

JEWEL

Joint nEtWork for European
net-zero manufacturing Leadership



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Open call #1 NZE-Demo Projects

GUIDE FOR APPLICANTS

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1. What is JEWEL ?

1.1. Project overview

JEWEL aims to mobilise the European manufacturing sector, particularly innovative SMEs, to address the challenges of net-zero manufacturing. The project supports the Twin Transition by accelerating the adoption of advanced technologies and sustainable business models that reduce the environmental impact of industrial production and strengthen Europe's industrial competitiveness.

JEWEL focuses primarily on key industrial ecosystems including Energy-Intensive Industries, Mobility, Transport and Automotive, as well as Aerospace and Defence. The project prioritises strategic Net-Zero Technologies (NZT) essential for industrial decarbonisation, notably battery and energy storage technologies, hydrogen solutions (including electrolyzers and fuel cells), electricity grid technologies, and transformative industrial decarbonisation technologies such as renewable energy systems.

The initiative is structured around three complementary pillars:

1. Development and dissemination of knowledge on NZT and sustainable economic models;
2. Personalised support for collaborative innovation projects, from idea to investment-ready initiatives;
3. Direct financial support to high-potential SME projects within European industrial ecosystems.

1.2. Strategic objectives

JEWEL pursues the following key objectives:

- Reinforce industrial competitiveness through the development and uptake of green and digital NZT solutions.
- Increase SME awareness of NZT applications improving resource efficiency and reducing energy consumption.
- Promote circular economy approaches and innovative industrial business models.
- Foster collaboration between technology SMEs and manufacturing end-users to develop new processes.
- Strengthen the European Cluster Alliance for Green Manufacturing as a long-term metacluster network.
- Support SME internationalisation through market monitoring and partnership development.
- Ensure effective communication and dissemination of project results at European level.

1.3. Consortium overview

The consortium gathers eight experienced cluster organisations from seven European countries (Belgium, Poland, Portugal, Latvia, Italy, France and Finland), coordinated by Pôle MecaTech (Belgium).

2. Basic Information about the Open Call

JEWEL Open Call #1 supports **NZT-Demo Projects** applied in a manufacturing context.

The call aims to:

- Accelerate the deployment of Net-Zero Technologies in manufacturing
- Support the development of European NZT solutions
- Support trans-regional and trans-national SME collaboration
- Strengthen European industrial competitiveness.
- Contribute to industrial decarbonisation

Note : JEWEL seeks gender balance. Therefore, applicants are invited to take all measures to promote equal opportunities between men and women in the implementation of the action. They must aim for a gender balance at all levels of personnel assigned to the action, including supervisory and managerial levels to the extent possible.

Key Parameters

- **Type of action:** Innovation & Demonstration Projects
- **Minimum project budget :** €60,000
- **Maximum grant per project:** €54,000 ; The split between SMEs will be decided according to the budget of each project.
- Applications have to include a private contribution equivalent to a minimum of 10% of the project budget (see article 6 on funding conditions)
- **Maximum project duration:** 9 months
- **Minimum consortium:** 2 SMEs from 2 different eligible regions (NUTS 2)

The Total budget foreseen for this open call is €540,000

3. Scope and Expectations

3.1. Net-Zero Technology Categories

Projects must address at least one of the following NZT categories¹:

- **Battery and energy storage technologies** : Technologies that improve energy retention, efficiency, and management (e.g., advanced battery cells, thermal storage, etc.).
- **Hydrogen technologies** : Specifically focusing on electrolyzers (production of green hydrogen) and fuel cells (using hydrogen for power), which are critical for decarbonizing heavy industry and transport.
- **Electricity grid technologies** : Solutions that make the power grid smarter, more flexible, and capable of handling high loads of renewable energy.
- **Wind, solar, and other green energy production technologies for decarbonation** : This broad category includes renewable energy technologies applied directly to industrial

¹ For more details about Net-Zero Technologies and JEWEL scope, please consult the "Cross-regional Service Pack" downloaded on the website of JEWEL [link to be inserted once ready]

processes to drastically reduce carbon footprints (e.g., electrifying heat processes, integrating wind/solar into factories).

