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Including modality of EARLY CAREER RESEARCHERS

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Glossary

• *Associated Countries:* Associated Countries are countries who signed an association agreement with the European Union and its Members. In Horizon Europe, legal entities from Associated Countries can participate under the same conditions as legal entities from the Member States. The list of Associated Countries is available here
• *Call Secretariat (CS):* The Call Secretariat, hosted by the Project Management Agency Karlsruhe (KIT-PTKA) will be in charge to prepare, coordinate and follow-up the joint call processes. It will work in cooperation and consultation with the Call Steering Committee (CSC) and provide the CSC with all documents needed for decisions. It is the central contact point for applicants regarding all technical and general issues of the submission.
• *Call Steering Committee (CSC):* The Call Steering Committee (CSC) will be composed of one representative per FPO and will be the decision-making body in the framework of this call.
• *Consortium/Consortia:* Transnational group(s) of partners, submitting a collaborative Research, Development and Innovation (RDI) proposal.
• *Consortium Coordinator (CC):* Coordinator of the transnational collaborative RDI proposal. Coordinates the submission of the proposal prepared by the partners in the online submission system, represents the Consortium before the CSC and the CS and, if funded, is responsible for the internal project management.
• *Early Career Researchers (ECR):* Refers to the Modality of Early Career Researcher of the 2026 Joint Transnational Call aimed at project proposals coordinated by early career researchers, who have obtained their PhD less than 10 year before the call launch, unless the FPOs calculate any exemption (e.g. maternity leave) as specified in the national/regional regulation annex.
• *Electronic Proposal Submission System (EPSS):* Web platform to be used by the applicants to submit their project proposals for the call, available at proposals.etag.ee/water4all
• *European Commission (EC):* European Commission is acting as a Funding Authority in the Water4All Partnership, co-funding the Transnational Projects selected for funding in the 2026 Joint Transnational Call.
• *Evaluation Panel (EP):* Panel of internationally recognised scientific, industry and policy experts which will evaluate and rank the pre/full proposals submitted in the 2026 JTC in order of merit. EP members will not submit or participate in proposals within this 2026 JTC and will sign declarations on confidentiality, absence of conflict of interest and code of conduct. The members of the EP consist of a Chairperson, a viceChairperson and a number of Evaluators.
  ○ **EP Chairperson:** Leads the EP meeting, by: ensuring active, all-inclusive and rich participation of all members; managing the collective decision-making by the EP; launching voting procedures if necessary; approving the EP meeting agenda and the minutes, proposed by the CS.
  ○ **EP viceChairperson:** Takes the duties of the Chairperson if the Chairperson is absent, for example, due to a conflict of interest.
  ○ **Evaluators:** Internationally recognised scientific or industry experts appointed for their independent evaluation of the submitted pre and full proposals to the 2026 Joint Transnational Call. Evaluators will not submit or participate in proposals within these Calls and must sign declarations on confidentiality, conflict of interest and code of conduct.
• *External expert:* Independent expert appointed for its independent evaluation of the submitted pre and/or full proposals to the 2026 JTC in case an expertise is missing within the EP. External experts are not members of the EP.
• *Funding Partner Organisation (FPO):* Party that has committed national/regional funds to participate in the 2026 Joint Transnational Call and/or in the modality of Early Career Researchers.
• *Independent Observer:* External expert invited as observer to the EP and CSC meetings to assess the conformity of the evaluation procedure.
• *Joint Transnational Call (JTC):* A call for the funding of excellent transnational research and innovation projects, co-funded by the FPOs supporting the call and the European Commission.
• *Knowledge Hub (KH):* A network of experts jointly working on the dissemination of their project outcomes in various formats with the aim of supporting evidence-based decision-making processes for targeted stakeholders.
• *National Contact Point (NCP):* Each participating FPO in the 2026 Joint Transnational Call and the modality of Early Career Researchers has nominated NCP(s) to provide information on national/regional funding rules and procedures.
• *Principal Investigator (PI):* Researcher/Leader of the research team of a Project Partner in a Transnational Project.
• *Project Coordinator:* The Principal Investigator leading the consortium of Project Partners in a Transnational Project and is in charge of submitting the proposal in the call.
• *Project funding:* The total sum of the funding, which will be granted by the FPOs to the Project Partners. The amount of funding that each project partner can receive depending from the national funding rules.
• *Project Partner:* Independent legal entity participating in the Transnational Project.

• *Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA):* A key document of the Water4All Partnership that defines the strategic orientations of the programme.
• *Transnational Project costs:* The total sum of the project costs which is necessary for the implementation of the foreseen activities.
• *Transnational Project:* A project funded in the frame of the 2026 Joint Transnational Call and its modalities.

1. Introduction

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

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

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

Reaching Water4Alls objectives require an inclusive and systemic approach, with a logical chain from problem analysis and the identification of knowledge gaps to the uptake of solutions and their concrete applications by the relevant stakeholders. The direct connection between stakeholders and problem owners with solution providers from the RDI field is required to make decisive contributions towards the objectives of Water security: *improved access to water; availability of adequate water supplies for all economic uses; ecosystems health and delivery of ecosystem services; resilience to global changes and water-related hazards*. This approach will be implemented through a broad range of activities, aiming together at achieving the following outcomes:
- Deliver sound knowledge, tools, and evidence basis on water for policy- & decision-making.
- Improve consideration of water impacts in all relevant policies.
- Enhance the field/market use of innovative solutions to water challenges.
- Increase citizens' awareness and engagement for an inclusive water governance.

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

The 2026 Joint Transnational Call (JTC) is the sixt in the series of the Water4All co-funded calls. It is jointly launched by 32 Funding Partner Organisations (FPOs) from 30 countries responsible for funding research and innovation actions in the field of water; Out of the participating FPOs, 31 are eligible to the financial support from the EC.

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

This call also foresees the support to the Knowledge Hub (KH) for the researchers from Transnational Projects funded in the Regular and the ECR modality. The KH will function as a networking platform for the researchers with the aim to synthesize and disseminate the Regular and ECR projects' outcomes in various formats to support evidence-based decision-making processes for targeted stakeholders. The thematic scope of the KH is bounded by the JTC topics.

Within this Call, projects are then asked to include the activities of Water4All Knowledge Hub in their

communication and dissemination related work package with dedicated personnel costs. At least one expert of each project needs to be nominated to act as project ambassador related to the activities of the Knowledge Hub. Given the list of tasks detailed in chapter 3.1.2, at least two person months should be allocated for the participation in the activities detailed in chapter 3.1.2.

1.2. Objectives of the 2026 Joint Transnational Call

The Water4All Joint Transnational Call 2026 invites research and innovation proposals that address the most pressing challenges for sustainable water management in Europe and beyond, with a particular focus on integrated approaches that strengthen water security, resilience, and the protection of water bodies and dependent ecosystems. The call aims to support projects that improve the understanding, assessment, management, and governance of water resources across scales, including the whole water cycle, from catchment to groundwater and from source to sea, integrating its green water component, while enabling better decision-making for public authorities, water managers, and other stakeholders.

The call seeks to generate new knowledge, tools, methods, and governance approaches that can help tackle competing water demands, improve the efficiency and transparency of water use, and support the transition towards more sustainable and equitable water management systems. Proposals are expected to go beyond the state of the art and to demonstrate clear pathways towards scientific, technical, policy, and societal impact, including uptake by relevant users and alignment with European and international policy frameworks.

In particular, the call will support research and innovation that contributes to improved integrated monitoring, modelling, and assessment of surface water, groundwater, and related socio-environmental systems across the water cycle; better understanding of pressures, risks, and trade-offs related to water quantity and quality, land use, and competing demands from human activities; development and testing of nature-based, hybrid, and data-driven solutions that enhance resilience, recharge, retention, and water availability at catchment and basin scales; more effective and cost-efficient water infrastructures, including monitoring infrastructures, smart systems, and adaptive solutions for ageing networks; and strengthened governance, policy coherence, stakeholder engagement, and social innovation to support inclusive and adaptive water management. The call also emphasises the role of digital tools, data interoperability, Earth observation, AI, and decision-support systems in enabling integrated water planning and management.

The call is designed to foster multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary collaboration and to encourage proposals that link science, practice, and policy in ways that are relevant across regions and sectors. Projects should consider the broader European context, the need for cross-border cooperation, and the importance of scalable and transferable solutions that can be adapted to different hydrological, institutional, and socio-economic settings.

2. Description of the aims and themes of the 2026 Joint Transnational Call

2.1. Strategic aim of the Joint Transnational Call

The 2026 Joint Transnational Call within the Water4All Partnership is aiming at research and innovation to contribute to water security in the long term. In line with the strategic objectives of Water4All, the results should contribute to the implementation of evidence-based, global, EU and national water management policies and strategies, within the frameworks of the European Green Deal, the zero-pollution action plan, the Water Framework Directive and the two so-called daughter directives on groundwater and quality of surface water, the Nature Restoration Regulation and the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, the Just Transition Mechanism, the Water Resilience Strategy and the Sustainable Development Goals. Proposals should show cognisance of appropriate legislation and policy frameworks that are relevant for the call at national and international levels.

