



EU funding opportunities available for aquaculture

Background paper

*Produced under the EU Aquaculture Assistance Mechanism
which is part of a Service Contract jointly managed by
DG MARE and the European Climate, Infrastructure and
Environment Executive Agency (CINEA).*

March 2023

NTT Data **scope**
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ARISTOTLE
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EUROPEAN COMMISSION

European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency
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Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2021

PDF	ISBN 978-92-95231-45-0	doi:10.2926/207560	HZ-04-23-181-EN-N
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Term	Description
AAM	Aquaculture Assistance Mechanism
AMIF	Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CF	Cohesion Fund
CFP	Common Fisheries Policy
CID	Council Implementation Decision
CINEA	European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency
CPR	Common Provisions Regulation
DG AGRI	Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development
DG EAC	Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture
DG EMPL	Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion
DG REGIO	Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy
EACEA	Education, Audio-visual and Culture Executive Agency
EAFRD	European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
EAGF	European Agricultural Guarantee Fund
EaSI	European Programme for Employment and Social Innovation
EEA	European Economic Area
EFSI	European Fund for Strategic Investments
EIB	European Investment Bank
EIC	European Innovation Council
EIF	European Investment Fund
EISMEA	European Innovation and SME Council Executive Agency
EIT	European Institute of Innovation and Technology
EMFAF	European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund
EMFF	European Maritime and Fisheries Fund
ERA	European Research Area
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESF	European Social Fund
ESF+	European Social Fund Plus
EU	European Union
ETS	Emissions Trading System
EUR	Euros
FEAD	Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IF	Innovation Fund
IPA III	Instrument for Pre-Accession III
I3	Interregional Innovation Investment
JTF	Just Transition Fund
LIFE	Programme for Environment and Climate Action
MAWP	Multi-Annual Work Programmes
MF	Modernisation Fund
MFF	Multiannual Financial Framework
NDICI	Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument
NGEU	NextGenerationEU
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NRRP	National Recovery and Resilience Plan
OA	Other Actions
OCT	Overseas Countries and Territories
RRF	Recovery and Resilience Facility
SAP	Standard Action Project
SIP	Strategic Integrated Project
SNAP	Strategic Nature Project
SME	Small and Medium-sized Enterprise
S3	Shared Smart Specialisation
TAP	Technical Assistance Project
TRL	Technology Readiness Level
UN	United Nations

INTRODUCTION

The European Union (EU) **Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF)** running from 2021 to 2027, and the **NextGenerationEU (NGEU)** recovery instrument¹ provide a wide range of EU funding opportunities, including to the aquaculture sector. The MFF is the **EU's long-term budget** to help fund the Union's priorities and finance big infrastructure and research projects. It is powered by the **NGEU temporary stimulus package** that aims to boost and support the EU's recovery plan to emerge stronger from the pandemic. Together, they amount to a total of **EUR 2.018 trillion** in current prices.

Depending on the nature of the EU funding concerned, the latter can be either directly managed by the European Commission (**direct management**), jointly managed by the European Commission and national authorities (**shared management**), or indirectly managed by partner organisations or other authorities inside or outside the EU (**indirect management**).

National programs are co-financed by the Union's budget and the EU Member States, via EU **shared management funds**, for which the **Common Provisions Regulation (CPR)**² sets out common rules. For the period 2021-2027, eight funds are covered by this Regulation, one of them directly related to aquaculture: European Regional Development Fund (ERDF); Cohesion Fund (CF); European Social Fund Plus (ESF+); European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF); Just Transition Fund (JTF); Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF); Border Management and Visa Instrument; and Internal Security fund³. **Co-financial** rates (i.e. the percentage of EU investments that Member States can receive) apply to these shared management funds depending on their nature (Cohesion Fund, Just Transition Fund, Interreg) and GDP criteria, ranging from 85% of the financing (for less developed regions) to 40% (for more developed regions)⁴.

To get funding for a project⁵, applicants need to identify a relevant **call for proposals** and carefully follow the specific guidelines on how to apply⁶ since each call is unique. The proposals will compete for funding with those submitted by other applicants for that call⁷.

This background document, developed by the EU's **Aquaculture Assistance Mechanism (AAM)**, has been designed to provide an **overview and description of the available funding programmes** that could finance projects in the field of aquaculture. The document contributes to the implementation of the Commission's **"Strategic Guidelines for a more sustainable and competitive EU aquaculture for the period 2021 to 2030"**⁸.

In particular, this document aims to support and empower both public and private actors, including **public authorities, aquaculture producers, market organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and research and academia institutions**, who wish to implement aquaculture-related projects, to seek EU funding or financing, including technical assistance.

¹ EU funding programmes implemented through the 2021-2027 MFF (2021). European Commission https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/find-funding/eu-funding-programmes_en

² Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 on the Common Provisions (2021). The European Parliament and the Council of Europe: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32021R1060>

³ New Cohesion Policy 2021-2027 [Inforegio - New Cohesion Policy \(europa.eu\)](https://europa.eu/inforegio)

⁴ Conditions for financing 2021-2027 [Inforegio - New Cohesion Policy \(europa.eu\)](https://europa.eu/inforegio)

⁵ EU funding for beginners: https://commission.europa.eu/funding-tenders/how-apply/you-apply-eu-funding-beginners_en

⁶ Information on the application process https://commission.europa.eu/funding-tenders/how-apply/application-process_en

⁷ Funding management https://commission.europa.eu/funding-tenders/find-funding/funding-management-mode_en

⁸ Communication on the Strategic Guidelines for a more sustainable and competitive EU aquaculture for the period 2021-2030 (2021). European Commission <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM:2021:236:FIN>

EU funding opportunities available for aquaculture

The document is divided in two main sections. The first section provides **an overview of the available EU funding programmes**. The second section consists of a series of **summary fiches for each of the identified programmes**. Each summary fiche is comprised of a short description detailing the programme's objectives, scope, key areas, components, governance, and implementation. It also specifies the **total volume⁹ of the funding** in euros, as well as the **type of funding in question** (e.g. grant, loan, guarantee, etc.). A **description of projects in the field of aquaculture eligible under the programme**, as well as a **layout of the basic rules for the fund, including its main eligibility criteria**, are also provided. In addition, each summary fiche specifies the **contact form or other type of support** for the reader to reach out for help or technical assistance. **Useful links and additional resources** are also provided for users to access additional information. Lastly, several examples of **previously funded projects in the field of aquaculture** are listed for each programme.

In a nutshell, by consulting this document, aquaculture actors should **gain a comprehensive view** of potentially available funding opportunities for investments in the field of aquaculture. They are, therefore, **better equipped to identify** the appropriate funding programme for their project, **better understand** the potential eligibility of their project and know where to find further guidance. The document is also helpful for those seeking **inspiration** in order to steer their aquaculture-related project forward.

⁹ Users should be aware that the total stated funding available may include additional eligible recipients (e.g. fisheries, other bio-economy sectors) and not be restricted exclusively to aquaculture projects

EU funding opportunities available for aquaculture

1 OVERVIEW OF 2021-2027 EU FUNDING PROGRAMMES AVAILABLE FOR AQUACULTURE

In this section, an overview is provided of the different EU funding programmes potentially available for investments in the field of aquaculture that are implemented through the 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework and the NextGenerationEU. Each funding programme is then presented in a dedicated summary fiche including possible applications.

Table 1: Overview of EU funding programmes potentially available for investments in the field of aquaculture

#	Funding Programme	Overall budget (not for aquaculture only)	Funding Manager	Establishing EU Regulation	Website
1	European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF)	EUR 6.108 billion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EUR 5.311 billion under shared management (Member States national programmes) • EUR 797 million under direct management (e.g. Blue Careers and Regional flagships in EU sea basins) 	European Commission with the European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency (CINEA), and EU Member States	Regulation (EU) 2021/1139 establishing the EMFAF	https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/funding/emfaf_en
2	BlueInvest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EUR 100 million public EU funds (allocated under the EIF and InnovFin Equity) • Up to EUR 500 million (dedicated equity initiative for the blue economy under InvestEU)¹⁰ 	European Investment Fund (EIF)	Regulation (EU) No 2021/523 establishing the InvestEU Programme	https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/maritimeforum/en/frontpage/1451
3	Horizon Europe	EUR 95.5 billion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EUR 25.011 million for Excellence a Science (pillar 1) • EUR 53.516 million for Global Challenges and European Industrial Competitiveness (pillar 2) • EUR 13.597 million for Innovative 	European Commission with its Executive Agencies	Regulation (EU) 2021/695 establishing Horizon Europe	https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe_en

¹⁰ This funding is further increased by a contribution from the EMFAF of EUR 140 million for the period 2021-2027. More information are available at: https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/news/blueinvest-commission-and-eif-agree-mobilise-eu500-million-new-equity-fund-blue-economy-2022-03-28_en

EU funding opportunities available for aquaculture

#	Funding Programme	Overall budget (not for aquaculture only)	Funding Manager	Establishing EU Regulation	Website
		Europe (pillar 3) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> EUR 3.393 million for Widening Participation and Strengthening the European Research Area 			
4	European Innovation Council (EIC)	EUR 10.1 billion	EIC Board supported by the European Innovation and SME Council Executive Agency (EISMEA)	Article 9 of the Regulation (EU) 2021/695 establishing Horizon Europe	https://eic.ec.europa.eu/index_en
5	Programme for Environment and Climate Action (LIFE)	EUR 5.4 billion for the 2021-2027 LIFE programme: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> EUR 1.1 billion for the Nature and Biodiversity sub-programme EUR 697.54 million for the Circular Economy and Quality of Life sub-programme EUR 947 million for the Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation sub-programme EUR 997 million for the Clean Energy Transition sub-programme 	European Commission with CINEA	Regulation (EU) 2021/783 establishing a Programme for the Environment and Climate Action (LIFE)	https://cinea.ec.europa.eu/programmes/life_en
6	European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)	EUR 226.05 billion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> EUR 10 billion for Interreg Programmes (of which EUR 8 billion from the ERDF budget) EUR 570 million for Interregional Innovation Investment (I3) Instrument 	European Commission with its Executive Agencies and EU Member States	Regulation (EU) 2021/1058 on the European Regional Development Fund and on the Cohesion Fund	https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/funding/erdf/
7	Erasmus+	EUR 26 billion	European Commission through DG EAC and DG EMPL, with the Education, Audio-visual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA), and Erasmus+ National	Regulation (EU) 2021/817 establishing Erasmus+	https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/