3.2. Targeted Industrial Ecosystems

Projects should address one or more of the following ecosystems:

- Automotive, Mobility or Transport
- Aerospace & Defence
- Energy-Intensive Industries

3.3. Expected Project Results

Projects are expected to:

- Increase Technology Readiness Level (minimum starting TRL 5-6 recommended to TRL 7-8)
- Demonstrate technological feasibility in relevant/operational environments
- Deliver measurable environmental impact
- Present credible market deployment pathways

4. Type of Proposals and Consortium Composition

4.1. Type of Action & Activities

This Open Call supports SMEs, either as manufacturing end-users or solution providers, **in implementing advanced processes and technologies that accelerate the transition towards net-zero manufacturing.**

Proposals must address a concrete manufacturing use-case, demonstrating direct application within an industrial production environment.

Actions shall focus on the deployment and demonstration of mature, **near-to-market solutions in real industrial environments (TRL 7-8)**. The objective is to bridge the gap between applied research and market uptake by enabling scalable, operational implementation.

Projects must:

- Deliver reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and environmental impact;
- Improve energy efficiency and/or optimize resource use;
- Integrate innovative and qualified digital technologies (e.g., IoT, AI etc.);
- Be clearly embedded in a manufacturing context and demonstrate measurable results.

Eligible activities. The following activities may be supported under this Open Call, provided they are directly linked to the objectives of the project and contribute to the demonstration and deployment of Net-Zero Technologies in a manufacturing context:

- **Demonstration and pilot activities**
 - Deployment and testing of technologies in real or operational industrial environments
 - Pilot lines, prototypes, demonstrators, or proof-of-concept validation at TRL 6–8
 - Integration of technologies into existing production systems
- **Technology implementation and adaptation**
 - Customisation and integration of NZT solutions into manufacturing processes
 - Retrofitting or upgrading industrial equipment to improve energy efficiency or reduce emissions
 - Process optimisation and digitalisation (e.g. IoT, AI, data-driven monitoring)
- **Digital solutions for sustainability**
 - Adopting or deployment of digital tools for energy monitoring, optimisation and management
 - Consumption/resource reduction, tracking and valorisation systems
 - Digital twins or predictive maintenance solutions improving resource efficiency
- **Circular economy implementation**
 - Reuse, recycling or recovery of materials within production processes
 - Development of circular production systems or industrial symbiosis approaches
 - Reduction of raw material consumption and waste generation
- **Testing, validation and performance assessment**
 - Measurement and verification of environmental impact (e.g. GHG emissions reduction)
 - Life-cycle or performance assessments directly linked to the demonstration
 - Validation of scalability and replicability of the solution
 - Activities that fill the gap between demonstration and commercialization.

Applicants are most welcome to also include upskilling, and/or internationalization and value chain strengthening activities, and/or promotion activities, to show the scalability of the solution and contribute to Europe’s leadership in sustainable manufacturing.

Projects must clearly indicate:

- TRL before project start
- TRL expected at project completion

Projects should typically aim to progress from TRL 5–6 toward TRL 7–8.

4.2. Consortium Composition

Minimum Requirements

At least 2 SMEs

- Established in 2 different eligible regions ([NUTS 2](#))
- Independent legal entities (no capital or personal links)

SME’s coming from EU-13 countries and EU regions with which the Euroclusters’ partners are not present are encouraged to participate. A system of bonus point to incentivize international collaborations has been foreseen (see article 9)

Roles

Each SME may act as:

- Technology/Solution Provider
- Manufacturing End-User

Additional Participants

- Subcontractors (universities, RTOs, experts, etc.)
- Partners without funding (e.g. large corporations, mid-caps)

Only SMEs are eligible for JEWEL direct funding.

5. Eligibility conditions

5.1. Eligibility of applicants and proposals

Before proceeding to the qualitative evaluation (paragraph 9), all applications will undergo an administrative and eligibility check by the JEWEL consortium, based on the information and supporting documents submitted by the applicants.

Proposals that do not fully comply with the eligibility criteria set out in this Guide for Applicants will be declared ineligible and will not proceed to the evaluation stage.

Proposals are eligible only if **all the following conditions** are met:

- Applicants to be funded are SMEs² established in eligible EU Member States or countries associated to the COSME (Competitiveness of SMEs) part of the Single Market Programme [[link to the list of eligible countries](#)].
- The consortium includes at least 2 SMEs from 2 different NUTS 2 regions [[link to the classification](#)],
- Applicants to be funded will have to complete and provide the results of the **SME self-assessment questionnaire** [[link to the self-assessment](#)]
- The requested grant does not exceed €54,000.
- Funding requested does not exceed 90% of the total project budget.
- Project duration does not exceed 9 months.
- Applications must comply with the conditions set out in this Guide for Applicants, including the type of action & activities, maximum financial contribution, and maximum project duration
- The application is submitted in English via the official JEWEL platform before the deadline.
- No double funding is declared.
- Each SME applicant can only be engaged in one application to the JEWEL Open Call.