2.2. Theme of the Joint Transnational Call

The Water4All 2026 Joint Transnational Call focuses on **Sustainable Water Management** (excluding extreme events and circularity), inviting proposals that address critical challenges related to Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM), River Basin Management, Groundwater Management, Water Resilience, Data monitoring and use, Water-positive solutions.

The call topics are overlapping and non-exclusive. Thus, proposals must address at least one of the following topics and may integrate multiple topics where relevant. It is not compulsory to address all subtopics within a topic in the proposals. Additionally, proposals are encouraged to explore links to

other Water4All SRIA themes, particularly the SRIA theme "Infrastructures for Water" (excluding extreme events, circularity and health).

In general, collaboration with relevant projects funded under the Horizon Europe programme and the EU Missions should be encourage and overlaps avoided.

Topic 1: Integrated Monitoring and Assessment for Sustainable Water Management

Reliable, well documented, high-resolution and high-frequency information, available over long time periods, are essential for sustainable integrated water resource management, particularly under increasing pressures from land-use dynamics, competing demands of water, and climate change. This topic addresses the need for integrated monitoring, data (cross)analysis and sharing, and assessment frameworks that enable a holistic understanding of surface and groundwater, and that facilitate robust, evidence-based decision-making. Proposals under this topic should advance innovative monitoring technologies, data integration and/or modelling approaches to enhance our collective understanding of the water cycle and its interconnection with other systems (air, soil, ground, food, energy, environment, biodiversity, health, economy, society ...) at different spatial and temporal scales as well as decision support tools that facilitate adaptation to changing conditions.

1.1 Advanced Monitoring Technologies and Data Interoperability

Contributions should focus on advanced automated monitoring systems, including IoT sensors for real-time and in-situ monitoring of water quality and quantity across the entire water cycle including but not limited to surface and subsurface systems. The use of remote sensing and earth observation technologies to improve the assessment of surface-groundwater interactions, surface-soil interaction, land-use impacts, and climate-related pressures on water resources is encouraged. Proposals should emphasize data integration and interoperability, as well as improved data accessibility to enable robust assessments, informed decision-making, and adaptive management strategies. Particular attention must be paid to representativeness over time and space, and to the accuracy of data from automated monitoring systems in relation to real environmental levels.

1.2 Data Integration, Analysis, and Modelling

Proposals should address the integration of GIS-based data to enable a coherent understanding of the spatial and temporal distribution and evolution of surface and groundwater systems. This should involve the combination of heterogeneous cross-sectorial monitoring, observational, and socio-environmental data. To ensure these insights are actionable and policy-oriented, proposals should integrate rigorous water accounting frameworks, such as SEEA-Water[1], to quantify resource availability, abstraction, and consumption in a standardized manner. The focus is placed on big-data analytics, as well as AI and machine learning methods for inter alia anomaly detection, prediction of flows and water levels, calculation of extractable volumes, contaminant dynamics and water quality prevision, and drought and flood risks. The development, coupling, or enhancement of hydrological, hydrogeological, socio-economic models to improve analysis, scenario testing, and forecasting is strongly encouraged. Approaches that enhance model transparency, uncertainty management, data accessibility, and the translation of complex model outputs into intuitive, decision-relevant interfaces are particularly welcome.

1.3 Assessment Frameworks, Decision Support, and Socio-Economic Dimensions

Proposals should focus on decision support systems that integrate monitoring data, analytical tools, and/or modelling outcomes in order to facilitate scenario analysis and science-based aid decision-making in situations of uncertainty. There should be a strong emphasis on stakeholder participation, including co-design of decision support systems and co-creation of management pathways with policymakers, water managers, and end users. Research leading to directly operational results and addressing governance structures, institutional coordination, and the cost-efficiency of management measures is particularly encouraged, with the aim of improving the nature-positive effectiveness, socio-economic acceptance, and long-term sustainability of water-related decisions.

Topic 2: Nature-Based Approaches for Resilient Water Management at Hydrological and Hydrogeological System Scale

The new hydrological reality and competing land and water uses require integrated and resilient evidence-based approaches to water management at catchment scale from source to sea, based on an

[1] seea.un.org/en/methodology/seea-water

enhanced understanding of the entire hydrological cycle. This topic focuses on nature-based approaches to enhance groundwater resilience, improve water retention and storage, and support adaptive river-basin and groundwater management, as well as enhanced resilience against flood and drought impacts. Proposals should advance scientific understanding, practical implementation, environmental and socio-economic uptake of such measures, supported by robust monitoring, modelling, and stakeholder-oriented frameworks. Water4All is seeking projects that address the positive (co-benefits) and negative impacts – both direct and indirect, short-term and long-term – of nature-based approaches for water resource management. New scientific knowledge and evidence are sought to assist in the selection and implementation of nature-based solutions that are regionally relevant and beneficial to the environment and society, sustainable over time, and capable of helping to address the challenges of the new hydrological reality. The objective is to strengthen the long-term sustainability and climate resilience of surface and groundwater systems. For that topic, demonstration activities are very welcome.

2.1 Nature-Based Approaches and Managed Aquifer Recharge (MAR) for Sustainable Groundwater Management

Proposals should assess the effects of nature-based approaches on groundwater recharge, infiltration processes, and groundwater quality, including short- and long-term system responses. Strong emphasis should be placed on the design and operation of Managed Aquifer Recharge (MAR) systems under hydrological extremes such as droughts and floods, and their role in enhancing climate resilience. Research on surface-groundwater interactions under climate and land-use change, including thermal influences on groundwater quality, is encouraged. Integrated, process-based, and scalable approaches that support adaptive groundwater management are particularly welcome, especially scalable and transferable solutions.

2.2 River-Basin Restoration to Enhance Water Resilience at Catchment Scale

Contributions should focus on the role of retention and restoration measures at catchment scale in improving groundwater recharge, water quality, and long-term water retention through redressing the sponge functions of landscapes. This includes projects that aim to develop sponge targets at landscape and urban levels; such targets quantify how much water soils, wetlands, and ecosystems should retain and how that contributes to increased water resilience by reducing flood impacts or enhancing resilience to drought. Integrated assessments of surface-groundwater interactions and system responses to hydrological variability and extremes are emphasised. The development and application of digital twins that couple surface water and groundwater processes is strongly encouraged to support simulation, evaluation, and adaptive management of nature-based interventions. Approaches that enhance decision-making, scalability and transferability, and long-term planning for resilient catchment management are particularly welcome.

2.3 Economic Valuation and Stakeholder Engagement models for Nature-Based Groundwater and River-Basin Management

Proposals should analyse the economic value of nature-based approaches, including reduced flood and drought impacts, improved groundwater availability, and benefits for agriculture, water supply, pollution reduction, biodiversity and nature, recreation and tourism, and regional economies. Emphasis should be placed on comprehensive benefit assessments addressing the needs of diverse stakeholders such as farmers, water utilities, industry, tourism, and local communities. Research should also explore incentive mechanisms, including co-financing, compensation models, and innovative funding approaches, to support implementation and long-term operation. Frameworks that integrate economic valuation, governance, cross-sector collaboration, and stakeholder engagement to support the increased uptake and scaling of nature-based water management strategies are particularly encouraged.

Topic 3. Smart, Secure and Adaptive Water Infrastructures for Sustainable Water Management

Increasing pressures on water resources, ageing infrastructure systems, and emerging environmental and geopolitical risks require a transition towards smart, adaptive, and integrated water infrastructures. This topic focuses on enhancing the performance, resilience, and security of water infrastructures across scales, from local systems to river basins.

Proposals under this topic should advance the development and integration of digital, nature-based, and hybrid infrastructure solutions to improve system efficiency, reliability, and flexibility. Emphasis should be placed on data-driven monitoring, adaptive management, and system-level optimisation, as well as on the secure and robust operation of infrastructures under changing conditions. The aim is to

support sustainable water management, improve water allocation, and strengthen the long-term resilience of interconnected water systems.

3.1. Digital and Risk-informed Water Infrastructures

Proposals should develop and integrate advanced monitoring systems, smart metering, leakage detection, and AI-based analytics to enhance infrastructure performance and decision-making. There should be a strong emphasis on interoperable data platforms, digital twins, and real-time data integration to support system optimisation. Research should also address risk and hazard assessment, early warning systems, and operational security, including cyber and physical threats. Data-driven approaches that improve reliability, transparency, and adaptive capacity are particularly encouraged.