EU funding opportunities available for aquaculture

#	Funding Programme	Overall budget (not for aquaculture only)	Funding Manager	Establishing EU Regulation	Website
			Agencies		
8	Innovation Fund (IF)	EUR 38 billion	European Commission with CINEA and the European Investment Bank (EIB)	Regulation (EU) 2019/856 supplementing Directive 2003/87/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council with regard to the operation of the Innovation Fund	https://climate.ec.europa.eu/eu-action/funding-climate-action/innovation-fund_en
9	European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)	EUR 95.51 billion (out of the EUR 386.6 billion allocated to the common agricultural policy (CAP))	European Commission through the Directorate-General for Agricultural and Rural Development (DG AGRI), and EU Member States	Regulation (EU) 1305/2013 on support for rural development by the EAFRD	https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/find-funding/eu-funding-programmes/european-agricultural-fund-rural-development-eafrd_en
10	European Social Fund Plus (ESF+)	EUR 99 billion	European Commission and EU Member States	Regulation (EU) 2021/1057 establishing the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1296/2013	https://ec.europa.eu/europe-an-social-fund-plus/en/what-esf
11	Modernisation Fund (MF)	EUR 48 billion	EU Member States with the support of the European Commission, the EIB, and the Investment Committee	Regulation (EU) 2020/1001 laying down detailed rules for the application of Directive 2003/87/EC as regards the operation of the Modernisation Fund	https://modernisationfund.eu/
12	Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF)	EUR 723.8 billion	EU Commission through the Recovery and Resilience Task Force (RECOVER) and the Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs (DG ECFIN)	Regulation (EU) 2021/241 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 February 2021 establishing the Recovery and Resilience Facility	https://commission.europa.eu/business-economy-euro/economic-recovery/recovery-and-resilience-facility_en

2 EU FUNDING PROGRAMMES SUMMARY FICHES

2.1 European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF)

EUROPEAN MARITIME, FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE FUND (EMFAF)	
Description	
<p>In force since the 14th of July 2021, the EMFAF runs in line with the duration of the MFF from 2021 to 2027. The programme supports both the EU Common Fisheries Policy (CFP)¹¹ and the EU Maritime Policy¹², as well as the Union's agenda for international ocean governance¹³.</p> <p>Through funding, the EMFAF aims at fostering sustainable fisheries and the restoration and conservation of marine biological resources; ensuring food security through the continuous supply of seafood products; contributing to the growth of a sustainable blue economy and its fishing and aquaculture communities; and strengthening international ocean governance and enabling a healthy, safe, secure, clean and sustainable management of the seas and oceans.</p> <p>Overall, the programme helps fulfil the Commission's objectives and priorities laid out in the European Green Deal¹⁴, as well as the United Nations' (UN) Sustainable Development Goal 14 "Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development"¹⁵.</p>	
Type of management	
<p>Part of the EMFAF is shared-managed between the European Commission and the national authorities of each EU Member State. For each seven-year programming period, the Commission and the Member States jointly establish the key EMFAF investment priorities, which are set out in national programmes. Thereafter, the Member States allocate the funding and are responsible for the implementation of the organised action, while the Commission monitors implementation, reimburses expenditures and is responsible for the budget, acquiring a supervisory role.</p> <p>The other part of the fund is directly managed by the Commission who either manages the actions itself or delegates it to the European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency (CINEA).</p>	
Volume and type of funding	Targeted beneficiaries
<p>The total budget amounts to EUR 6.108 billion in current prices (not exclusively for aquaculture).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> EUR 5.311 billion are dedicated to shared management. The maximum co-financing rate per specific objective is 70% of the eligible public expenditure, with the exception of compensation for additional costs in the outermost regions, for which it is 100%. The standard maximum rate of public aid¹⁶ granted to beneficiaries is 50% 	<p>Target beneficiaries include operators from the fishery and aquaculture sectors, research institutions, public authorities, NGOs, international organisations, and civil society organisations.</p>

¹¹ Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 on the Common Fisheries Policy (2013). The European Parliament and the Council of the EU <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32013R1380>

¹² Integrated Maritime Policy of the EU. The European Parliament <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/121/integrated-maritime-policy-of-the-european-union>

¹³ International ocean governance (2022). European Commission https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/ocean/international-ocean-governance_en

¹⁴ The European Green Deal (2019). European Commission <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM%3A2019%3A640%3AFIN>

¹⁵ UN Development Goal n°14 (2015). United Nations <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal14>

¹⁶ The maximum rate of support for State aid shall be determined by the applicable aid scheme and category of aid, in accordance with Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU

EUROPEAN MARITIME, FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE FUND (EMFAF)

(with derogations depending on the added value of the project).

- **EUR 797 million are dedicated to direct management.** The funding under direct management may be provided through grants, procurement contracts, loans, guarantees and compensation payments.

Eligible projects in the field of aquaculture

The EMFAF is particularly targeted to support **innovative projects and solutions in the field of aquaculture** that contribute to the sustainable exploitation and management of aquatic resources. Specifically, the programme supports under both shared and direct management, investments that:

- Enable the development of a sustainable and competitive aquaculture contributing to food security;
- Promote the marketing, quality and added value of aquaculture products, as well as processing of those products;
- Foster the economic and social vitality of aquaculture communities;
- Improve the skills and working conditions in the aquaculture sector; and
- Protect marine biodiversity and ecosystems.

Funds may also be eligible for projects combining different activities, including for example, aquaculture combined with renewable energies (offshore wind parks) or applications of aquaculture in blue biotechnology.

Under shared management, eligible investments in the field of aquaculture are further detailed in each Member State's national programme for the period 2021-2027.

Objectives of the 'Strategic Guidelines on Sustainable Aquaculture' covered



- ✓ Building resilience and competitiveness



- ✓ Participating in the green transition



- ✓ Ensuring social acceptance and information to the consumer



- ✓ Increasing knowledge and Innovation

The EMFAF contributes to the implementation of the Strategic Guidelines by supporting projects that target all objectives.

Eligibility criteria

Under **shared management**, eligibility rules are **provided in each Member States' national programme**. The EMFAF may provide funding for such projects on the condition that they are included in the national programmes, and in accordance with the eligibility rules defined by the Member States concerned. Before applying, potential beneficiaries might contact the national authority in charge of managing the EMFAF programme in the country, in order to obtain guidance and confirm the eligibility of their project for this funding.

Under **direct management**, eligibility rules are defined in the **EMFAF regulation**, according to which, the following entities are eligible to receive funding from the programme:

- Legal entities established in an EU Member State or in a third country listed in the EMFAF

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work programme;

- Any legal entity created under Union law or any international organisation;

Exceptionally, legal entities established in a third country where their participation is necessary for the achievement of the objectives of a given action. Legal entities established in a third country that is not associated to the programme shall in principle bear the cost of their application.

Support and technical assistance

- List and contact details of national authorities in charge of managing Member States operational programmes: https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/funding/emfaf_en#how-to-apply
- Frequently asked questions about the EMFAF: https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2021-07/emfaf-faq_en.pdf

Useful links and additional information

- Regulation (EU) 2021/1139 establishing the EMFAF: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.L_.2021.247.01.0001.01.ENG
- EMFAF national programmes 2021-2027: https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/funding/emfaf-programmes-2021-2027_en
- The European Commission's EMFAF website: https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/funding/emfaf_en
- EMFAF Planned Finances and Achievements: <https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/funds/emfaf/21-27>

Examples of previously funded projects related to aquaculture

EMFAF Blue Calls for 2023:

- Blue careers for a sustainable blue economy call – Development of the next generation of blue skills and provide opportunities for attractive and sustainable maritime careers: https://cinea.ec.europa.eu/funding-opportunities/calls-proposals/emfaf-call-proposals-blue-careers-sustainable-blue-economy_en
- Regional flagships projects – Support sustainable blue economy in EU sea basins: https://cinea.ec.europa.eu/funding-opportunities/calls-proposals/emfaf-call-proposals-regional-flagships-projects-supporting-sustainable-blue-economy-eu-sea-basins_en

Examples of procurement contracts under EMFAF:

- EU Aquaculture Assistance Mechanism for aquaculture – Support MS and the aquaculture industry in the implementation of the 2021-2030 Strategic Guidelines for EU aquaculture: <https://aquaculture.ec.europa.eu/about>
- Framework Contract for the provision of scientific advice for Aquaculture – Provision of specific and timely scientific advice: https://cinea.ec.europa.eu/funding-opportunities/calls-tenders/multiple-framework-contract-cascade-provision-scientific-advice-aquaculture_en
- Study on state-of-the-art scientific information on the impacts of aquaculture activities in Europe: https://cinea.ec.europa.eu/publications/study-state-art-scientific-information-impacts-aquaculture-activities-europe_en

The European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) – EMFAF's predecessor – provided funding for projects related to aquaculture on different topics, including:

Sustainable Blue Economy:

- AlgaeDemo – Demonstration of large-scale seaweed cultivation at open sea and the positive effects thereof on the ocean: <https://www.algaedemo.eu/the-project/>
- BLUENET – Creating new life for discarded fishing and aquaculture gears to prevent marine

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litter generation: <https://www.bluenetproject.eu/>

- DEMO-BLUESMARTFEED – Demonstration project of a smart technology for monitoring the delivery of feed for a sustainable aquaculture: <https://bluesmartfeed.eu/>
- EASY FEED – Eco-aquaponics systems – 100% sustainable and profitable EU fish-farming: <https://wayback.archive-it.org/12090/20210413021653/https://ec.europa.eu/easme/en/easy-feed-eco-aquaponics-systems-100-sustainable-and-profitable-eu-fish-farming>
- INvertebrateIT – Disruptive and forward-looking opportunities for competitive and sustainable aquaculture: <https://invertebrateitproject.eu/>
- SEASTAR – Exploiting innovative Internet of Underwater Things Technologies and integrating them with last-generation miniaturized wearable sensors to be placed on each fish: <https://www.seastar-project.eu/>

Blue Careers in Europe:

- ENTREFISH – Sustainable entrepreneurship for stronger skills and new employment in fishery and aquaculture's SMEs: <https://www.entrefish.eu/>

Blue Labs:

- FISH4FISH – Chitinolytic biowastes in active and sustainable packaging material: <http://fish4fish.dbcf.unisi.it/>

Marine Litter:

- AQUA-LIT – Preventive Measures for Averting the Discarding of Litter in the Marine Environment from the Aquaculture Industry: <https://aqua-lit.eu/>

Sea Basin Cooperation:

- FAINMAC – Fishery and aquaculture integrated management model along the Adriatic coasts: <https://wayback.archive-it.org/12090/20210413021856/https://ec.europa.eu/easme/en/fishery-and-aquaculture-integrated-management-model-along-adriatic-coasts>

Studies:

- Study on windfarm effects on aquaculture and fisheries – Overview of existing and potential future effects of offshore wind farms on fisheries and aquaculture: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/3f2134f9-b84f-11eb-8aca-01aa75ed71a1>

2.2 BlueInvest

BLUEINVEST

Description

Since 2019, BlueInvest aims at **fostering innovation and investment in sustainable technologies for the blue economy**, by providing technical support and access to finance to innovative small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)¹⁷ and start-ups active in the blue sectors. The initiative established a 'BlueInvest' platform that provides them a wide range of services. Among these, a **BlueInvest Fund** is offered by the Commission in partnership with the **European Investment Fund (EIF)** to support innovative blue economy companies and stimulate investments in the sector.