² SME definition by the European Union: <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/support/sme>

- SMEs that are under liquidation, in difficulty (as defined under Commission Regulation 651/2014, art. 2.18), or excluded from the possibility of obtaining EU funding under the provisions of both national and EU law, or by a decision of both national or EU authority, are not eligible to apply. Before applying, SMEs will have to check their financial situation by filling out the **SME Financial Viability Self-Check**. SME applicants will have to provide the outcome of this self-assessment in their application, to prove their financial capacity [[link to the tool](#)].

Entities that are direct members of the JEWEL consortium are not eligible to receive financial support under this Open Call.

5.2. How can the financial support be used ?

The financial support will be provided as a **lump sum** to the selected SMEs for the implementation of the approved project. The lump sum will be paid upon successful completion of the project activities and achievement of the agreed deliverables and milestones, as specified in the grant agreement.

As part of the application, applicants must provide an **estimated budget and a clear explanation of how the lump sum will be used** to implement the proposed activities. The budget should demonstrate that the requested amount is reasonable and necessary for achieving the project objectives.

The proposed use of the lump sum may include :

- Staff effort dedicated to the implementation of the project activities, including upskilling;
- Subcontracting of specific tasks where justified and necessary;
- Travel and accommodation, promotion and communication, related to project activities;
- Equipment, consumables, or other goods and services necessary for the implementation of the project.

As the financial support takes the form of a lump sum, beneficiaries will **not be required to report actual incurred costs or provide detailed financial justification of expenditures**. However, beneficiaries must implement the activities as described in the approved proposal and ensure that the lump sum is used to support the execution of the project.

The following types of expenditure cannot be supported by the lump sum: indirect overheads unrelated to the project, recoverable VAT, financial charges, costs incurred outside the project duration, or any form of double funding.

6. Funding conditions

Only SMEs are entitled to receive direct funding.

- Maximum grant per project: **€54,000**

- The split between SMEs will be decided according to the budget of each project.
- Maximum funding intensity: **90%**
- Private Co-financing required: Minimum 10% of the project Budget
 - Each SME must include a minimum private contribution equivalent to 10% of the budget. Crowding-in of private resources means financial resources invested in the project, i.e. not as in-kind contributions, staff costs, subcontracting or similar.
 - At application stage SMEs must indicate, in the application form, the planned amount and source of their private contribution.
 - SMES will confirm this amount into the final report of their project, if selected for funding.

Funding is provided as a **lump sum grant**.

Subcontracting costs are allowed, but must be justified and proportionate (see part 5.2).

Payment Scheme

- 40% pre-financing at project start
- 60% after achievement of conditions detailed in paragraph 11.

7. Open Call calendar

- **Call opening:** Wednesday, 1st of April 2026
- **Deadline for submission:** Monday, 1st of June 2026 (17:00 CET)
- **Eligibility check** (administrative assessment): 1 – 12 June 2026
- **External evaluation:** 8 June – 26 June 2026
- **Results notification** to applicants: early July
- **Sub-grant agreement signature:** 6 July – 31 August 2026
- **Project implementation period:** Projects may start upon signature of the Sub-grant Agreement and no later than 1st September 2026, for a maximum duration of 9 months.

8. Application process

Applications must be submitted via JEWEL page hosted on [the GoodGrand platform](#)

The application consists of:

1. Project Summary
2. Consortium Information
3. Technical Description
4. Budget & Work Plan
5. Risk Management
6. Key Performance Indicators
7. Declarations

Applications must be written in English.

Applicants may edit their proposal until final submission.

9. Evaluation and Scoring

All eligible proposals will be evaluated by independent external experts.

All external evaluators will be required to sign a declaration of absence of conflict of interest and a non-disclosure agreement prior to their appointment.

The evaluation will be based on three main criteria:

- Excellence
- Impact
- Implementation

Each criterion is worth 20 points and will be evaluated on basis of sub-criterion weighted as indicated below.

Maximum total score per application is: 60 points

9.1. Excellence (Max. 20 points)

a. Relevance to JEWEL & EU priorities (Max. 5 pts)

Alignment with JEWEL scope, Net-Zero Technologies, the European Green Deal and the Net-Zero Industry Act.

b. Degree of innovation (Max. 5 pts)

Advancement beyond state-of-the-art and industrial added value.

c. Technical quality & maturity (Max. 10 pts)

Soundness, feasibility, TRL coherence, and readiness for industrial adoption.