3.2. Modernisation and Adaptive Asset Management of Ageing Infrastructures

Proposals should focus on innovative approaches for upgrading, retrofitting, and extending the lifetime of existing water infrastructures. There should be an emphasis on modular, flexible, and cost-efficient solutions that can respond to evolving demands, climate variability, and emerging risks. Research is encouraged on the integration of smart technologies into legacy systems, as well as on improving safety, robustness, and operational continuity. Approaches supporting long-term planning, prioritisation of investments, and adaptive asset management are particularly welcome.

3.3. Integrated and Hybrid Infrastructures for Basin-scale Management

Proposals should investigate solutions that enhance coordination between built infrastructures and natural water systems, including interactions between surface water and groundwater systems. There should be a strong emphasis on hybrid grey-green and centralised-decentralised systems that support integrated water resources management. Research should also address infrastructures enabling efficient, transparent, and equitable water allocation across sectors, water grids and users, while avoiding unintended effects such as rebound increases in water use. System-level, scalable, and governance-aware approaches are particularly encouraged.

Topic 4. Resilient Water Systems Through Systemic Change, Policy Coherence and Inclusive Governance

This topic aims to strengthen the resilience of river basins, groundwater systems, and coastal waters by integrating systemic approaches with coherent policies and inclusive governance and improved understanding of water's strategic value. It emphasizes integrated perspectives that recognise the physical, ecological, and socio-economic connections across the entire water cycle. The proposals under this topic are expected to develop harmonized knowledge, tools and models that address emerging environmental, societal, and geopolitical challenges, and improve cross-sectoral and transboundary cooperation capacities. The proposals are also expected to underline regulatory challenges and policy coherence across sectors, as well as relevant European frameworks and strategies (e.g. the Water Framework Directive, Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive, Water Reuse Regulation, Water Resilience Strategy). Proposals should consider how governance and policy instruments can support integrated, sustainable, and adaptive water management across scales and sectors.

4.1 Systemic Approaches for Social, Economic and Environmental Resilience

Increasing disruptions in the hydrological cycle are creating unprecedented pressures on resilience of ecosystems, communities, infrastructures and economies, and require systemic adaptation rather than incremental change. There is a need to move beyond narrow problem definitions and instead explore how water both influences and is influenced by interactions across ecosystems and human activities. Examination of cascading effects, feedback loops, and trade-offs across spatial, temporal, and societal scales and sectors would help understand system interactions.

In this subtopic, transdisciplinary research teams should contribute to increased understanding of system boundary definitions, integration of diverse environmental stressors and consequences, and effective ways of stakeholder involvement for systemic solutions. The overarching aim is to generate holistic knowledge and tools that support sound decision-making and sustainable water management practices for systemic change towards resilient water systems that can respond to future environmental and societal challenges.

4.2 Policy Coherence and Inclusive Governance for All

Fragmented and incoherent governance frameworks constrain effective decision-making, investment,

and coordinated action across sectors, scales, and borders.

This subtopic focuses on advancing integrated and inclusive approaches to water governance that connect ecosystem processes, societal participation, and economic valuation and innovative finance models in support of resilient water systems. Proposals should address conjunctive management of surface water and groundwater, as well as interactions across the water cycle, while strengthening the links between governance, infrastructure planning, water allocation, sustainable water use and associated economic models. Particular attention should be given to improving policy coherence across sectors such as water, agriculture, energy, and land use, and to aligning governance and financial frameworks with long-term climate and sustainability objectives.

A strong emphasis should be placed on the development of methods and tools for ecosystem-based and system-scale water management, including approaches that take into account interactions between natural systems and built infrastructures. Proposals are also encouraged to advance approaches for the economic valuation of water and ecosystem services, and to incorporate water-related risks into planning, governance, and financial decision-making, thereby strengthening incentives for sustainable use and long-term investments.

Inclusive, participatory, and collaborative governance approaches are central to this topic. Proposals should explore mechanisms to enhance stakeholder engagement and representation, including women, minorities, indigenous communities, and local actors, and to support transparent and equitable decision-making processes. Transboundary and multi-level governance frameworks, as well as water stewardship approaches, should be further developed to improve cooperation, reduce conflicts, and increase resilience under growing geopolitical uncertainty.

2.3. Cross-cutting themes/aspects/considerations

Proposals should also consider the following cross-cutting aspects where relevant:

- **Climate change and environmental pressures:** Evaluating how climate variability and change, including hydrological extremes such as droughts and floods, affect water availability, water quality, and ecosystem functioning. Proposals should consider implications for long-term resilience and adaptive water management strategies.
- **Socio-economic and participatory aspects:** Investigating stakeholder engagement, public perceptions, behavioural change, and water use practices, as well as the socio-economic implications of water management decisions. Approaches that support equitable, inclusive, and participatory water governance are encouraged.
- **Digitalisation and data-driven approaches:** Promoting the development and integration of digital tools, monitoring systems, and data-driven methods, including artificial intelligence, to support water management, system optimisation, and decision-making across scales.
- **Innovation uptake and implementation:** Strategies to facilitate the adoption, scaling, and real-world implementation of innovative solutions, including technological, nature-based, and governance approaches, while addressing barriers to uptake and ensuring long-term sustainability and impact.

2.4. Expected approach

The proposals presented to the Water4All 2026 JTC are expected to take a comprehensive and problem-oriented approach. They should demonstrate how the proposed research addresses the overarching goals of the call and contribute to improving sustainable water management. Likewise, the proposals must avoid too specific and narrowly defined cases; thus, they are expected to address aspects that are cross-cutting and highlight cases where the transfer of solutions to other contexts and regions is feasible and can have a higher impact.

Delivered knowledge needs to cover relevant existing gaps and have the clear potential to be used in new or improved tools, processes, policy options and policy making. The proposals are also expected to contribute to the acceleration of the adoption of measures and to connect actors. In all cases, knowledge transfer and the impact of the outputs must be credible through involvement of stakeholders.

Given the complexity of water challenges and their cross-sectorial impacts, proposals may need to take a multi- or interdisciplinary approach, not as an end in itself, but to better define problems, develop solutions, and deliver them effectively. Proposals must not duplicate, but can complement, past efforts and results delivered by projects and actions previously funded by e.g. Horizon 2020, Horizon Europe, Water JPI, Water4All, Biodiversa+, PRIMA and JPI AMR calls. Approaches built on the results of previous projects of the mentioned instruments, such as in e.g. BiodivNBS Call 2023–2024,

must demonstrate that they include substantially new or improved ideas and approaches for additional progress and impact.

2.5. Impact of the proposals

Proposals are expected to demonstrate clear and credible impacts extending beyond the duration of the project, contributing to more sustainable, resilient, and equitable water management systems. They should identify the main beneficiaries of the proposed work and explain how the expected results are transferable to other locations and scales, and will support scientific advancement, practical implementation, policy development, and societal uptake.

The call aims to deliver impacts at several levels, including improved understanding of water systems, stronger decision-support capacity, improved resilience of water systems and water dependent sectors, increased and long-term water availability, and more effective responses to current and emerging water management challenges.

In particular, projects should contribute to improved assessment and forecasting of water quantity and quality, groundwater dynamics, and related risks across the water cycle; increased adoption of integrated water management approaches that account for multiple pressures, cross-sector interactions, and spatial and temporal scales; development and implementation of nature-based solutions, including their integration with technological and hybrid approaches; enhanced affordability, effectiveness and adaptability of both existing and future water infrastructures; and strengthened governance and policy frameworks that support coordination across sectors and administrative levels in water allocation and management.

Proposals should also describe how their outcomes may support relevant European and international policy frameworks, including water-related environmental, resilience, and sustainability objectives. This includes demonstrating how project results can contribute to the implementation of European strategies (e.g. relevant directives and frameworks), and to improved integrated water management, enhanced protection of water resources and dependent ecosystems, and stronger preparedness for long-term pressures on water systems.

Societal and economic impacts are also expected to be clearly addressed. Projects should explain how their results may improve water security, support more efficient use of public and private resources, reduce risks and costs associated with water stress or poor water management, and generate solutions that are transferable to other regions and contexts.

Credible impact will depend on active collaboration with stakeholders throughout the project lifecycle, from problem definition to dissemination and uptake of results. Proposals should therefore include appropriate engagement with end users, policy actors, water managers, industry, civil society, and other relevant groups to facilitate knowledge transfer, implementation, and long-term adoption of the project outcomes.

3. Call Structure

3.1. 2026 Joint Transnational Call Structure, including its modality

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

- **Joint Transnational Call** – the annual Water4All call for funding of excellent research and innovation proposals.
- **Early Career Researchers modality** – aimed at projects coordinated by early career researchers. The thematic framework described in Chapter 2, the proposal structure and the evaluation process are the same as for the JTC.