Overall, the programme helps fulfil the Commission's priorities laid out in the **European Green Deal** by connecting innovation and investment that address sustainability and climate change challenges.

Type of management

The BlueInvest Fund is an **equity initiative** managed by the **EIF** as part of the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) Equity Programme under the Expansion and Growth Window¹⁸.

The EIF has deployed the dedicated budget under this programme in the form of equity investments to **funds and financial intermediaries** that are wholly or partly **targeting the blue economy**, allowing them to invest into final recipients to enhance their expansion and sustainable growth. These have been selected in 2020 by the EIF through calls for expression of interest.

The initiative has been scaled-up in 2022, under the **InvestEU Blue Economy** and a second call for expression of interest¹⁹ has been opened to select new financial intermediaries.

Volume and type of funding

In 2020, **EUR 75 million** out of EFSI's overall budget plus **EUR 15 million** from InnovFin Equity were allocated to the BlueInvest Fund and deployed to four selected Venture Capital funds, who are mobilising these commitments to invest up to **EUR 300 million** into blue economy companies and projects until **2026**.

In addition, the scaled-up instrument is expected to mobilise up to **EUR 500 million** of funds under InvestEU programme via financial intermediaries investing in this sector, resulting in up to **EUR 1,5 billion** of equity financing available to the market.

Targeted beneficiaries

The targeted beneficiaries are **early-stage businesses, SMEs and scale-ups**²⁰ via **funds and financial intermediaries** (e.g., venture capital funds).

Eligible projects in the field of aquaculture

¹⁷ A micro, small or medium-sized enterprise as defined in Commission Recommendation 2003/361/EC. European Commission https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/smes/sme-definition_en

¹⁸ EFSI Equity Instrument (2016-2020). EIF https://www.eif.org/what_we_do/equity/efsi/index.htm

¹⁹ EFSI Equity Products – Calls for Expression of Interest (2022-2027). EIF https://www.eif.org/InvestEU/equity_products_calls/index.htm

²⁰ An enterprise that has already established a product or service, and has already generated revenue, and has already increased production capacity, to finance market or product development, to provide additional working capital or to be used for a (total or partial) acquisition, with a view to further grow the business. EIF <https://www.eif.org/attachments/escalar-annex-ii-investment-guidelines.pdf>

BLUEINVEST

Eligible investments are those that support the blue economy by **targeting innovative and sustainable investment projects in blue economy subsectors, including aquaculture**. These must primarily address the sector's specific market gaps in research and innovation; growth of European scale-ups and SMEs; and/or result in social impact.

According to the BlueInvest market opportunity snapshot on sustainable aquaculture²¹, current opportunities and areas of innovation in the sector include prediction and prevention technologies, innovation to increase productivity, aquaculture management and/or monitoring solutions, and other innovation solutions such as digital transformation for public administration in the sector.

Objectives of the 'Strategic Guidelines on Sustainable Aquaculture' covered

-  Building resilience and competitiveness
-  Participating in the green transition
-  Ensuring social acceptance and information to the consumer
-  Increasing knowledge and Innovation

BlueInvest contributes to achieving the objectives of the Strategic guidelines by supporting SMEs and start-ups from the blue sector. Specifically, the programme boosts their innovation and sustainable technologies and improves their market readiness and entry.

Eligibility criteria

The EIF selects **fund managers and financial intermediaries** based on applications received in response to **calls for expression of interest** and subject to a policy review by the European Commission. The selection of **final recipients** and approval of funding lie solely with the financial intermediary, according to their investment strategy and the rules of the BlueInvest Fund.

Support and technical assistance

- Summary of required data points to be included in the application form for the call for Expression of Interest under the InvestEU programme: https://www.eif.org/InvestEU/equity_products_calls/investeu-equity-checklist.pdf

Useful links and additional information

- BlueInvest Platform: <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/maritimeforum/en/frontpage/1451>
- Calls for expression of interest: https://www.eif.org/InvestEU/equity_products_calls/index.htm
- Regulation (EU) No 2021/523 establishing the InvestEU Programme: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/523/oj>

Examples of previously funded projects related to aquaculture

The following four venture capital funds were selected in 2020 by the EIF:

- Sofinnova Partners: <https://sofinnovapartners.com/>
- Astanor Ventures: <https://astanor.com/>

²¹ Market Opportunity Snapshot on Sustainable Aquaculture. BlueInvest
https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/maritimeforum/en/system/files/market_opportunity_snapshot_-_aquaculture.pdf

BLUEINVEST

- Sarsia: <https://sarsiaseed.com/>
- Ocean 14: <https://www.ocean14capital.com/>

Examples of companies focused on aquaculture that are funded by these selected venture capitals:

- Under Sofinnova Partners: Microphyt – development, production and marketing of microalgae-based natural ingredients: <https://sofinnovapartners.com/portfolio/microphyt>
- Under Astanor: Ynsect – transformed insects into premium, highly nutritious protein powder for animal feed and aquaculture: <https://astanor.com/cases/ynsect/>
- Under Sarsia: SeaSmart – patented wireless drones to monitor fish farming cages: <https://www.seasmart.no/>
- Under Ocean14 Capital: SyAqua – solutions for shrimp hatcheries and farmers: <https://www.syaqua.com/>

2.3 Horizon Europe

HORIZON EUROPE	
Description	
<p>Horizon Europe is the EU's key funding programme for research and innovation from 2021 to 2027. The priorities of this programme correspond to three pillars and one horizontal part, which are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pillar 1: excellent science (enhancing EU's global scientific competitiveness). • Pillar 2: global challenges and European industrial competitiveness (promoting research of societal challenges and boosting technological and industrial capacities through six clusters: 1. health; 2. culture, creativity and inclusive society; 3. civil security for society; 4. digital, industry and space; 5. climate, energy and mobility; 6. food, bioeconomy, natural resources, agriculture and the environment). • Pillar 3: innovative Europe (making Europe a leader in market-creating innovation through the European Innovation Council (EIC) and developing the overall European innovation ecosystem through the EIT (European Institute of Innovation and Technology)). • Horizontal Part: widening participation and strengthening the European Research Area (ERA) (supporting Member States to promote national research and innovation). <p>The programme also identifies European co-funded and co-programmed partnerships, 5 main mission areas, and covers international cooperation.</p>	
Type of management	
<p>The programme is managed by the European Commission, its Executive Agencies and a range of legal entities established as Union bodies (e.g., EIT), either through direct management or indirect management. Programme activities are selected by excellence, impact and quality, and efficiency of implementation through open calls for proposals.</p>	
Volume and type of funding	Targeted beneficiaries
<p>The total budget of the programme amounts to EUR 95.5 billion, at current prices, including EUR 5.4 billion (plus a reinforcement of EUR 4.5 billion) from NGEU. This budget is subdivided into EUR 25.011 million for Pillar 1; EUR 53.516 million for Pillar 2; EUR 13.597 million for Pillar 3; and EUR 3.393 million for the Horizontal Part.</p> <p>The funding model mainly consists of grants, although the programme framework provides for any of the means of indirect action foreseen in the EU financial regulation²².</p>	<p>Among others, targeted beneficiaries include: universities and research institutes, public administrations, SMEs, NGOs, end-users (e.g. citizens' associations, professional associations), etc.</p>
Eligible projects in the field of aquaculture	
<p>Under Pillar 2, the principal source of funding for aquaculture is through Cluster 6. The latter primarily funds research and innovation projects aimed at transforming the efficiency of production methods and promoting the use of innovations, improving the sustainability of the food system. In addition, projects enhancing climate mitigation and resilience and environmental performance are also eligible. Finally, this cluster also supports projects in line with the EU regulatory and administrative framework, contributing to its</p>	

²² Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union (2018). European Parliament and the Council of the EU <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32018R1046>

HORIZON EUROPE

implementation.

Calls relevant to and inclusive of aquaculture are also hosted through **Clusters 4 and 5**, specifically with regards to digitalisation, satellite technologies and climate issues.

Aquaculture projects contributing to a **zero-emission blue economy** are also eligible under the **EU Mission Restore our Ocean and Water by 2030**.

Key areas of the 'Strategic Guidelines on Sustainable Aquaculture' covered

Horizon Europe contributes to the implementation of the Strategic Guidelines by supporting projects that target the following key areas: regulatory and administrative framework; animal health and public health; climate change adaptation and mitigation; diversification and adding value; environmental performance; animal welfare; data and monitoring; and increasing knowledge and innovation.

Eligibility criteria

Any type of organisation can apply for Horizon Europe funding as long as they have the **operational and financial capacity** to carry out the tasks that they propose. For most calls for proposals, applications must be submitted by a team of **at least 3 partner organisations** from **3 different EU or associated countries**.