9.2. Impact (Max. 20 points)

a. Environmental impact (Max. 5 pts)

Quantified GHG reduction, energy efficiency and resource savings.

b. Economic & industrial impact (Max. 10 pts)

Market potential, scalability, competitiveness and integration into EU value chains.

c. Social impact (Max. 5 pts)

Skills development, workforce impact and broader societal benefits.

9.3 Implementation (Max. 20 points)

a. Work plan quality (5 pts)

Clarity, feasibility and milestones (max. 9 months).

b. Budget coherence (5 pts)

Cost-effectiveness and justification, budget repartition between the partners in adequation of the tasks and roles in the project implementation.

c. Risk management (5 pts)

Risk identification and mitigation measures.

d. Consortium quality (5 pts)

Complementarity of the partners and staff, expertise and transnational dimension.

9.4 Bonus Point allocation

To strengthen the European dimension and foster transnational value chains, additional points will be awarded to proposals demonstrating cross-border collaboration.

Applications that meet the evaluation thresholds and include funded SMEs established in different eligible countries will receive **5 additional points** in recognition of their transnational dimension.

9.5 Scoring Scale

Score	Interpretation	Explanation
0	<i>Not addressed</i>	<i>The proposal fails to address the criterion under examination or cannot be judged due to missing or incomplete information</i>
1	<i>Very poor</i>	<i>The criterion is addressed in an inadequate manner, or there are serious inherent weaknesses</i>
2	<i>Poor</i>	<i>While the proposal broadly addresses the criterion, there are significant weaknesses.</i>
3	<i>Acceptable</i>	<i>The proposal addresses the criterion, although significant improvements are possible</i>
4	<i>Good</i>	<i>The proposal addresses the criterion well, although certain improvements are still possible.</i>
5	<i>Very good</i>	<i>The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion in question. Any shortcomings are minor.</i>

9.6 Threshold and Ranking

For each proposal, the score will be calculated as the average of the individual scores awarded by the evaluators appointed.

Proposals must obtain :

- a minimum average score of **12 out of 20** for each main criterion (Excellence, Impact, Implementation)
- reach the overall minimum threshold of **36 out of 60**

Where applicable, bonus points for transnational collaboration will be added to proposals reaching thresholds.

Proposals above thresholds will then be ranked in descending order of their final score until the available budget is fully allocated.

In case of equal scores, priority will be given to:

- 1) Consortium including a funded SME coming from a country not covered by the cluster partners composing the JEWEL consortium (outside Belgium, Finland, France, Italy, Latvia, Poland, or Portugal)
- 2) Highest Impact score
- 3) Highest Excellence score
- 4) Net Zero technologies less represented among funded proposals.

10. Sub-grant Agreement

Selected SMEs will:

- Submit administrative documents: entities from the successful applications selected for funding will have to provide a number of administrative and financial documents to check their eligibility. Applicants will have a maximum delay of 3 weeks to provide the requested documentation. The JEWEL Consortium will proceed to a verification of these documents to make sure the selected applications are fully eligible. Failing to provide the documents and/or to respect deadline without due justification will lead to ineligibility of the application. Another applicant from the reserve list will be invited to sign a sub-grant agreement.
- Sign a Sub-grant Agreement with the JEWEL Coordinator: If all eligibility conditions are met and confirmed, participating entities from the successful applications selected for funding will be invited to sign a sub-grant agreement containing the obligations of the SMEs funded in the framework of JEWEL Open Call and payment process to be proceeded by the JEWEL Coordinator. The content of their application is binding part of the sub-grant agreement.

The agreement defines :

- Payment conditions
- Reporting obligations
- Communication requirements

- Visibility rules
- Data protection obligations

The outcome of the call will be publicly disclosed. The published information will include, for each selected project, a short description of the supported action, the date of the award, the project duration, and the legal name and country of the final recipient(s). See also article 14.

11. Support and Reporting obligations

Each funded project will be:

- Assessed and supported by a project guardian nominated among the JEWEL cluster partners during its whole implementation.
- Required to submit:
 - A mid-term report (based on a template that will be provided by the project guardian)
 - A final technical report (based on a template that will be provided by the project guardian)
 - Complete the Beneficiary satisfaction survey developed by the European Commission
- Kept informed by its project guardian about activities of relevance organized by JEWEL projects or any other project

The project performance will be assessed by the mid-term and final report, justifying the implemented workplan and the achievements of the project.