IMPORTANT: Applicants mark in the submission tool under which modality they are applying (regular JTC or ECR. The thematic framework, the evaluation criteria and the pre-proposal template are the same for the JTC and for the ECR except for the eligibility criteria for the Consortium Coordinator. The applicants must comply with the General eligibility criteria as stated in Chapter 4, as well as with the national/regional regulations for each of the modalities. **Not all FPOs financially support the ECR modality** (see ANNEX A).

3.1.1. Modality of Early Career Researchers

The ECR modality focuses on developing capacities for talented early career researchers by giving them an opportunity to act as project Coordinators in this call. The principle criterion for the early

career researcher acting as Coordinator is to have obtained their PhD less than 10 years before the call launch[2] . The aim of this modality is to support early career researchers to conduct basic or applicable research related to JTC topics and to provide them with a platform to present their research as well as forge valuable international connections with other researchers in a similar field.

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

While the evaluation of the proposals submitted in the JTC and ECR will be done under a single call process and subject to the same rules, the proposals can be ranked in one or several ranking lists depending on the number of ECR proposals received and budget availability. In all cases, the funding organisations participating in the ECR modality will prioritize the funding of ECR proposals, in cases of equal ranking of several projects.

3.1.2. The Water4All Knowledge Hub in the context of the 2026 Joint Transnational Call

The researchers coming from the projects selected for funding will take part in the Water4All Knowledge Hub (KH), whose aim is to contribute to knowledge synthesis, dissemination, and networking activities. The KH will thus have the same timeline as the funded Transnational Projects. As a cluster, the participants will be accompanied by a facilitator to produce specific activities and outputs, such as the following ones:

- Knowledge synthesis outputs, including policy briefs, state-of-the art reports, concept notes, fact sheets, position papers, etc. that appeal to different target groups, ranging from the general public to policy makers at various levels;
- Foresight exercises (events, workshops, etc e.g., in response to new policy priorities or societal challenges);
- Short summaries of any published articles;
- Joint peer-reviewed publications from Water4All funded projects;
- Online thematic events on Water4All JTC themes;
- Learning and training content to increase/maximize use of Water4All outputs;
- Feedback and Input into the update of the Water4All SRIA; The added value of the KH for the participating researchers is to:
- Enable the valorisation of research project results and foster knowledge transfer to relevant stakeholders;
- Provide researchers with opportunities for networking, knowledge exchange and uptake of research outcomes;
- Facilitate cooperation resulting in high-impact publications;
- Contribute to a greater number of scientific outputs (publications, patents, licenses, etc.) through collaboration;
- Build researchers' capacity through integrated, transnational and multi-disciplinary approaches and exchange of good practices;
- Contribute to the EU legislation evolution.

3.2. Participating countries

A total of 32 Funding Partner Organisations (FPOs) from 30 countries have agreed to launch a Joint Transnational Call for RDI proposals on the topic "Sustainable Water Management". In addition, a total of 17 FPOs from 16 countries will support the Early Career Researcher modality.

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

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

Applicants should note that in some countries, several funding organisations participate in the call with different organisational rules and priorities. Applicants must pay attention to the national/ regional regulations and if questions arise, it is highly recommended to contact the NCPs before

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

submitting a pre-proposal and full proposal (see list in ANNEX A).

3.3. Financial Commitment

A total of approx. 34 million Euros has been provisionally allocated for the JTC 2026 and its modalities by the participating FPOs with the support of the EU (Table 1). These funds will be used for RDI activities carried out by researchers, institutions and companies according to the funding rules and legal frameworks of their respective FPOs.

Partners applying in a consortium cannot request more funding per modality than their relevant FPO stated in the national/regional regulations to this Call Announcement. Each FPO should have indicated the maximum funding per project partner and/or per project (if several partners request funding to the same FPO) in their national regulations. When there is no maximum budget per project and/or per project partner indicated in the national regulations for one FPO, the maximum funding requested per project should be in proportion to the total national budget available and the expected number of projects to be funded by the FPO. Please contact your national/regional FPO for further information.

Table 1: Water4All FPOs participation in the 2026 JTC and its modalities

	Country	Funding Partner Organisation	Acronym	JTC (yes/no)	ECR (yes/no)	National budget	Expected number of projects to be funded by the FPO
1	Austria	Fonds zur Förderung der wissenschaftlichen Forschung	FWF	Yes	No	800.000,00	2
2	Belgium	Fonds Voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek-Vlaanderen	FWO	Yes	Yes	700.000,00	2–3
3	Belgium	Fonds de la Recherche Scientifique	F.R.S.-FNRS	Yes	Yes	300.000,00	1–2
4	Brazil	Brazilian National Council of State Funding Agencies	CONFAP	Yes	Yes	1.756.050,00	–
5	Czechia	Technology Agency of the Czech Republic	TA CR	Yes	No	500.000,00	3
6	Denmark	Innovation Fund Denmark	IFD	Yes	Yes	1.000.000,00	3–5
7	Estonia	Sihtasutus Eesti Teadusagentuur	ETAg	Yes	No	300.000,00	1–2
8	Finland	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry	MMM	Yes	Yes	600.000,00	2
9	France	Agence Nationale de la Recherche	ANR	Yes	Yes	1.500.000,00	5–6
10	Germany	Bundesministerium für Forschung, Technologie und Raumfahrt	BMFTR	Yes	Yes	1.600.000,00	6–8
11	Greece	General Secretariat of Research & Innovation	GSRI	Yes	No	1.000.000,00	5–6
12	Hungary	Nemzeti Kutatási, Fejlesztési és Innovációs Hivatal	NKFIH	Yes	No	330.000,00	1–2
13	Ireland	Environmental Protection Agency of Ireland	EPA	Yes	Yes	578.000,00	3
14	Israel	Ministry of Energy	MoE	Yes	No	220.000,00	1
15	Latvia	Latvijas Zinātnes padome	LZP	Yes	Yes	570.000,00	1–2
16	Lithuania	Lietuvos mokslo taryba	LMT	Yes	Yes	300.000,00	2
17	Luxembourg	Luxembourg National Research Fund	FNR	Yes	No	350.000,00	1
18	Malta	Ministry for Environment, Energy and Enterprise	MEER	Yes	No	400.000,00	1–2
19	Moldova	National Agency for Research and Development	NARD	Yes	Yes	100.000,00	1–2

	Country	Funding Partner Organisation	Acronym	JTC (yes/no)	ECR (yes/no)	National budget	Expected number of projects to be funded by the FPO
20	Netherlands	Dutch Research Council	NWO	Yes	No	2.000.000,00	4–5
21	Norway	The Research Council of Norway	RCN	Yes	Yes	1.250.000,00	3–5
22	Poland	Narodowe Centrum Badań i Rozwoju	NCBR	Yes	No	1.500.000,00	4–6
23	Romania	The Executive Agency for Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation Funding	UEFISCDI	Yes	No	1.000.000,00	5
24	Slovak Republic	Slovak Academy of Sciences	SAS	Yes	Yes	240.000,00	2
25	Slovak Republic	Slovak Centre of Scientific and Technical Information	CVTI SR	Yes	Yes	800.000,00	2–3
26	South Africa	Department of Science and Innovation	DSTI	Yes	Yes	400.000,00	2–3
27	Spain	Agencia Estatal de Investigación	AEI	Yes	Yes	1.500.000,00	8–10
28	Spain	Centre for the Development of Industrial Technology	CDTI	Yes	No	400.000,00	2–3
29	Sweden	The Swedish Research Council for Environment, Agricultural Sciences and Spatial Planning	FORMAS	Yes	Yes	1.800.000,00	6–8
30	Tunisia	The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research	MHESR	Yes	No	700.000,00	7
31	Türkiye	Turkiye Bilimsel Ve Teknolojik Arastirma Kurumu	TUBITAK	Yes	No	500.000,00	2–3
32	United Kingdom	UK Research and Innovation	UKRI	Yes	No	1.735.657,00	5–7
Estimated EU contribution (in Euro)						7.492.097,10	
Total national commitments (in Euro)						26.729.707,00	
Total contribution (in Euro)						34.221.804,10	
EU Member States and Associated countries							
Third countries or other countries							

3.4. Call Process

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

STEP 1

The Consortium Coordinator must submit a pre-proposal on behalf of the consortium, providing key data on the proposed project. The Consortium Coordinators fulfilling the condition of eligibility of the modality of ECR (see section 3.1.2) are invited to mark it in the submission tool. Their pre-proposals are submitted as part of the ECR modality. The deadline for the submission of the pre-proposal is **10/11/2026, 15h00 CET**.

STEP 2

The Consortium Coordinator must submit a full proposal on behalf of the consortium. The deadline for full proposal submission is **06/04/2027, 15h00 CEST**. Deadline to be confirmed after Step 1.
ANNEX A provides the contact information of the NCPs in each participating country/region for the JTC 2026 and its modalities. It is required that each partner in a consortium checks their national/regional regulations for each modality prior to submission of a pre-proposal and full proposal and confirms their eligibility with the NCPs.