Support and technical assistance

- Horizon Europe - Programme Guide: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/programme-guide_horizon_en.pdf
- Horizon Europe Support for applicants: https://rea.ec.europa.eu/horizon-europe-support-applicants_en

Useful links and additional information

- Regulation (EU) 2021/695 establishing Horizon Europe: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/695/oj>
- Council Decision (EU) 2021/764 establishing the Specific Programme implementing Horizon Europe: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec/2021/764/oj>
- Horizon Europe Website: https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe_en
- Work Programmes (2021-2022): https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/wp-call/2021-2022/wp-1-general-introduction_horizon-2021-2022_en.pdf
- Work Programmes (2023-2024): https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/wp-call/2023-2024/wp-1-general-introduction_horizon-2023-2024_en.pdf

Examples of previously funded projects related to aquaculture

Relevant projects funded under Horizon 2020²³ (Horizon Europe's predecessor programme) include:

- ParaFishControl – Advanced Tools and Research Strategies for Parasite Control in European farmed fish: <https://www.parafishcontrol.eu/>

²³ More examples are included in the following report: European Commission, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, Dimitrova, N., Doneva, T., Hranilovic, M., et al., Portfolio analysis: Horizon 2020 aquaculture projects: supporting the implementation of the "Strategic guidelines for a more sustainable and competitive EU aquaculture for the period 2021 to 2030" and the "EU mission restore our ocean and waters by 2030": report on R&I project cluster analysis, Publications Office of the European Union, 2022, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/808507>

HORIZON EUROPE

- MUSES – Exploring the opportunities for Multi-Use in European Seas across five EU sea basins (Baltic Sea, North Sea, Mediterranean Sea, Black Sea and Eastern Atlantic): <https://muses-project.com/>
- PerformFish – Integrating Innovative Approaches for Competitive and Sustainable Performance across the Mediterranean Aquaculture Value Chain: <http://performfish.eu/>

Aquaculture projects funded under Horizon Europe include:

- AntiVirFish – Evaluating the new business opportunity of introducing a new therapeutic antiviral to reduce viral infection and associated economic losses in aquaculture: <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101069282>
- ASPIRE – Developing fast growing seaweed strains to strengthen Europe’s potential to thrive in an emerging seaweed aquaculture industry: <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101066815>

Aquaculture projects funded under Horizon Europe-Cluster 6 include:

- Cure4Aqua – enhancing aquatic animal health and welfare and promoting the environmentally friendly, inclusive, safe and healthy seafood production to improve the EU aquaculture resilience: <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101084204>
- IGNITION – Improving Green Innovation for the blue revolution: new tools and opportunities for a more sustainable animal farming: <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101084651>
- OrganicTargets4EU– support for the EU Farm to Fork Strategy’s objective of increasing organic farming in the UE: <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101060368>
- SeaMark – expanding circular ocean seaweed cultivation and land-based integrated multi-trophic aquaculture (IMTA) systems and developing novel processing methods involving fermentation and biotransformation within twelve innovative seaweed-based products: <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101060379>

Aquaculture projects funded under Horizon Europe – EU Mission “Restore our Ocean and Waters” include:

- PERP4BLUE– enabling a successful first phase (2022-2025) of the Mission by developing the co-creation and co-implementation R&I modalities to achieve the Mission's objectives and engage citizens and stakeholders: <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101056957>

2.4 European Innovation Council (EIC)

EUROPEAN INNOVATION COUNCIL (EIC)

Description

The European Innovation Council (EIC) is the EU's flagship innovation programme established under the Horizon Europe framework to **identify, develop, and scale up** technologies and transformative innovations. The EIC consist of three funding schemes supporting applicants depending on their Technology Readiness Level (TRL):

- **EIC Pathfinder (TRL 1-3)** brings support to the early stages of scientific research, the development and identification of innovative technologies.
- **EIC Transition (TRL 3-5)** drives the development and maturity of technologies and supports the development of business plans for targeted implementations.
- **EIC Accelerator (TRL 6-9)**, considered as the main EIC instrument, funds and invests to develop and scale up game-changing innovations with high risk and impact.

Each scheme is further divided into two subprogrammes: '**Open**' for proposals without predefined thematic priorities and '**Challenge**' for proposals within predefined priorities and objectives.

Type of management

The **EIC Board** is the body responsible for the programmes' governance. Supported by the European Innovation and SME Council Executive Agency (**EISMEA**), they implement the EIC annual work programmes and manage the evaluation and selection process for applications. The fund is driven by experts from the **EIC programme managers** and implemented by the different **EIC Investment Partners** (specifically, in 2022 there is a single partner, the EIC Fund, but from then on, the EIC may work with other partners).

The programme is further implemented through **calls for proposals**, for which applications are continuously ongoing, consisting of up to 4 evaluation deadlines per year.

Volume and type of funding

Total budget amounts to **EUR 10.1 billion** (from Horizon Europe 2021-2027), and is provided under the three different programmes through **grants or investments**:

- Pathfinder provides grants of up to EUR 3 to 4 million;
- Transition funding provides grants of up to EUR 2.5 million;
- Accelerator provides grants of up to EUR 2.5 million and investments of up to EUR 15 million.

Targeted beneficiaries

Target beneficiaries of the funding include different **innovators** (individuals, universities, research organisations) and **companies** (SMEs, start-ups and exceptionally small mid-caps²⁴).

Eligible projects in the field of aquaculture

Aquaculture projects focusing on the **development and application** of innovative and breakthrough **technologies** and conducting **scientific research** within the sector are eligible for funding through any of the calls for proposals under the funding schemes calls.

²⁴ A mid-cap is a category of firm that is larger than the standard definition of SMEs, but smaller than large corporates. It has between 250 and 3000 employees. EIF: <https://www.eib.org/en/cartoons/sme-cartoon-midcaps>

EUROPEAN INNOVATION COUNCIL (EIC)

Objectives of the 'Strategic Guidelines on Sustainable Aquaculture' covered

-  Building resilience and competitiveness
-  Participating in the green transition
-  Ensuring social acceptance and information to the consumer
-  Increasing knowledge and Innovation

The EIC programme contributes mainly to the objective "increasing knowledge and innovation" in the field of aquaculture.

Eligibility criteria

Eligibility criteria are in line with the **Horizon Europe legal base**. Therefore, **any legal entity or international organisation** is eligible to participate, although only applicants **established in a Member State, associated country to Horizon Europe or low/middle-income third country** are eligible for funding.

Requirements differ depending on the funding programme. Further criteria are outlined in each **specific call for proposals**.

Support and technical assistance

- Acces2EIC: <https://access2eic.eu/>
- EIC Investment Guidelines: <https://eic.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-03/220301%20EIC%20Investment%20Guidelines%20-20Horizon%20Europe%20March%202022%20FINAL.pdf>
- FAQ: https://eic.ec.europa.eu/eic-frequently-asked-questions_en#ecl-inpage-348

Useful links and additional information

- EIC Website: https://eic.ec.europa.eu/index_en
- EIC Platform: https://eic.ec.europa.eu/eic-communities/eic-community-platform_en
- EIC Datahub: <https://eic.easme-web.eu/?b=917846690#>

Examples of previously funded projects related to aquaculture

- ALGABOOSTER – Marine microalgae immunostimulant complex contributing to the EU aquaculture sector competitiveness: <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/876643>
- ALGAEPRINT – Algae Products' Internationalization: <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/650549>
- ALGAMATER – Using microalgae bioreactor technology to deliver the world's most cost-effective, energy-efficient and adaptable system for the treatment of toxic industrial and landfill wastewater: <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/767333>

2.5 Programme for Environment and Climate Action (LIFE)

PROGRAMME FOR ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE ACTION (LIFE)	
Description	
<p>The LIFE Programme is the EU's financial instrument for environment and climate action contributing to EU environmental and climate protection. The instrument is implemented through four sub-programmes, which are:</p> <p><i>In the field of 'environment'</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Nature and Biodiversity, funding nature conservation projects in the areas of biodiversity, habitats and species; ii) Circular Economy and Quality of life, supporting environmental sector projects in the area of circular economy, including water management; <p><i>In the field of 'climate action'</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> iii) Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation, aimed at supporting the development and implementation of innovative ways to respond to climate challenges; and iv) Clean Energy Transition, aimed at facilitating the transition towards an energy-efficient, renewable energy-based, climate-neutral and resilient economy. 	
Type of management	
<p>The LIFE programme is directly managed by the European Commission. However, most grants are delegated to CINEA.</p>	
Volume and type of funding	Targeted beneficiaries
<p>The total budget for the 2021-2027 LIFE programme amounts to EUR 5.4 billion. The 2021-2024 Multiannual Work Programme (MAWP) allocates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EUR 1.1 billion to the Nature and Biodiversity sub-programme. The predominant form of funding for this sub-programme is grants (EUR 926,69 million), of different nature and volume²⁵. • EUR 697.54 million to the Circular Economy and Quality of Life sub-programme, mainly in the form of grants (EUR 599.29 million) of different nature and volume²⁶. • EUR 505.52 million to the Climate mitigation and adaptation sub-programme, mainly in the form of grants (EUR 419,07 million) of different nature and volume²⁷. • EUR 527.08 million to the Clean Energy transition sub-programme, mainly in the form of grants (EUR 412,22 million) of different nature and volume²⁸. 	<p>Targeted beneficiaries of the LIFE programme include private enterprises; NGOs and civil society organisations; and public authorities.</p>

²⁵ SAPs (EUR 547,77 million), SNAPs (EUR 280 million), TAPs (EUR 15,42 million), OAs (EUR 55,50 million), and Operating grants (EUR 28 million).

²⁶ SAPs (EUR 350,3 million), SIPs (EUR 210,7 million), TAPs (EUR 13,28 million), OAs (EUR 19 million), and Operating grants (EUR 6 million).

²⁷ SAPs (EUR 280,44 million), SIPs (EUR 125 million), TAPs (EUR 2.85 million), OAs (EUR 0.30 million), and Operating grants (EUR 10.48 million).

²⁸ SAPs (EUR 20,50 million), TAPs (EUR 1.60 million), OAs (EUR 379.12 million), and Operating grants (EUR 11 million).

PROGRAMME FOR ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE ACTION (LIFE)

Other forms of funding such as **procurement, prizes and blending operations** are also possible.

Generally, the maximum **co-financing rate** for LIFE projects (SAPs, SNAPs, SIPs, and TAPs) shall not exceed 60% of total eligible costs. Some exceptions apply for SAPs, for which the rate could reach up to 75% under specific conditions, as well as for TAPs (up to 95% under specific conditions). The co-financing rate shall not exceed 95% for OAs (100% under specific conditions) and 70% for operating grants.

