 declaring certain categories of aid compatible with the internal market in application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty, or as defined in subsequent EU legislation amending or replacing the former.

Modality	Eligible applicants	Eligible partners
	Local and regional education authorities in Portugal.	Aquariums, science centres, museums and other non-profit organisations active in marine education (public and private), ocean literacy, environmental awareness and science communication, established in Portugal or in one of the Donor States.
Call 6	Vocational and higher education institutions, training centres, maritime academies, enterprises, and professional associations.	Educational institutions (schools, vocational education and training providers, higher education institutions and maritime academies) and NGOs established in Portugal or in one of the Donor States.

2.3 Selection procedures:

Projects under the programme areas "Business and Innovation" and "Education" shall be selected in accordance with the rules and procedure specified in Chapter 7 of the Regulation. The Programme Operator shall establish a Selection Committee for each call.

The Selection Committee for Calls 1,2 and 3 (Outcome 1 – programme area "Business and Innovation") shall be composed of the following five voting members:

- The Directorate General for Maritime Policy (DGPM)
- The Icelandic Centre for Research (Rannís)
- Innovation Norway
- The Agency for Research and Innovation (AI^2)
- A member external and independent to DGPM and the Donor Programme Partners, appointed by DGPM.

The Selection Committee for Calls 5 and 6 (Outcome 3 – programme area "Education") shall be composed of the following six voting members:

- The Directorate General for Maritime Policy (DGPM)
- The Icelandic Centre for Research (Rannís)
- The Directorate for Higher Education and Skills (HK-DIR)
- The National Agency for International Education Affairs (AIBA)
- The Institute for Higher Education (IES, I.P.)
- A member external and independent to DGPM and the Donor Programme Partners, appointed by DGPM.

Projects under the programme area "Research" (Call 4) shall be selected in line with the EEA Grants Guideline for Research and Innovation Programmes, Chapters 11 and 12 in particular. The Research

Council of Norway and the Icelandic Centre for Research (Rannís) shall not be members of the Selection Committee.

3. Pre-defined projects

1) "New masters of the sea - revitalization and valorization of wooden shipbuilding in Portugal"

Project Promoter:	FOR-MAR - Fisheries and Maritime Training Centre
Donor project partner(s):	Plus-skolen AS Isegran Fartøyvernsenter AS
Total maximum eligible costs:	€ 550,000
Project grant rate:	100.00 %
Maximum project grant amount:	€ 550,000
Estimated duration:	36 months

The project aims to revitalise Portugal's wooden shipbuilding sector by establishing a certified vocational training programme. It responds to an ageing workforce, skills shortages, weak knowledge transfer and the absence of formal qualifications aligned with labour-market needs, sustainability, and innovation. Structured bilateral cooperation between Portugal and Norway will facilitate the transfer of proven educational models, dual-learning methodologies, and sustainable shipbuilding techniques, with the aim of developing a programme that responds to evolving workforce needs and the green and digital transitions, while effectively passing on traditional craftsmanship to a new generation of skilled craftspeople. Key outputs include a national skills-gap study, labour-market assessment, co-designed modular training, work-based learning environments in shipyards, a digital technical resource library, and a Portugal–Norway student mobility model, creating the foundation for long-term sector modernisation, innovation, and employment growth.

The partners shall contribute to the project by sharing their expertise in traditional wooden shipbuilding techniques and shall only be reimbursed on a cost basis from the project in accordance with Chapter 8 of the Regulation.

The main activities shall include:

1. Economic and skills assessment: Comprehensive analysis combining labour-demand mapping, sector potential evaluation, and identification of priority profiles and missing competences.
2. Co-development of certification ready VET course framework: Design of modules, learning outcomes, assessment methods, and integration of sustainability, circular economy, innovation, and digital skills.
3. Digital technical resource library: Development of manuals, videos, and 3D models for lifelong learning, innovation and scalability.
4. Bilateral technical missions and trainer and trainee mobility: Placement of Portuguese trainers in Norwegian VET schools and shipyards; deployment of Norwegian experts in Portuguese

entities, shipyards and FOR-MAR; and technical visits for trainees to gain first-hand knowledge and to observe good practices in VET, maritime activities and shipyard operations.

5. Development and implementation of a pilot training project: Implementation of a pilot vocational training course in sustainable wooden shipbuilding, integrating the co-developed curriculum and dual-learning methodologies.
6. Preparation of Portuguese shipyards for work based learning: Infrastructure and pedagogical improvements to support dual-learning modalities, ensuring safety and sustainability standards.
7. Dissemination and certification of training curricula: Validation, official recognition, and dissemination of the co-developed training curricula through integration into the Portuguese National Qualifications Catalogue as a nationally certified training offer.

2) "Strengthening ENIDH's capacity for advanced maritime training, research and innovation"

Project Promoter:	Escola Náutica Infante D. Henrique (ENIDH)
Donor project partner(s):	University of South-Eastern Norway (USN) Norwegian Sea Rescue Society
Total maximum eligible costs:	€ 1,200,000
Project grant rate:	100.00 %
Maximum project grant amount:	€ 1,200,000
Estimated duration:	30 months

To be determined

4. Bilateral relations

The responsibilities for the Donor Programme Partners in the programme shall be divided as follows:

- Innovation Norway (IN) and the Icelandic Centre for Research (Rannis) shall act as the Donor Programme Partners for the programme area Green Business and Innovation (PA02 – Outcome 1).
- The Research Council of Norway (RCN) and the Icelandic Centre for Research (Rannis) shall act as the Donor Programme Partners for the programme area Research and Innovation (PA03 – Outcome 2).
- The Directorate for Higher Education and Skills (HK-DIR), the National Agency for International Education Affairs (AIBA) and the Icelandic Centre for Research (Rannis) shall as the Donor Programme Partners for the programme area Education, Training and Youth Employment (PA04 – Outcome 3).

The Cooperation Committee shall consist of representative(s) of the Programme Operator (Chair), all Donor Programme Partners (Innovation Norway; Research Council of Norway; Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills; Icelandic Centre for Research; Liechtenstein National Agency for

International Education Affairs) and the national programme partners (the Agency for Research and Innovation (AI^2) and the Institute for Higher Education (IES, I.P.)).

5. Programme management and financial parameters

5.1 Special rules on eligibility of costs:

Programme management costs shall take the form of unit cost for direct staff costs in accordance with Article 8.6.2(a) of the Regulation and a flat rate of 15 % of eligible direct staff costs for indirect costs, in accordance with Article 8.5.1(b) of the Regulation. All other costs shall take the form of actually incurred costs.

5.2 Programme administrative structures:

The Agency for Research and Innovation (AI^2) shall act as the national partner responsible for Outcomes 1 and 2 and the Institute for Higher Education (IES, I.P.) shall act as the national partner for Outcome 3.

6. Miscellaneous

Not applicable.