3.5. Dates and deadlines

Tentative Time Schedule of the Water4All 2026 Joint Transnational Call and its modalities	
First Step: Submission of pre-proposals	
June 2026	Call Pre-announcement
08 Sept. 2026	Call Publication and 1st Step opening
10 Nov. 2026, 15.00 CET	Deadline for submission of the pre-proposals
09 Feb. 2027	Notification to the applicants of the 1st Step outcomes
09–23 Feb. 2027	Period for request to redress
Second Step: Submission of full proposals	
09 Feb. 2026	2nd Step opening
06 Apr. 2027, 15.00 CEST	Deadline for submission of the full proposals
September 2027	Notification to the applicants of the 2nd Step outcomes
September/October 2027	Ethical Clearance
September/October 2027	Period for request to redress
September/October 2027	Communication of the decision after request to redress
Last quarter 2027 / 1st quarter 2028	Start of the Transnational Projects
Last quarter 2030 / 1st quarter 2031	End of the Transnational Projects

3.6. Confidentiality & Conflict of interest

Research plans (pre-proposals and full proposals), abstracts, and evaluation statements are confidential documents. Proposal documents are therefore handled and stored with due care and confidentiality.
Water4All consortium and its Call Secretariat ensure complete confidentiality to applicants during the evaluation process, i.e., the proposals will only be available to the national/regional funding organisations and the mandated experts responsible for the evaluation of the proposal. Experts appointed for the evaluation will sign a confidentiality agreement and will be asked to declare any conflict of interest. The proposals will be handled by the Water4All Call Secretariat. Each of the funding organizations will subsequently handle projects approved for funding. Accordingly, national law will govern. Projects approved for funding will be governed by the applicable law on confidentiality, including, where relevant, national law of the participating funding organisations.
The publishable information of the Transnational Projects selected for funding, as listed in below section 3.7, will be published at the end of the call process.

3.7. Publishable Information

A list of the pre-proposals invited to submit a full proposal in Step 2 will be published (at the end of Step 1) by Water4All and FPOs in the context of the "Widening" option procedure (cf. section 5.6) with the following information: Proposal Number, Project Title, Project Acronym, Main Topic and Keywords. A list of the funded Transnational Projects will be published at the end of the call process (once the projects have been selected). Therefore, applicants should be aware that the following information from the proposals may be published by Water4All and FPOs for promotional purposes: (1) Project Title and Project Acronym, (2) Publishable abstract, (3) Duration of the project, (4) Total costs and total funding of the research project, (5) Organisation name and country of each partner, (5) Name of the Project Coordinator.

3.8. Privacy Policy

By submitting the application, the Consortium Coordinator and partners agree to the use, to the share (for specific purposes: e.g., evaluation, for future nomination of experts, Water4all specific communication) and to the storage of projects related information according to the Privacy Policy and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Further information on Privacy Policy[3] is presented on the Online Submission Tool.

4. Eligibility criteria

Partners should note that the general eligibility criteria (section 4.1) and the national/regional regulations are decisive for the initial evaluation of proposals, at both first and second steps.
A proposal that does not fulfil all the general eligibility criteria will be declined without any further

[3] 3www.water4all-partnership.eu/privacy-policy

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

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

Eligibility of Water4All Partnership beneficiaries

Research teams from some beneficiaries of Water4All partnership may exceptionally participate to this co-funded call; the list of the beneficiaries of Water4All partnership and who might apply for funding under this Co-funded call are indicated in ANNEX B. **For those beneficiaries, measures have been foreseen to mitigate the risk of, perception of, or de facto conflict of interest or unequal treatment of applicants**. No other beneficiary of Water4All partnership may apply for funding under the JTC 2026 or its modalities.

4.1. General eligibility criteria

The general eligibility criteria for the JTC and the ECR modality are summarized in Table 2. In case of not fulfilling these requirements, the proposal will not be considered for funding.

Table 2: General Eligibility Criteria for the JTC and the ECR modality

Scope	• Proposals must address at least one main topic, even though it is not compulsory to address all subtopics within a topic in the proposals. Each consortium is responsible for choosing the main topic that best fits with their proposal.
Consortium composition	**General consortium composition** • Each consortium must be composed of **at least a minimum of three (3) eligible partners**that request funding from participating Funding Partner Organisations (FPOs) from three different countries. • In addition to the abovementioned condition, the projects must involve **at least two independent legal entities from two different EU Member States** or **Horizon Europe Associated Countries** as recipients of the financial support. • The **upper limit of eligible project partners per consortium is seven (7)**(including 1 self-funded partner) for the projects submitted as JTC as well as for those under the ECR modality. This upper limit can be increased to eight partners per consortium if at least one partner from an undersubscirbed FPO is included. • The national/regional regulations may limit the maximum number of partners from the same country within the consortium. • For proposals involving up to five (5) partners, maximum two (2) entities that are also involved in the Water4All partnership (listed in ANNEX B) may participate in the same proposal. Larger proposals may involve up to three (3) entities that are also involved in the Water4All partnership (listed in ANNEX B).
	Consortium Coordinator in JTC • In each proposal, one of the entities must act as the Consortium Coordinator who has the responsibility for submitting the proposal. • The Consortium Coordinator must be eligible for funding by a FPO of this call. • The Principal Investigators (PI) of the entity acting as Consortium Coordinator can only participate in one proposal of either JTC or the ECR modality (i.e., if the PI is the Consortium Coordinator of a proposal, he/she cannot participate in any other proposal of the JTC or ECR, neither as a Consortium Coordinator nor as PI of a partner).
	Consortium Coordinator in ECR • The PI of the entity acting as Consortium Coordinator must have obtained their PhD less than 10 years prior to the call launch (i.e. after 12 September 2016), unless the FPOs calculate any exemption (e.g. maternity leave) as specified in the national/regional regulation annex. The other PIs in the Consortium **do not**need to be early career researchers. • **A Consortium Coordinator who complies with the ECR criteria may decide whether they wish to participate in the JTC or in the ECR, however, participation in both modalities is incompatible.** • In each proposal, one of the entities must act as the Consortium Coordinator which has the responsibility for submitting the proposal. • The Consortium Coordinator must be eligible for funding by a FPO of this call. • The PI of the entity acting as Consortium Coordinator can only participate in one proposal of either JTC or the ECR modality (i.e., if the PI is the Consortium Coordinator of a proposal, he/she cannot participate in any other proposal of the JTC or ECR, neither as a Consortium Coordinator nor as PI of a partner).
	Workload • The workload distribution within a consortium must be balanced, and no partner (including a self-funded partner) shall have more than 50% of person months. • Partners from the same country shall not have, altogether, more than 50% of person months

	Partners not requiring funding (self-funded partners) • No more than one self-funded project partner per consortium is allowed. • The applicants have to prove their willingness to self-fund their own activities or the willingness of other partners to fund their activities by sending a letter of intent/commitment together with the full proposal. • They have to follow the rules given in this Call Announcement and have to be part of the project consortium agreement. • A self-funded partner cannot coordinate a project. • They are not considered in the minimum requirement of eligible partners and countries in the Water4All eligibility criteria. • They are counted for the requirement of the maximum number of partners in a project.
Duration	• The Transnational Projects duration must be 36 months. • Start date and end date of the researcher groups within the consortium must be aligned as far as possible.
Submission	• Pre-proposals and full proposals must be submitted before the deadlines. • Pre-proposals and full proposals must be submitted correctly and completely via the Online Submission Tool as outlined in Chapter 6. • Pre-proposals and full proposals must be written in English.

4.2. National/regional eligibility criteria

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

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

4.3. Eligibility of international research institutions

The following eligibility rules count for international research institutions:

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

4.4. Recommendations for the applicants

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

Scope

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

Consortium composition

- All proposals are encouraged to consider geographical balance and implementation in appropriate geographic settings and according to the objectives of the proposal, including in low- and middle-income countries/regions.

- Project partners may participate in more than one proposal provided this is in line with the national/regional regulations.
- Participation of legal entities from countries (and/or regions) not participating in the call, at the entities' own expense, is welcome.
- Project partners that are not eligible for funding may participate at their own expense or if they have their own separate source of funding. They have to comply with requirements set out in Table 2 for partners not requiring funds.
- It is encouraged but not compulsory to involve stakeholders (i.e., small and medium enterprises (SMEs), industries, authorities, public administrations, associations, as well as civil society organisations) as partners or self-funded partners. The participation of stakeholders is subject to national/regional regulations if eligible for funding.
- All proposals should integrate the gender dimension[4] of RDI activities.
- Every partner in a proposal, including a self-funded partner and subcontracted partner, needs a Participant Identification Code (PIC) from the EC to be included in the submission. The applicants have to check their PIC or ask for the creation of a PIC well in advance of the submission[5].