Eligible projects in the field of aquaculture

Eligible investments in the field of aquaculture under 'Nature and Biodiversity sub-programme' are those that fall under **at least one of the two following areas of intervention with clearly defined specific outcome-based biodiversity-related objectives**:

- '**Space for nature**' projects that aim to improve the condition of species and habitats through area-based conservation or restoration measures;
- '**Safeguarding our species**' projects that aim to improve the condition of species (or, in the case of invasive alien species, reducing their impact) through any relevant activities other than area-based conservation or restoration measures.

AND that address **at least one of the following policy priorities**:

- Contribution to the implementation of the **EU Birds²⁹ and Habitats³⁰ directives**; as well as to the development of **Natura 2000 network³¹** and the **Invasive Alien Species Regulation³²**;
- Achievement of the objectives and targets of the **EU's Green Deal's biodiversity strategy for 2030³³**.

Aquaculture projects are also eligible for investments under the 'Circular Economy and Quality of Life sub-programme', particularly those addressing **water quality** and **marine and coastal water management** to ensure the preservation of seas and oceans while promoting sustainable human activities within the aquatic environment.

In addition, aquaculture-related projects delivering **nature-based solutions or climate services** in the management of coastal and marine areas through assessments, guidance, capacity building, and suitable financial approaches and products, are also eligible for investment under the '**Climate Mitigation and Adaptation**' sub-programme.

Key areas of the 'Strategic Guidelines on Sustainable Aquaculture' covered

The LIFE programme contributes in particular to the key areas "environmental performance" of the EU aquaculture sector and "climate change adaptation and mitigation".

²⁹ Directive 2009/147/EU on the conservation of wild birds (2009). European Parliament and Council of the EU <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32009L0147>

³⁰ Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (1992). Council of the EU <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A31992L0043>

³¹ Natura 2000 Network. European Commission: https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/index_en.htm

³² Regulation (EU) No 1143/2014 on the prevention and management of the introduction and spread of invasive alien species (2014). European Parliament and Council of the EU https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/index_en.htm

³³ Biodiversity Strategy 2030 (2020). European Commission https://environment.ec.europa.eu/strategy/biodiversity-strategy-2030_en

PROGRAMME FOR ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE ACTION (LIFE)

Eligibility criteria

Eligible beneficiaries of the LIFE Programme include:

- Public or private legal entities registered in the EU or an OCT linked to it;
- Non-EU countries associated with the LIFE programme;
- A legal entity created under EU law or any international organisation;
- Exceptionally, legal entities established in a third country that is not associated with the LIFE programme where their participation is necessary for the achievement of the objectives of a given action. These shall, in principle, bear the cost of their application.

Natural persons are not eligible to apply.

The **maximum eligibility period** per grant is 10 years for SAPs and OAs; 14 for SNAPs; 5 for TAPs and 3 years for operating grants.

Support and technical assistance

- Get in touch with your national contact points for the programme: https://cinea.ec.europa.eu/programmes/life/life-european-countries_en
- Guidelines: https://cinea.ec.europa.eu/programmes/life/contract-and-financial-aspects_en#guidelines
- Frequently asked questions: https://cinea.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-09/FAQs_LIFE2022_2209.pdf

Useful links and additional information

- Regulation (EU) 2021/783 establishing a Programme for the Environment and Climate Action (LIFE): <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32021R0783>
- LIFE Multi-annual work programme for 2021-2024: https://cinea.ec.europa.eu/programmes/life/life-legal-basis/life-multiannual-work-programme-2021-2024_en
- List of Priority Topics for 2021-2024: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/life/wp-call/2021-2024/priority-topics_life-2021-2024_en.pdf
- LIFE project database: <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/life/publicWebsite/index.cfm>

Examples of previously funded projects related to aquaculture

Examples of aquaculture projects funded under the LIFE Programme include:

- REMEDIA – Remediation of marine environment and development of innovative aquaculture: exploitation of edible/not edible biomass: <https://remedialife.eu/>
- BREWERY – New strategies for improving the sustainability of breweries: full waste recovery for aquaculture feed: <https://lifebrewery.azti.es/>
- AQUAPEF – Promote the effective implementation of the Product Environmental Footprint in the Mediterranean aquaculture sector: <https://lifeaquapef.eu/>
- LIFE MUSCLES – Life MUSsel Sustainable production (re)cyCLES: <http://www.lifemuscles.eu/>

2.6 European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)

EUROPEAN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUND (ERDF)	
Description	
<p>In the framework of the EU Cohesion Policy³⁴, the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) invests in a smarter, greener, more connected, and more social Europe, closer to its citizens. The overall objective for the period 2021-2027 is to balance and strengthen the economic, social and territorial cohesion of the EU regions.</p> <p>Under the ERDF, the Interreg programmes aim at supporting cooperation projects between regions and countries that boost their economic and social development and tackle common challenges to find shared solutions in a wide range of areas. For the period 2021-2027, Interreg programmes will continue to support cross-border mobility and efforts to develop environmental protection, emergency services, skilled jobs and access to public services for the EU's next generation.</p> <p>On the other side, the ERDF-funded Interregional Innovation Investment (I3) instrument aims to promote interregional collaboration among innovation ecosystems coming from all European regions, focusing on close-to-market innovation projects. It offers financial and advisory support for projects under shared smart specialisation priorities (S3) in the following thematic areas: green transition, digital transition and smart manufacturing.</p>	
Type of management	
<p>The EU Cohesion Policy is implemented through different specific funds, including the ERDF. The majority of ERDF funding programmes are managed under the shared responsibility³⁵ of the European Commission and the national/regional authorities of each Member State. In this case, Member States' administrations are responsible for the selection of projects to fund and for day-to-day management.</p> <p>Interreg programmes are implemented under shared management between the European Commission and the Managing Authority (located in one of the Member States participating in the programme). The Managing Authority is assisted by a joint secretariat, which is also the main contact point for applicants and project partners. However, it is possible for outermost regions' cooperation to be implemented under indirect management. Specific rules should be set out on how to implement those programmes as a whole or partially under indirect management.</p> <p>The European Commission Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO) implements the I3 Instrument under direct and indirect management by the European Innovation Council and SME executive agency (EISMEA).</p>	
Volume and type of funding	Targeted beneficiaries
<p>The ERDF budget amounts to EUR 226.05 billion. Budget of specific programmes under ERDF is the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interreg benefits from EUR 8 billion of the total ERDF budget plus EUR 2 billion of external financing instruments³⁶. The fund is provided in the form of 	<p>Targeted beneficiaries of the ERDF are public bodies, some private sector organisations (such as SMEs and large companies in well-justified specific cases), universities, associations, NGOs and voluntary organisations.</p>

³⁴ EU Cohesion Policy: https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/what/investment-policy/

³⁵ Exceptions include the I3 and the European Urban Initiative, which are implemented by the Commission in direct and indirect management.

³⁶ The contribution from the ERDF to external cross-border Interreg programmes is also supported from the financial envelope allocated under the Instrument for Pre-Accession III to cross-border cooperation (IPA III CBC) or from the financial envelope allocated under the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe to cross-border cooperation for the Neighbourhood geographic area (NDICI CBC).

EUROPEAN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUND (ERDF)

grants, financial instruments, or prizes, or a combination of these. Interreg programmes have a co-financing rate of up to 80%, although there are higher co-financing rates for Interreg D programmes and external cross-border cooperation programmes.

- The **I3 instrument** receives a total of **EUR 570 million** in current prices from the ERDF total budget. It is provided mainly in the form of **grants**.

Eligible projects in the field of aquaculture

Research and innovation projects in the **aquaculture sector** are eligible for ERDF funding if they fall under the scope of the smart specialisation strategies of the regions or countries. Local authorities call for aquaculture-related projects adapted to their specific needs for the sector. In particular, Interreg-funded projects **address issues that extend beyond national boundaries** in different fields, including the environment, supporting projects that address **problems of pollution, use of resources or biodiversity loss** and that promote **sustainable management models, capacity building and exchange of experience**, particularly between public authorities.

The I3 instrument funds aquaculture-related projects addressing **climate change and environmental challenges** leading to the achievement of the 2050 climate neutrality objective; and supports investments in **innovative value chain, green technology, clean energy, sustainable food systems, sustainable industry and transport**.

In addition, in 2022, the Commission approved the establishment of a **Smart Specialisation Platform for the Blue Economy** within which aquaculture innovation actions will be supported.

Key areas of the 'Strategic Guidelines on Sustainable Aquaculture' covered

Through Interreg and I3, the ERDF programme contributes to the implementation of the Strategic Guidelines by supporting projects that target climate change adaptation and mitigation; diversification and adding value; environmental performance; integration in local communities; and increasing knowledge and innovation.

Eligibility criteria

With the exception of the I3 instrument, eligibility **requirements** for ERDF are **set by each national managing authority**. Candidate projects must meet the selection criteria of the call established by the region under which they present their application.

Interreg programmes require participants to be **located in an area covered by the specific programme** (e.g. Atlantic Area Interreg Programme) and the **joint participation of partners from different countries** targeted by the specific programmes. More criteria are established depending on the strand and content set out in each specific programme.

The I3 Instrument is available to **legal entities** established in an **EU Member State, including OCTs**. Legal entities from third countries may participate, although they are not eligible for funding. The maturity of innovation projects applying for funding must be a **Technology Readiness Level (TRL) 6-9**. Applicants can participate under a **consortium** (having specific selection criteria depending on the strand).