Final payment is subject to:

- Deliverables completion and quality
- Technical performance indicators based on the KPI defined by the project partners and their achievement justification
- Deadline compliance
- Completion of the Satisfaction survey.

12. Audits, redress and compliance.

The European Commission (EC) will ensure that JEWEL beneficiaries, including SMEs, comply with the provisions of the grant agreement and the rules governing financial support. To this end, the EC may perform financial audits or on-the-spot checks during the project implementation and for up to five years after its completion. These controls may be carried out by the EC services, authorised external auditors, the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF), the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO), or the European Court of Auditors (ECA). Audits may address financial aspects, project management, and compliance with contractual obligations.

Beneficiary SMEs are required to provide all necessary information and supporting data upon request, including accounting records and personnel-related information. They must retain all project-related documents and deliverables (originals or certified copies, including electronic formats) for a period of five years following the end of the project.

In the event of an audit, SMEs must grant access to their premises, systems, and records, and ensure that all relevant data can be readily consulted or provided in an appropriate format.

Following the results of any audit, the EC may take appropriate actions, including the recovery of funds or the application of other corrective measures. The European Court of Auditors is entitled to carry out audits under the same conditions and with the same rights as the EC.

13. Helpdesk and Complaints

For any question regarding the open calls or JEWEL project, potential applicants are invited to:

- Fill in the helpdesk form available on the following link:
https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/JEWEL_ADHOHELPDESK

A contact person from the JEWEL cluster consortium will be assigned to your query and provide the appropriate follow-up as soon as possible.

- Contact the JEWEL coordinator directly throughout the call period:
<https://evoluma.pl/en/jewel#coordinators>

In addition to this Guide for Applicants, several documents are provided to explain the context of JEWEL open call and help the potential applicants:

- A FAQ document: [add link to the FAQ once online].
- Service Pack offered to SMEs and explaining the participants' journey through JEWEL Eurocluster, the activities and the scope of the project
- JEWEL official website: <https://evoluma.pl/en/jewel>

The template of the application form (for information only – all fields must be directly entered into the application platform) is available here: [link to be provided]

Complaints regarding eligibility assessment after the evaluation phase may be submitted within 5 working days following notification. The complaint has to be sent by email to the JEWEL Coordinator (<https://evoluma.pl/en/jewel#coordinators>). The JEWEL consortium will review it within no more than 10 calendar days from its reception. If the JEWEL consortium needs more time to assess the received complaint, the applicant will be informed by email about the extension.

The evaluation process is run by independent external experts. The JEWEL consortium does not interfere with their assessment; therefore complaints related to the results of the evaluation other than related to the mistakes in the evaluation of the eligibility criteria will not be taken into account.

14. Confidentiality and Data Protection

Personal and corporate data collected during the application and evaluation process will be processed in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (General Data Protection Regulation – GDPR).

Data provided by applicants will be used for:

- the management, evaluation and monitoring of the JEWEL Open Call,
- communication with applicants during and after the evaluation process,
- statistical and reporting obligations towards the European Commission.
- Basic information of selected projects (title, abstract provided, SME names, country, budget, duration) will be made public.

Proposals will be shared with independent external evaluators and project partners involved in the assessment process, all of whom are bound by confidentiality (signature of NDA foreseen) and conflict-of-interest obligations.

In line with JEWEL's Project Guardian approach and its mission to strengthen European industrial ecosystems, applicants not selected for funding may be contacted after the evaluation process for:

- information on future JEWEL calls,
- matchmaking or networking opportunities,
- alternative regional, national or European funding opportunities relevant to their proposal.

Such follow-up contact aims to maximise the impact of submitted project ideas and support SME innovation pathways beyond the scope of the present call. Applicants may opt out of such communications at any time.

15. Legal and contractual obligations

Applicants should be aware that projects funded under the JEWEL Open Call are part of a European Union funded action and are therefore subject to specific contractual obligations.

In accordance with the Grant Agreement governing the JEWEL project, beneficiaries receiving financial support (third parties) must comply with a set of essential rules applicable to EU-funded actions.

In particular, beneficiaries will be required to:

- Avoid conflicts of interest and ensure impartiality in the implementation of their project
- Ensure confidentiality and security of any sensitive or proprietary information
- Comply with ethical standards and EU values, as well as applicable legislation
- Acknowledge EU funding in all communication and dissemination activities
- Implement the project as described in the approved proposal
- Provide information when requested for monitoring, evaluation, or reporting purposes
- Keep appropriate records and supporting documents for audit and control purposes

Failure to comply with these obligations may lead to the suspension, reduction, or recovery of the financial support.