Budget

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

Duration

Duration of the Transnational Projects must be **36 months**. Funded consortia will be asked to agree on a starting date no later than 31 March 2028 and an end date no later than 31 April 2031.

4.5. Further considerations

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

4.6. Ethical issues

For all proposed research activities funded by Water4All, **the ethical dimension is an integral part of research from the beginning to the end**, and ethical compliance is seen as pivotal to achieving real research excellence.
The Horizon Europe Framework Programme sets high expectations. The Grant Agreement states: 'The action must be carried out in line with the highest ethical standards and the applicable EU, international and national law on ethical principles. The beneficiaries must commit to and ensure the respect of basic EU values (such as respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and human rights, including the rights of minorities).'

The responsibility for 'ethics' lies with the individuals carrying out the research.

Applicants are required to describe any potential ethical aspects of the work to be carried out, and how the project will fulfil applicable requirements in institutional, national and EU legislation.

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[4] ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants_manual/hi/gender/h2020-hi-guide-gender_en.pdf
[5] 9-digit number serving as a unique identifier for organisations (legal entities) participating in EU funding programmes / procurements. If needed, one can apply for a temporary PIC on: ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/how-to-participate/participant-register. A search tool for organisations and their PICs is available on ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/how-to-participate/participant-register-search. We suggest validating the PICs via the public available Partner Search – Organisation Profile service. This allows use to fill out some requested data inputs automatically, which is less error-prone and provides much better user experience.
ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/support/apis

The applicants are responsible for completing the Ethics Self-assessment and Detailed Ethics Self-assessment section of the application, as required, to the best of their knowledge, at the time of the proposal submission. For more information on each of the ethics issues and how to address them, including detailed legal references, see the European Commission guidelines on 'How to Complete your Ethics Self-Assessment'.
If the proposal is selected for funding the applicant is reminded that, before starting an action task raising ethical issues, s/he must have obtained all approvals or other mandatory documents needed for implementing the task, notably from any (national or local) ethics committee or other bodies such as data protection authorities. For more information see Annex 5 of the Grant Agreement Model.
The Transnational Project must also comply with **the EU "Do no significant harm" principle (DNSH).** The applicant must integrate environmental considerations into all stages of research projects, from design to implementation and evaluation. It ensures that research, even if beneficial in one area, does not cause significant harm to other environmental objectives
Useful links:

- Link:ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/how-to-complete-your-ethics-self-assessment_en.pdf
- Link:ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/agr-contr/general-mga_horizon-euratom_en.pdf

5. Evaluation of Proposals

5.1. Evaluation Procedures

A two-step evaluation procedure will apply, for the pre-proposals (step 1) and the full proposal (step 2) respectively. The evaluation procedure will be common for all proposals submitted under the JTC and ECR modality and regardless the topics.
The CSC will set up an Evaluation Panel (EP), which will be comprised of international scientific experts from the relevant research areas covered in this call. Its composition will consider the gender and geographical balance. The EP members cannot be applicants in the joint call and cannot evaluate proposals with which they declared a conflict of interest, to ensure a fair evaluation process and equal treatment of applicants.
The CS will check that no Conflict of Interest exists concerning the proposals evaluated.
The EP will be headed by a Chair and a viceChair. The Chair and viceChair will be in charge of moderating the EP meetings and conveying the results of the discussions to the CSC.
All proposals, either submitted under the JTC or the ECR modality will be evaluated by the same EP and in accordance with the same evaluation criteria (see section 5.2) and ranked in one or several ranking list(s) per modality and/or per topics.
An independent observer will be invited as external observer to the EP and CSC meetings to assess the conformity of the general procedure with the EU regulation.

Step 1 (Pre-proposal stage)

Pre-proposals submitted correctly and within the deadline will be checked for eligibility by the CS against criteria defined in Chapter 4 and by the FPOs according to their national/regional criteria.
All eligible pre-proposals should be subject to a scientific evaluation by three (3) EP members, as far as possible, based on two criteria – '**Excellence**' and '**Impact**' (see Table 3). One of the EP members will act as the rapporteur during the EP meeting.
During the EP meeting, the evaluation results of each pre-proposal will be presented by the rapporteur. The EP will discuss the pre-proposals and agree on the final scores for each criterion and afterwards, the scores of the two criteria will be summed up to produce the final overall score. All applicants will receive a consensus report from the EP.
A ranking list of pre-proposals will be produced, including only those pre-proposals that meet the minimum threshold, i.e., 3 out of 5 in each criterion.
The objective of this first step is to identify the best proposals to proceed to Step 2 and to ensure balance between requested and available funds at the national/regional level. The ranked eligible pre-proposals will be sent to the CSC and divided in 3 groups, according to their scores: Group A (highest evaluation scores), Group B (medium evaluation scores) and Group C (low evaluation scores). All pre-proposals in Group A, will be invited to Step 2. Among the pre-proposals in Group B, proposals will be selected to Step 2, taking into account the ranking, the representativeness of all FPOs, the participation in the ECR modality and the funding ratio limits. Pre-proposals in Group C will be dismissed for their low classification.
Consortium Coordinators will be informed of the outcomes by the CS and, if appropriate, invited to submit a full proposal.

Step 2 (Full proposal stage)

After the submission deadline for full proposals, the submitted full proposals will be checked to ensure that they meet the formal call criteria and have not changed substantially from the respective pre-proposals. Full proposals not meeting the formal conditions will be rejected without further review.
As in Step 1, each full proposal will be reviewed by three (3) members of the EP based on three criteria – '**Excellence**', '**Impact**' and '**Quality and Efficiency of Implementation**'. The EP members will assess the full proposals in advance of the EP meeting and prepare individual evaluation reports. In case of a missing expertise in the EP for some full proposals, the CS will identify and mobilize external experts to obtain three (3) individual evaluation reports.
The evaluation results for each full proposal will then be presented by the rapporteur during an EP meeting and discussed by the Panel members. The EP meeting will complete the evaluation procedure by agreeing on the final individual score for each criterion, and the overall score for each proposal. Due to the large number of proposals evaluated, the EP could decide to focus on those proposals that report divergent scores from the evaluators. Any proposal where there is a consensus between the evaluators on any of the three criteria being below the threshold (i.e. 3 out of 5 in each criterion) may not be discussed and ranked by the EP (regardless if there is divergence or not in other scores). The overall threshold on the final score is 10/15: no project with a lower score will be funded.
The decisions of the EP should be taken collectively, preferably by consensus or by simple majority of the panel members, in case consensus cannot be reached. The rapporteur will produce a common consensus report on behalf of the EP for each full proposal, which will be transmitted to the applicants.
A ranking list of proposals will be produced based on the final scores. Depending on the number of proposals per modality, the topics coverage and the budget availability, the CSC can decide to organize this ranking list in several ranking lists either per modality (JTC or ECR) and/or per topics, strictly following the final score of each full proposal as agreed by the EP.

The final ranking list(s) will be forwarded to the CSC, which will meet to decide on the projects to be recommended for funding by FPOs. For this decision, the CSC will strictly follow the order of the ranking list(s) from the EP until the available funding is exhausted.
The projects with the same final scores will be prioritised by the CSC taking into consideration a number of principles. The CSC may decide how to use some of the following principles providing that they are used uniformly for all proposals:
- Maximizing the total number of projects funded and thus optimizing the amount of EC financial support to the Water4All call;
- Prioritizing the projects submitted under the ECR modality;
- Maximizing the number of countries/regions involved into the projects funded;
- Assuring a good balance between different topics of the call;
- Promoting the allocation of the EC financial support pro rata, based on the actual contributions of the Funding Organisations involved in the proposals.

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

5.2. Evaluation Criteria

If a pre-proposal or a full proposal passes the general and national/regional eligibility checks, it will be evaluated following the procedures reported in the previous section 5.1. The following evaluation criteria will be applied by the EP members (as well as the external experts, if needed) in order to assess each proposal. For two-stage submission procedures, only the aspects in bold are considered for the evaluation of first-stage applications.

Table 3: Evaluation Criteria

Excellence	Impact	Implementation
Threshold: 3/5	**Threshold: 3/5**	**Threshold: 3/5**
1.1 Clarity and pertinence of the project's objectives to the Water4All 2026 JTC topics and the extent to which the proposed work is ambitious, and goes beyond the state of the art. **1.2 Soundness of the proposed [for the first stage: overall[1]] methodology,** including the underlying concepts, models, assumptions, inter-disciplinary approaches, appropriate consideration of the gender dimension in research and innovation content, and the quality of open science practices, including sharing and management of research outputs and engagement of citizens, civil society and end-users where appropriate.	**2.1 Credibility of the pathways to achieve the expected outcomes and impacts specified in the work programme, and the likely scale and significance of the contributions from the project.** 2.2 Suitability and quality of the measures to maximise expected outcomes and impacts, as set out in the dissemination and exploitation plan, including communication activities.	3.1 Quality and effectiveness of the work plan, assessment of risks, and appropriateness of the effort assigned to work packages, and the resources overall. 3.2 Capacity and role of each participant, and the extent to which the consortium as a whole brings together the necessary expertise.