Support and technical assistance

- Interregional Innovation Investments (I3): <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/programmes/i3>
- ERDF contacts: <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/find-funding/eu-funding->

EUROPEAN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUND (ERDF)

[programmes/european-regional-development-fund-erdf_en#contact](#)

Useful links and additional information

- Regulation (EU) 2021/1058 of the European Parliament on the European Regional Development Fund and on the Cohesion Fund: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/1058/2021-06-30>³⁷
- Regulation (EU) 2021/1059 of the European Parliament and of the Council on specific provisions for the European territorial cooperation goal (Interreg) supported by the ERDF and external financing instruments: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/1059/oj>
- Cohesion Policy budget allocation (2021-2027): <https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/stories/s/2021-2027-EU-allocations-available-for-programming/2w8s-ci3y/>
- Websites:
- ERDF: https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/funding/erdf/
- Interreg: https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/policy/cooperation/european-territorial_en
- I3: https://eisma.ec.europa.eu/programmes/interregional-innovation-investments-i3-instrument_en
- Smart Specialisation Platform: <https://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/sustainable-blue-economy>
- I3 Instrument Work Programme (2021-2022): https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/tender/pdf/official/2021-2022_financing_decision_i3.pdf
- ERDF Planned Finances and Achievements: <https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/funds/erdf/21-27>
- Interreg Planned Finances and Achievements: <https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/funds/interreg/21-27>

Examples of previously funded projects related to aquaculture

Examples of aquaculture projects financed by the EU's ERDF through Interreg programmes:

- ACUAENERGY – Improving aquaculture plants' competitiveness through environmentally and economically sustainable energy solutions: <https://keep.eu/projects/26034/Improving-the-competitivene-EN/>
- Baltic Blue Growth – Demonstration of the environmental and economic benefits of blue mussel farming to extend the practice in the Baltic Sea region: https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/projects/Denmark/baltic-blue-growth-shows-how-mussel-farming-is-good-for-business-and-the-environment-thanks-to-interreg
- FANBEST – Creation of a network of public and private entities focused on fundraising to promote technology transfer to SMEs in blue biotechnology and exploitation of marine resources and to facilitate the start-up and scaling-up phase: <https://fanbest.eu/>
- MACBIOBLUE – Study of the potential to diversify the uses of algae (e. g. as fertilisers, pharmaceuticals, or fish feed): https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/projects/Spain/macaronesia-brings-algae-to-the-forefront-of-economic-development
- PLASMAR – Smart solutions to enable the expansion of maritime sectors ensuring maritime conservation in the Azores, Madeira and the Canary Islands: https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/projects/Portugal/plasmar-balancing-maritime-development-and-conservation-in-macaronesia

³⁷ Article 13 establishes the Interregional Innovation Investments.

2.7 Erasmus+

ERASMUS+	
<p>Description</p> <p>The Erasmus+ programme is responsible for supporting the main activities carried out in the fields of European education, the digital education action plan³⁸, and the European skills agenda³⁹. In addition to offering grants, Erasmus+ also supports teaching, research, networking, and policy debate on EU issues.</p> <p>There are three key actions that are being carried out to achieve the programme's objectives: i) learning mobility; ii) cooperation among organisations and institutions; and iii) support for policy development and cooperation.</p> <p>The objectives are also pursued through Jean Monnet actions⁴⁰, which support teaching, learning, research, and debates on European integration matters, including on the EU's future challenges and opportunities.</p>	
<p>Type of management</p> <p>Erasmus+ is managed directly by the European Commission which is the ultimately responsible for the development of the programme, and its implementation is carried out through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The direct management of the Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC). Concerning the parts of the programme relating to skills and qualifications policy, adult learning and vocational education and training, it cooperates with the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL), and with the Education, Audio-visual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) for indirect centralised management. • The indirect management via the Erasmus+ National Agencies. These agencies help to bring the programme closer to its target audience, to consider the diversity of national education systems and to better align European and national priorities. The responsibility for supervising and coordinating these agencies lies with the DG EAC. 	
<p>Volume and type of funding</p> <p>The total amount of the budget for the Erasmus+ programme during the period 2021-2027 is of EUR 26.2 billion, complemented by around EUR 2.2 billion from EU external cooperation instrument⁴¹.</p> <p>From this financial envelope, 70% supports mobility opportunities in a lifelong learning perspective.</p> <p>The remaining 30% is invested in cooperation projects and policy development activities, allowing organisations to gain experience in international cooperation, strengthen their capacities, produce innovative approaches, exchange of good practices and network.</p>	<p>Targeted beneficiaries</p> <p>There are two main beneficiaries of the Erasmus+ Programme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals through organisations, institutions, bodies and groups that articulate activities related to education and youth, social inclusion, culture, health and well-being, environmental sustainability and skills and employability. • Organisations (including

³⁸ Digital Education Action Plan (2021-2027). European Commission: <https://education.ec.europa.eu/focus-topics/digital-education/action-plan>

³⁹ European Skills Agenda (2020). European Union: <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1223&langId=en#:~:text=The%20European%20Skills%20Agenda%20is%20a%20five-year%20plan,on%20the%20lessons%20learnt%20during%20the%20COVID-19%20pandemic>

⁴⁰ Jean Monnet Actions (2022). European Commission: <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/programme-guide/part-b/jean-monnet-actions>

⁴¹ Neighborhood, Development and Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) and the Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA III)

ERASMUS+

The financing mechanism applied under the Erasmus+ programme in most cases provides **grants** based on the reimbursement on the basis of unit costs or lump sums.

informal and autonomous groups).

Eligible projects in the field of aquaculture

Erasmus+ supports aquaculture-related projects aimed at:

- Improving the **professional skills and competences**, including of the EU aquaculture workforce, as well as to develop their capacity and knowledge and assist in their exchange of lessons and best practices.
- Fostering **international cooperation** between aquaculture organisations and institutions leading to the development, transfer and/or implementation of innovative practices and high-quality skills.
- Promoting the **integration of green practices and support measures** through the development of knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to make the sector more sustainable.

Key areas of the 'Strategic Guidelines on Sustainable Aquaculture' covered

Erasmus+ contributes to the implementation of the Strategic Guidelines by supporting projects that target climate change adaptation and mitigation; environmental performance; animal welfare; and increasing knowledge and innovation.

Eligibility criteria

Interested parties can participate in the Erasmus+ programme as an **individual** or as an **organisation** (both must belong to EU member states or countries associated to the Programme). In case of individual applicants, the latter must apply through an organisation (e.g. university, training centre, company).

For most Actions, the organisation must be established in a Programme Country (EU Member States or a short list of other Programme Countries). However, other Actions are also accessible to groups from other countries not associated to the Programme.

Support and technical assistance

- The Erasmus+ Programme Guide: https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2022-01/2022-erasmusplus-programme-guide-v2_en_0.pdf
- Erasmus+ FAQ: <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/projects/faqs>
- Erasmus+ contact point: <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/contacts>

Useful links and additional information

- Regulation (EU) 2021/817 establishing Erasmus+: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/817>
- Erasmus+ website: <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/>
- Funding opportunities under the Erasmus+ programme: <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/funding>
- List of Erasmus+ programme countries: <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/programme-guide/part-a/eligible-countries>
- 2022 Erasmus+ Annual Work Programme: <https://www.erasmustrainingcourses.com/erasmus-annual-work-programme.html>
- 2023 Erasmus+ Annual Work Programme: <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-annual-work-programme-2023>

plus.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2022-08/2023-erasmus-annual-work-programme-c2022-6002_en.pdf

Examples of previously funded projects related to aquaculture

Examples of aquaculture projects funded under Erasmus+ include:

- Innovative Aquaculture quality Vocational Education and Training (VET) professional program for development and sharing of Skills, Knowledge and Best Practice within fish farming companies: <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/projects/search/details/2018-1-NO01-KA204-038849>
- BlueEDU – Fostering growth in the Blue Economy by developing an action plan for Innovative European Aquaculture VET and Harmonized qualifications: <https://www.stimuli.no/content/blueedu>
- MATES – Maritime Alliance for fostering the European Blue economy through a Marine Technology Skilling Strategy: <https://www.projectmates.eu/>
- EWEAS – Energy and water efficiency in the aquaculture sector is an e-training module on energy and water efficiency in aquaculture which includes aspects such as the design of renewable energy and its location: <https://eweasproject.eu/>

2.8 Innovation Fund (IF)

INNOVATION FUND (IF)	
Description	
<p>The Innovation Fund (IF) provides funding for the commercial demonstration of innovative low-carbon technologies, aiming to provide market industrial solutions to decarbonise Europe and support its transition to climate neutrality.</p> <p>The overall goal of the funding programme is to support clean energy business and to promote economic growth, and for that commitment the IF incentivises investment in the next generation of technology, improves competitiveness by empowering companies with a first-mover advantage to become global leaders in innovative clean technologies and promotes low-carbon technology in all Member States.</p>	
Type of management	
<p>The general management of the programme is executed by the European Commission, supported by two implementing bodies: CINEA is responsible for calls for proposals, evaluations, grant preparation, signatures and regular monitoring of projects; and the European Investment Bank (EIB) offers project development assistance. Other actors are actively involved, such as DG Climate Action, the EU Emissions Trading System (ETS)⁴² and Member States.</p> <p>The programme is implemented through calls for proposals. IF funding can be combined with different sources of funding, including other funds (i.e. InvestEU, Horizon Europe); national research and innovation support programmes for low-carbon technologies; and private capital.</p>	
Volume and type of funding	Targeted beneficiaries
<p>The IF provides EUR 38 billion (at EUR 75 / tCO₂), depending on the carbon price⁴³.</p> <p>The funding is provided mainly in the form of grants.</p>	<p>Target beneficiaries are public and private entities that can apply individually (e.g. SMEs and mid-caps) and in consortia from European Economic Area (EEA) Member States.</p>
Eligible projects in the field of aquaculture	
<p>Aquaculture investments focusing on the development of highly innovative technologies or large flagship projects with the potential to achieve significant emission reductions in the sector, generate further low-carbon investments in Member States and provide innovative low-carbon solutions leading to carbon reduction in aquaculture, are eligible for funding under this programme. These include projects promoting clean energy and technologies for the sector, contributing to pollution prevention and to a circular and green economy, and stimulating the creation of aquaculture-related jobs.</p>	

⁴² EU ETS. European Commission https://climate.ec.europa.eu/eu-action/eu-emissions-trading-system-eu-ets_en

⁴³ An instrument that captures the external costs of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions—the costs of emissions that the public pays for, such as damage to crops, health care costs from heat waves and droughts, and loss of property from flooding and sea level rise—and ties them to their sources through a price, usually in the form of a price on the carbon dioxide (CO₂) emitted. A price on carbon helps shift the burden for the damage from GHG emissions back to those who are responsible for it and who can avoid it. World Bank <https://carbonpricingdashboard.worldbank.org/what-carbon-pricing>

INNOVATION FUND (IF)

Key areas of the 'Strategic Guidelines on Sustainable Aquaculture' covered

IF contributes to the implementation of the Strategic Guidelines by supporting projects that target climate change adaptation and mitigation; environmental performance; and increasing knowledge and innovation through promoting the use of innovative clean technologies.