Overall Score Threshold at Full proposal stage: 10/15

[1] Including all aspects mentioned in the first stage proposal template, which also include the integration of the gender dimension in research and innovation content as well as open science practices.

5.3. Scoring system

Evaluation Panel members will address all sub-criteria described in Table 3, but individual scores will be attributed only to the three main criteria. Each criterion will be scored from 0 to 5 (half marks are only allowed in step 1) based on the scoring system. The threshold for each criterion is 3 out of 5: no project with a lower score for one of the criteria, or an overall score lower than ten (10) at Step 2 will be funded.

Table 4: Scoring System

0 – LIMITED – The proposal fails to address the criterion or cannot be assessed due to missing or incomplete information.
1 – POOR – The criterion is inadequately addressed, or there are serious inherent weaknesses.
2 – FAIR – The proposal broadly addresses the criterion, but there are significant weaknesses.
3 – GOOD – The proposal addresses the criterion well, but a number of shortcomings are present.
4 – VERY GOOD – The proposal addresses the criterion very well, but a small number of shortcomings are present.
5 – EXCELLENT – The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion. Any shortcomings are minor.

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

5.4. Funding recommendation

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

5.5. Redress procedure

Applicants can request to redress the evaluation outcome if they suspect a breach in the application of the evaluation and selection procedures. This redress procedure only covers the procedural aspects of the evaluation and/or eligibility checks, including the national eligibility checks. The request to redress will not call into question the scientific or technical judgement of appropriately qualified experts.
In this case they shall submit their appeal to the Partnership Coordination Team of Water4All (redress_water4all@agencerecherche.fr) and the CS (water4all.call@ptka.kit.edu) via email, up to 14 calendar days after the date of dispatch of the evaluation outcome email by the CS at the end of each stage (first or second step). The proposal outcome email containing the results of the evaluation will give information on the appeals procedure, which is described below.

Admissibility of request to redress

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

– The request must be submitted by the Consortium Coordinator of the proposal to which the request to redress relates
– Only one request to redress per proposal will be considered
– The request must be addressed to the Water4All viceChair
– The request must be submitted via email within the 14 calendar days deadline
– The request must contain the following minimum information:
  • The name of the call for proposals;
  • The proposal number;
  • The title of the proposal;
  • A description of the alleged shortcomings of the evaluation procedure.

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

Procedure

Upon receipt of a request to redress, an acknowledgement of receipt will be sent by the CS within 7 calendar days. The acknowledgement will report the redress process and the anticipated date by which a decision on the request to redress will be communicated to the appellant.
All requests to redress received by the 14 calendar days deadline will be processed together and the decision will be communicated to the appellant within 14 calendar days from the deadline for submitting the requests. The Water4ll viceChair will establish an internal "Redress Committee" chaired by the Water4All viceChair and comprised of the Independent Observer, one representative from the Ethics and Deontology Board of Water4All and one representative of the Water4All consortium (Pillar B leader / representative of the Water4All Partnership Coordination Team / FPO not involved in the 2026 JTC). The role of the "Redress Committee" is to evaluate the requests to redress according to the procedure, ensuring fair and equal treatment of applicants.
They will examine the requests with support of the CS and one representative per FPO concerned by the requesting projects, if needed. The "Redress Committee" will provide its opinion on the implementation of the evaluation procedure, on the basis of the available information related to the proposal and its evaluation, and will make recommendation to the Water4All viceChair, who is in charge of deciding, except for national eligibility.
A negative national eligibility check of a FPO cannot be overruled by the viceChair. Requests to redress on national eligibility decisions will be assessed by the FPO responsible for the national eligibility check, that will provide justification about its decision to the Vice Chair, in order to prove that national funding rules listed in the Call Announcement have been applied correctly.

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

For Step 2: The redress procedure may lead to a re-evaluation of all or part of the proposal by independent experts not involved in the previous evaluation or to the confirmation of the initial evaluation.
A re-evaluation will only be carried out if the request to redress shows that the selection procedure was flawed by a breach which affects the evaluation outcome and the final decision on whether to fund a proposal. This means, for example, that a problem relating to one evaluation criterion will not lead to a re-evaluation if the proposal has failed anyway on another criterion or if even by adding the maximum points for this criterion, the final score still remains below the funding threshold.
The score following any re-evaluation will be regarded as definitive. It may be lower than the original score. All requests to redress will be treated in confidence and will not prejudice future applications.

5.6. Widening Option

The "widening" option between the pre-proposal stage and the full-proposal stage aims to maximize the number of countries/regions involved into the projects funded.
Consortia invited to submit a full proposal in step 2 of the evaluation process will have the possibility to include in their consortium, either on request of the Funding Partner Organisations (FPOs) or on a voluntary basis, a new partner established in an underrepresented country and FPO between Step 1 and Step 2. The list of underrepresented countries and FPOs will be published on Water4All website after Step 1 outcomes.
The addition of a new partner should not substantially change the proposals' content but should be relevant and enhance the original focus of the proposal.

The addition of a partner from an underrepresented funding organisation does not count towards the maximum changes allowed between step 1 and 2 (cf. section 6.2). However, eligibility procedure remains the same and national/regional eligibility rules still apply. Consortia are invited to check the Water4All Partnering Tool for potential suitable partners.
Please note that all changes in the consortium composition should be conducted in close collaboration with the concerned Funding Partner Organisation and requests for changes shall be assessed and allowed by all the FPOs involved in the proposal.

5.7. Fallback Procedure

The objective of this procedure is to provide an additional mean between step 1 and step 2 to avoid rejecting valuable pre-proposals due to high financial pressure on some individual FPOs. This procedure is complementary to the "widening" option and provides a consortium with the possibility to remove a project partner requesting funding from a FPO under high financial pressure (i.e. oversubscribed by a factor higher than 4, or 3 for a FPO not eligible for EC co-Funding) or replace it with a project partner requesting funding from an underrepresented FPO listed in the "widening" option.
This procedure can be used only upon suggestion of the Call Steering Committee among the pre-proposals in Group B invited to submit a full proposals in step 2 and which fulfil the following criteria:

- The pre-proposal must include only one project partner requesting funding from a FPO with high financial pressure;
- This project partner must not be the coordinator;
- This project partner should not contribute more than 25% of the overall project person months;
- If the removal of this project partner results in a breach in the general eligibility criteria (i.e. project partners from less than three countries or less than two EU MS or Horizon Europe AC countries), the removed project partner must be replaced with a project partner requesting funding to an underrepresented FPO listed in the "widening" option;

All Main Applicants will be informed at the same time. Removing (and/or replacing) a project partner requesting due to high financial pressure will be part of the writing process of the full proposal.

The Fallback Procedure is not mandatory – should a consortium choose that they do not wish to proceed without the project partner in question, they can choose not to submit their full proposal. Additionally, depending on any contracts/agreements already signed within the consortium in question or any intellectual property arrangements, the project partner in question may also refuse to be removed/replaced (which would also lead to the pre-proposal remaining unchanged and being removed from the Call).
The removal of a project partner requesting funding from a highly oversubscribed FPO or addition of a partner from an underrepresented funding organisation does not count towards the maximum changes allowed between step 1 and 2 (cf. section 6.2).

After stage 2 of the Call has closed, the Call Secretariat will examine the affected full proposals as part of the transnational eligibility checks and declare ineligible the full proposals which have not removed the project partners concerned by the Fallback procedure. Additionally, full proposals which no longer fulfil the general eligibility and/or national eligibility rules will also be declared ineligible.
Please note that all changes in the consortium composition should be conducted in close collaboration with the concerned Funding Partner Organisation and requests for changes shall be assessed and allowed by all the FPOs involved in the proposal.

6. Application procedures

A two-step application procedure will apply equally for the JTC and its modalities. Pre-proposals and full proposals must be submitted electronically via a specifically designed web platform, the Electronic Proposal Submission System (EPSS), using the templates provided.
Applicants should note that the online system may experience high traffic volumes in the last hours before the submission deadline and it is therefore highly recommended to submit the final version of the pre / full-proposal well in advance of the deadline to avoid any last-minute technical problems. Requests for extensions of the deadline due to last minute technical problems will not be considered.

6.1. Online Submission Tool

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

Step 1 (Pre-proposal stage)

1. The Consortium Coordinator creates an account on the EPSS Sectionfor the Water4All 2026 JTC.
2. The Consortium Coordinator should choose under which modality they wish to participate: the JTC or the ECR.
3. The coordinator can enter, edit and save the electronic forms, add partners to the consortium, upload the project description and submit the proposal. Partners can enter and edit their own data only. Coordinator can edit partner's data only after a partner has created an EPSS user account and has agreed to join the proposal.
4. It is possible to update and submit the pre-proposal as many times as necessary until the submission deadline (10/11/2026, 15:00 CET).