Eligibility criteria

Projects must be located on the territory of **one or more EU Member States, Norway or Iceland**, and fall within one of the following categories: i) Energy intensive industries; ii) Innovative renewables; iii) Energy storage; and iv) Carbon capture, use and storage.

Support and technical assistance

- Project Development Assistance: https://climate.ec.europa.eu/eu-action/funding-climate-action/innovation-fund/project-development-assistance_en
- National contact points: https://climate.ec.europa.eu/eu-action/funding-climate-action/innovation-fund/national-contact-points_en
- IF FAQ: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/MEMO_19_1416

Useful links and additional information

- Regulation (EU) 2019/856 supplementing Directive 2003/87/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council with regard to the operation of the Innovation Fund: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:02019R0856-20210811>
- Funding & tender opportunities: <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/programmes/innovfund>
- Innovation Fund Website: https://climate.ec.europa.eu/eu-action/funding-climate-action/innovation-fund_en
- Innovation Fund Project Portfolio: <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/dashboard/sense/app/e32ef3f5-0e0e-4be3-8f14-8e2fb5a20aa7/overview>

Examples of previously funded projects related to aquaculture

Examples of projects funded under the Innovation Fund (not specifically related to aquaculture), include:

- CO2-FraMed – Free Agriculture for the Mediterranean region: https://climate.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-07/if_pf_2021_co2-framed_en.pdf
- GREENMOTRIL – Development and operation of a green energy community in the port of Motril: https://climate.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-07/if_pf_2021_greenmotril_en.pdf
- Aquilon – Airborne wind hybrid renewable microgrid with redox flow battery to provide flat renewable energy to an industrial site: https://climate.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-07/if_pf_2021_aquilon_en.pdf

2.9 European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)

EUROPEAN AGRICULTURAL FUND FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT (EAFRD)

Description

The **European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)** is one of the two funding programmes that supports the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and contributes to the **development of rural areas** by strengthening their social, environmental, and economic sustainability. This funding programme finances projects and national and regional programmes that aim to:

- Increase the **competitiveness** of the agricultural sector;
- Ensure **sustainable management of natural resources and climate action**; and
- Achieve a **balanced territorial development** of rural economies and communities.

Type of management

The EAFRD is **shared-managed** between the European Commission, through the **Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development (DG AGRI)** and the national authorities of each **EU Member State**. For each seven-year programming period, each Member State sets out in its national CAP strategic plan the implementation of EAFRD at the national and regional levels. Member State authorities are also responsible for choosing which of the projects submitted in **calls for proposals or calls for tenders** will receive support from EAFRD. The Commission monitors implementation, reimburses expenditures and is responsible for the budget, acquiring a supervisory role.

Volume and type of funding

The EAFRD total budget amounts to **EUR 95.51 billion** of which 8.07 billion come from NGEU funds (current prices). This budget is allocated from the CAPS's total budget of EUR 386.6 billion. The EAFRD works under a **co-financing basis**, which rates vary between regions and may also vary according to the type of intervention.

The EAFRD funding is provided in the form of **grants, loans, microcredits, guarantees and equities**.

Targeted beneficiaries

The EAFRD is available to different kinds of recipients, ranging from **farmers to public authorities, economic and social partners, local action groups, and relevant bodies representing civil society**.

Eligible projects in the field of aquaculture

Provided that support to the aquaculture sector is provided in the national CAP strategic plan of the Member State concerned, enterprises and projects in **the aquaculture sector that promote sustainable development of farming, food and the socio-economic development of rural areas** could be eligible for receiving support under the EAFRD. In particular, eligible investment projects in the aquaculture sector are mainly those that:

- Contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation;
- Promote the efficient management of natural resources such as water;
- Preserve ecosystems;
- Create employment;
- Respond to social demands in terms of food and health, including high-quality, safe and nutritious food produced in a sustainable way;
- Reduce food waste and improve animal welfare and combat animal welfare; and
- Promote innovation and digitisation of the sector.

EUROPEAN AGRICULTURAL FUND FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT (EAFRD)

Key areas of the 'Strategic Guidelines on Sustainable Aquaculture' covered

The national strategic plans of the CAP can contribute to various areas of the Strategic Guidelines. From 2023 onwards, at least 35% of funds will be spent on measures to support climate, biodiversity, environment, and animal health and welfare. Other areas such as integration in local communities and increase of knowledge and innovation are also covered.

Eligibility criteria

As the EAFRD is not allocated directly by the European Commission, the eligibility criteria are **established by each national authority** in its national CAP strategic plan.

Support and technical assistance

- DG AGRI: https://ec.europa.eu/info/departments/agriculture-and-rural-development_en
- Fi-compass-EAFRD: <https://www.fi-compass.eu/funds/eafrd>
- Calls for tenders: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/find-calls-tender/tender-opportunities-department/tender-opportunities-agriculture-and-rural-development_en
- Methodological handbook for implementing an ex-ante assessment of agriculture financial instruments under the EAFRD: https://www.fi-compass.eu/sites/default/files/publications/209775_EAFRD_EXANTE_ASSESSMENT_HANDBOOK_0.pdf

Useful links and additional information

- EAFRD annual financial reports: https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/common-agricultural-policy/financing-cap/cap-funds/eafrd-reports_en
- EAFRD Website: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/find-funding/eu-funding-programmes/european-agricultural-fund-rural-development-eafrd_en
- Regulation (EU) 1305/2013 on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD): <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2013/1305/2022-06-30>
- Regulation (EU) 2021/2115 establishing rules on support for strategic plans to be drawn up by Member States under the common agricultural policy (CAP Strategic Plans) and financed by the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF) and the EAFRD: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021R2115&qid=1644405605719&from=en>

Examples of previously funded projects related to aquaculture

Aquaculture projects funded by the EAFRD:

- Aquaponics – Using innovative production techniques, such as aquaponics, to increase food production while minimising the environmental impact: https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/aquaponics-greenhouse-innovative-food-production_es
- The Circle – Moving from zero impact to a positive impact through aquaponics to ensure a high-quality sustainable food production: https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/circle-zero-impact-positive-impact_es

2.10 European Social Fund (ESF+)

EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND (ESF+)	
Description	
<p>As one part of cohesion policy, ESF+ supports economic, territorial and social cohesion in the EU, fostering the reduction of disparities between Member States and regions. The fund is also one of the key EU instruments to support EU Member States dealing with the socio-economic, ecological, digital and resilient recovery from the coronavirus pandemic by investing in jobs, skills and services.</p> <p>The European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) combines four funds that were separate in the previous programming period (2014-2020): the European Social Fund (ESF), the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD), the Youth Employment Initiative and the European Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI).</p> <p>The ESF+ investment scope covers labour market access, skilled workforce, vocational training, disadvantaged groups and social inclusion.</p>	
Type of management	
<p>The ESF+ is shared-managed between the European Commission and the national/regional authorities of each EU Member State. For each seven-year programming period, the Commission and the Member States jointly establish the key ESF+ investment priorities, which are set out in national or regional programmes. Thereafter, the Member States allocate the funding and are responsible for the implementation of the organised action, while the Commission monitors implementation, reimburses expenditures and is responsible for the budget, acquiring a supervisory role.</p>	
Volume and type of funding	Targeted beneficiaries
<p>ESF+ total budget amounts to EUR 99 billion provided through grants, financial instruments (e.g. loans, guarantees, equity or quasi-equity), prizes, or a combination of them. Depending on the area of investment and the level of development of the programme's region, the ESF+ programme's co-financing rate varies between 50% and 95%.</p>	<p>Targeted beneficiaries depend on the criteria set by the managing authorities in each country or region, although SMEs, large enterprises, research organisations, public authorities, NGOs, and civil society organisations are usually the potential beneficiaries.</p>
Eligible projects in the field of aquaculture	
<p>The projects funded by the ESF+ are defined by each Member State managing authority. However, aquaculture projects investing in education programmes and initiatives, adult workforce reskilling, initiatives for young people (particularly labour market access), labour market access for disadvantaged or marginalised groups, access to services (in particular for disadvantaged groups), material support, studies, and networking, cooperation and the exchange of experiences, are generally supported by the ESF+.</p>	
Objectives of the 'Strategic Guidelines on Sustainable Aquaculture' covered	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Building resilience and competitiveness
	<input type="checkbox"/> Participating in the green transition
	<input type="checkbox"/> Ensuring social acceptance and information to the consumer

EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND (ESF+)



- ☑ Increasing knowledge and Innovation

ESF+ contributes to the implementation of the Strategic Guidelines by supporting the increase of knowledge and innovation in the sector through, inter alia, education and skills development.

Eligibility criteria

Eligibility criteria are decided by the **managing authorities** according to their **national rules**. Each programme, therefore, has its eligibility criteria defining (i) the time period, (ii) the scope of intervention, (iii) the cost categories, (iv) the geographical location of operations, (v) the sustainability of operations, and (vi) the types of beneficiaries.

Support and technical assistance

- Funding and tender opportunities: <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/programmes/esf>
- Support by Member State: <https://ec.europa.eu/european-social-fund-plus/en/support-your-country>
- Fi-compass-ESF+: <https://www.fi-compass.eu/funds/esfplus#anchor-2021>

Useful links and additional information

- Regulation (EU) 2021/1057 of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1296/2013: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/1057/oj>
- ESF+ website: <https://ec.europa.eu/european-social-fund-plus/en>
- ESF+ Planned Finances and Achievements: https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/funds/esf_plus/21-27

Examples of previously funded projects related to aquaculture

- Internship and Employment: <https://ec.europa.eu/esf/main.jsp?catId=46&langId=en&projectId=3280>

2.11 Modernisation Fund (MF)

MODERNISATION FUND (MF)	
Description	
<p>The Modernisation Fund (MF) is the European Union's programme supporting the ten lowest-income Member States to modernise their energy systems and achieve energy efficiency to meet the 2030 climate and energy targets. This fund is a key element of the European Green Deal Investment Plan and, therefore, contributes to the EU's transition to climate neutrality, increases energy security, improves the financing of renewable energy resources, promotes the exchange of best practices, and leads to a greener and cleaner economy and energy sector.</p>	
Type of management	
<p>As foreseen in the Emissions Trading System (ETS) Directive⁴⁴, the beneficiary Member States are responsible for the MF management and implementation. However, the EIB, the Investment Committee and the European Commission support them.</p> <p>Member States select the investments and submit them to the Investment Committee, the EIB and the EC. The EIB decides whether an investment is a priority or non-priority, manages the assets of the fund and provides the resources to the Member States. Finally, the EC and the Investment Committee take a disbursement decision on priority and non-priority investments respectively.</p> <p>The MF allows co-financing from private and public entities, as well as the use of resources such as national funds and/or European instruments (e.g., InvestEU, Connecting Europe Facility, European Structural Investment funds and Just Transition Fund).</p>	
Volume and type of funding	Targeted beneficiaries
<p>For the period from 2021 to 2030, the MF total budget amounts to EUR 48 billion at EUR 75/TCO₂, provided in the form of grants, premiums, guarantee instruments, loans or capital injections, according to the beneficiary Member States' choice.</p>	<p>The MF targeted beneficiaries are the ten lower-income EU Member States: Bulgaria, Czechia, Estonia, Croatia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia.</p>
Eligible projects in the field of aquaculture	
<p>The Modernisation Fund can provide support to aquaculture projects related, in particular, to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Priority investments corresponding to at least one of the following areas: renewable energy, energy efficiency (including in transport, buildings, agriculture, and waste), energy storage, energy networks and/or just transition in carbon-dependent regions (including support for the redeployment, reskilling and upskilling of workers, for education, for job-seeking initiatives and start-ups, and in dialogue with social partners).• Non-priority investments do not belong to any of the above areas but meet the objectives of the Modernisation Fund and demonstrate a decrease in greenhouse gas emissions.	

⁴⁴ Directive 2003/87/EC establishing a scheme for greenhouse gas emission allowance trading within the Community (2003). European Parliament and the Council of the European Union <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32003L0087>

MODERNISATION FUND (MF)

Key areas of the 'Strategic Guidelines on Sustainable Aquaculture' covered

MF contributes to the implementation of the Strategic Guidelines by supporting projects that target climate change adaptation and mitigation; environmental performance; and increasing knowledge and innovation.

Eligibility criteria

To be eligible for MF opportunities, the beneficiary Member State must:

- Prove that its investments meet the requirements of the Modernisation Fund as set out in the ETS Directive and the Implementing Regulation. It also must comply with the State aid rules and with any other applicable requirements of Union and national law.
- Have enough funds in its Modernisation Fund account.
- Demonstrate that there is no double funding of the same costs with another Union or national instrument.

Support and technical assistance

- Assessment Guidance Document: <https://modernisationfund.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Assessment-Guidance-Document-plus-Appendix-1-and-2-for-publication.pdf>
- FAQ: <https://modernisationfund.eu/faq/>
- Guidance and support: <https://modernisationfund.eu/contact/>

Useful links and additional information

- Regulation (EU) 2020/1001 laying down detailed rules for the application of Directive 2003/87/EC as regards the operation of the Modernisation Fund supporting investments to modernise the energy systems and to improve energy efficiency of certain Member States: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg_impl/2020/1001/oj
- MF website: <https://modernisationfund.eu/>
- MF on the European Commission website: https://climate.ec.europa.eu/eu-action/funding-climate-action/modernisation-fund_en#ecl-inpage-1555
- Annual Reports by beneficiary Member States: <https://modernisationfund.eu/governance/member-states/>

2.12 Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF)

RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE FACILITY (RRF)	
Description	
<p>The Recovery and Resilience Facility is the key instrument at the heart of NextGenerationEU, which aims to mitigate the economic and social impact of the coronavirus pandemic and make European economies and societies more sustainable, resilient and better prepared for the challenges and opportunities of the green and digital transitions. The Facility is a temporary recovery instrument. It allows the Commission to raise funds to help Member States implement reforms and investments that are in line with the EU's priorities and that address the challenges identified in country-specific recommendations under the European Semester framework of economic and social policy coordination.</p>	
Type of management	
<p>The Recovery Facility is a direct management instrument. Disbursements are therefore made on the basis of compliance with a series of pre-determined Milestones and Targets set out in the Council Implementing Decisions (CIDs) for the National Recovery and Resilience Plans (NRRPs).</p>	
Volume and type of funding	Targeted beneficiaries
<p>The overall budget available under the RRF is EUR 723.8 billion (in current prices) in loans (EUR 385.8 billion) and grants (EUR 338 billion).</p>	<p>Targeted beneficiaries of the Facility are Member States of the European Union.</p>
Eligible projects in the field of aquaculture	
<p>Although the RRF does not necessarily target aquaculture, some Member States, such as Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain, have allocated some investments in the sector in their respective National Recovery and Resilience Plans. These are allocated under the following components:</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cyprus: Component 3.1, Investment 1 'Construction of a collaborative marine aquaculture infrastructure (port and land facilities) in Pentakomo coastal area', and Investment 6 'Scheme for modernisation and digitalisation of enterprises engaged in manufacturing and trading of agricultural products'.• Greece: Component 4.6, Investment 15 'Support for aquaculture' aimed at modernising and improving the resilience of the sector.• Italy: Mission 2, Component 1.2, Investment 2.1 'Logistics development for the agri-food, fisheries and aquaculture sectors, forestry, floriculture and nursery gardening' aimed at improving the sustainability of the supply chain.• Portugal: Component 10, Investment i02 'Green and digital transition and security in fisheries', and Investment i04RAA 'Development of the "Sea Cluster of the Azores"'. • Spain: Component 3 'Environmental and digital transformation of the agri-food and fisheries system' aimed at boosting sustainability, research, innovation and digitalisation of the aquaculture sector.	
Key areas of the 'Strategic Guidelines on Sustainable Aquaculture' covered	
<p>The RRF contributes to the implementation of the Strategic Guidelines by supporting projects that target climate change adaptation and mitigation; environmental performance; and increasing knowledge and innovation.</p>	
Eligibility criteria	
<p>Eligible projects need to align with the six main pillars of the RRF, which are: i) Green transition; ii) Digital transformation; iii) Social and territorial cohesion; iv) Smart, sustainable and inclusive growth; v) Health and economic, social and institutional resilience; and vi) Policies for</p>	

RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE FACILITY (RRF)

Next Generation. At least 37% of RRF spending must target climate transition and 20% digital transformation.

Support and technical assistance

- Guidance to Member States - Recovery and Resilience Plans - Part 1: https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2021-01/document_travail_service_part1_v2_en.pdf
- Guidance to Member States - Recovery and Resilience Plans - Part 2: https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2021-01/document_travail_service_part2_v3_en.pdf
- Technical guidance on the application of "do no significant harm": <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX%3A52021XC0218%2801%29&from=EN>

Useful links and additional information

- Regulation establishing the Recovery and Resilience Facility: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32021R0241>
- National recovery and resilience plans: https://commission.europa.eu/business-economy-euro/economic-recovery/recovery-and-resilience-facility_en#national-recovery-and-resilience-plans
- Recovery and Resilience Scoreboard: https://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/recovery-and-resilience-scoreboard/index.html
- Recovery and Resilience Facility Annual Report: https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2022-03/com_2022_75_1_en.pdf

Examples of previously funded projects related to aquaculture

Examples of aquaculture-related calls under countries' NRRP:

Cyprus

- Grant Scheme for the Creation, Modernisation and Digital Upgrading of Processing and/or Marketing Units of Agricultural Products: <https://www.fundingprogrammesportal.gov.cy/call/%cf%83%cf%87%ce%ad%ce%b4%ce%b9%ce%bf-%cf%87%ce%bf%cf%81%ce%b7%ce%b3%ce%b9%cf%8e%ce%bd-%ce%b3%ce%b9%ce%b1-%ce%b4%ce%b7%ce%bc%ce%b9%ce%bf%cf%85%cf%81%ce%b3%ce%af%ce%b1-%ce%b5%ce%ba%cf%83%cf%85%ce%b3/>

Greece

- Call for applications for aid under the project "Support for Aquaculture": <https://greece20.gov.gr/?calls=prosklisi-ypovolis-aitiseon-enischysis-sto-ergo-enischysis-ydatokalliergeion>

Italy

- Public notice for the development of agrifood logistics in port areas: <https://www.politicheagricole.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/18738>

Poland

- Support for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises in the processing or marketing of agricultural, fishery or aquaculture products: <https://www.funduszeuropejskie.gov.pl/nabory/wsparcie-mikro-ma%C5%82ych-i-%C5%9Brednich-przedsi%C4%99biorstw-na-wykonywanie-dzia%C5%82alno%C5%9Bci-w-zakresie-przetw%C3%B3rstwa-lub-wprowadzania-do-obrotu-produkt%C3%B3w-rolnych-rybo%C5%82%C3%B3wstwa-lub-akwakultury/>

RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE FACILITY (RRF)

- Support for farmers or fishermen in the processing or marketing of agricultural, food, fishery or aquaculture products: <https://www.funduszeuropejskie.gov.pl/nabory/wsparcie-w-zakresie-przetwarzania-lub-wprowadzania-do-obrotu-produktow-rolnych-spozywczych-oraz-rybolowstwa-lub-akwakultury/>

Portugal

- Support for energy transition and reduction of environmental impact for companies in the fisheries and aquaculture sector (Notice No. 02/C10-i02/2022): <https://recuperarportugal.gov.pt/candidatura/02-apoio-a-transicao-energetica-e-reducao-do-impacto-ambiental-para-empresas-do-setor-da-pesca-e-da-aquicultura-aviso-n-o-02-c10-i02-2022/>

Spain

- Resolution of the public business entity red.es, M.P. announcing grants for the digitalisation of companies in Segment II (between 3 and less than 10 employees), Digital Kit Programme: <https://www.infosubvenciones.es/bdnstrans/GE/es/convocatoria/644810>
- Agreement for the implementation of the Marine Science Programme within the Complementary R&D&I Plans of the RRP: <https://www.infosubvenciones.es/bdnstrans/GE/es/convocatoria/654075>
- Royal Decree of 3rd August of the DG for Fisheries Management and Aquaculture, which calls for grants for projects for technological development, innovation and the balance of the marketing chain in the fisheries and aquaculture sector: <https://www.infosubvenciones.es/bdnstrans/GE/es/convocatoria/579529>
- Call for proposals for the implementation of blue growth projects in the fisheries and aquaculture sector: <https://www.infosubvenciones.es/bdnstrans/GE/es/convocatoria/606653>

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