Applicants should note that any core data change (such as the partner institutions, applicants' personal data and budget) after pre-proposal submission will need to be approved by the concerned FPO should the proposal be invited to Step 2 (See section 6.2).
The submission of a pre-proposal is mandatory. It is not possible to enter the application procedure at a later stage. The information given in the pre-proposal will be used to check for eligibility and to evaluate the pre-proposal.
Please note, that **some of the partners will also need to submit an application directly to their respective national/regional FPOs**. For further details about these procedures and schedule, please consult the national/regional regulationsand/or your NCP (ANNEX A).

Step 2 (Full proposal stage)

The second step of the application consists of the submission of a more extensive full proposal. Only research consortia which successfully passed the first step will be invited to submit a full proposal. All rules mentioned in the pre-proposal stage apply for this stage as well. The Consortium Coordinator and the project partners should consider the following for the submission of the full proposal:
1. The Electronic Proposal Submission Systemwill be open for invited consortia.
2. The information provided in the pre-proposal will be automatically imported into the full proposal.
3. The Consortium Coordinator can enter, edit and save all new information according to the guidelines of the full proposal in the submission tool.
4. It is possible to update and submit as many times as necessary the full proposal until the submission deadline (06/04/2027, 15:00 CEST).

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

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

For any questions regarding the submission, please contact the Water4All 2026 JTC Call Secretariat (water4all.call@ptka.kit.edu). For any technical question regarding the EPSS, please contact the EPSS Help desk (epss.water4all@g.etag.ee).

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

Please note that the information given in the pre-proposals is binding. **No major changes regarding the proposals' content will be allowed by the Call Steering Committee (CSC) between the pre-proposals and full proposals.**
Regarding the **administrative details**, a limited number of changes may be allowed, provided they are in line with the general rules of the call and the national/regional funding rules of the FPOs.

Participants shall contact the call secretariat via e-mail and their NCPs via the contacts reported in ANNEX A and in the national/regional regulations to submit their request to modify the project proposal data. The changes between the pre-proposal stage and the full proposal stage are possible, but are subject to prior endorsement, as described below for each case. Since requests for changes may take time to be processed, **such requests should be made as early as possible in the full proposal stage**, and at least **one week** before the deadline for submitting full proposals.

The following changes may be accepted:
- **Minor change of budget** may be allowed **by the relevant FPO**. A request of minor budget change must be submitted to the FPO for approval, at least **one week** before the deadline for submitting full proposals.

- Changes in the consortium composition:
  - No changes of Coordinator (i.e., Principal Investigator and entity) will be allowed, except in case of force majeure. A request of change of coordinator must be submitted to the Call Secretariat at least **one week** before the deadline for submitting full proposals and it will be discussed on a case-by-case basis by all Funding Organisations involved in the proposal.
  - Changes in the consortium composition are allowed (maximum 2 changes of Project Partners in proposals with more than 5 partners; maximum 1 change of project partner in proposals with 5 or less partners). A request for change (addition, removal or replacement of a partner) must be submitted to the Call Secretariat at least **one week** before the deadline for submitting full proposals and is subject to approval by all Funding Organisations involved in the proposal.
  - Please note that the number of changes applies to "Partner", i.e., the independent legal entity participating in the Transnational RDI project (incl. self-financed partners). For changes of team members/PIs, the relevant FPOs (and not the Call Secretariat) should be consulted, as this does not constitute a change of consortium composition (with the exception of the change of Coordinator). **Please note that:**
    - the general and national/regional eligibility criteria must be respected.
    - the final decision to allow a change in consortium will be taken by the Funding Organisations involved in the proposal, taking into account the impact of the change on the financial pressure of the concerned FPOs.
    - the addition of a partner from an underrepresented funding organisation does not count towards the maximum changes allowed between step 1 and 2 (Widening option, section 5.6);
    - the removal of a project partner requesting funding to a FPO with high financial pressure or addition of a partner from an underrepresented funding organisation does not count towards the maximum changes allowed between step 1 and 2 (Fallback procedure, section 5.7).

7. Transnational Project funding and reporting

7.1. Negotiation of grant agreements

After a positive funding recommendation, the outcome of this process will be communicated by the CS to the Consortium Coordinators, who will then have to inform the Principal Investigator of the Transnational Project partners. The grants for the funded Transnational Projects will be awarded on a national/regional basis by the relevant FPO according to their terms and conditions. Each FPO will thus fund its own national /regional research teams within the project.
The project partners must directly contact their NCP (see ANNEX A) in order to start the contract negotiation and accomplish the remaining steps until the research project can start. The Consortium Coordinator is responsible for synchronising the project start with the whole consortium.

7.2. Consortium Agreement

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

7.3. Project Reporting

In addition to the reporting required by the national/regional rules, Consortium Coordinators will be required to submit a Mid-term Progress Report and a Final Report (and deliverables needed to monitor the progress) to the CSC according to common templates which will be provided to them. All partners will have to deliver input for these reports. The monitoring will be conducted during the life span of the project.
Funding recipients must ensure that all outcomes (publications, etc.) of the Transnational Projects funded by the 2026 JTC include a proper acknowledgement of the Water4All Partnership, the EC, and the respective FPOs. In addition, each Transnational Project partner must comply with the reporting requirements of its respective national FPOs.
More information on the monitoring and reporting procedures will be provided to the Consortium Coordinators of the Transnational Projects selected for funding.

7.4. Dissemination and exploitation

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

Table 5: Meetings of Water4All Transnational Projects funded from this call.

Events	Participants	When
Water4All Kick-off meeting of the funded Transnational Projects	Coordinators and partners of funded projects, stakeholders, CSC	Spring 2028
Water4All Mid-term meeting of the funded Transnational Projects	Coordinators and partners of funded projects, stakeholders, CSC	Autumn 2029
Water4All Final meeting of the funded Transnational Projects	Coordinators and partners of funded projects, stakeholders, CSC	Spring 2031

Dissemination of Transnational Project results is essential, and the dissemination plan should propose communication routes, such as scientific papers, posters, courses or training material, web-based tools, workshops or direct intervention towards end users.
Dissemination to national end-users is necessary in all partner countries. A dissemination plan will be requested for the full proposal and should specify how the planned activities will contribute to the impact of the Transnational Project.

7.5. Open Access and Open Data

The optimisation of the impact of publicly-funded scientific research is of fundamental importance to improve conditions to i) minimise the time spent searching for information and accessing it, ii) be able to speed up scientific progress, and iii) make it easier to cooperate across and beyond the EU.
Open Access requirements for all scientific publications and long form publications produced by the Transnational Projects funded by the 2026 JTC will support Green Open Access (immediate or delayed open access provided through self-archiving), or Gold Open Access (immediate open access provided by a publisher for the most important outputs). In the case of Green Open Access, partners will (as soon as possible and at the latest on publication) deposit a machine-readable electronic copy of the published version or final peer-reviewed manuscript accepted for publication in a repository for scientific publications. In addition, partners will ensure open access to the deposited publication and bibliographic metadata. Information should be provided about all the other scholarly objects, tools and instruments that are needed to validate the conclusions of the publication.
In case of any Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) issue for some project data and products the consortium may decide to go for Opt Out Option and cover this within the project consortium agreement. Projects can opt out before or after the signature of the Consortium Agreement (thereby freeing themselves from the associated obligations) on the following grounds:

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

Depending on the funding rules of the FPOs, the costs related to the implementation of these provisions may be eligible for reimbursement during the grant.
The funded Transnational Projects are requested to develop a Data Management Plan within the first six months of the project's lifetime, according to the provisions of the HE MGA art. 17, page 110–112[6], and are expected to **appoint FAIR contact points**.

The funded projects will be requested to submit metadata on all the resources directly generated by the project, as well as additional information on how this data will be used, if and how the data will be made accessible for verification and re-use, and how the data will be curated and preserved.

8. Water4All 2026 JTC – Call Secretariat contact

Anne Petzold & Simon Frank Water4All JTC 2026 Call Secretariat

Project Management Agency Karlsruhe (PTKA) Mail: water4All.call@ptka.kit.edu

Phone: +49 721 608 23130

[6] Horizon Europe Model Grant Agreement

LIST OF ANNEXES TO THE CALL ANNOUNCEMENT DOCUMENT

The most updated version of ANNEXES listed hereafter will be available for download on the 2026 Joint Transnational Call dedicated webpage, from Water4All website – www.water4all-partnership.eu.

ANNEX A: List of national contact points (NCPs) and a matrix of the topics and modalities funded by each participating country/region
ANNEX B: List of Water4All beneficiaries that may apply to the 2026 Joint Transnational Call

STAND-ALONE DOCUMENTS SUPPORTING THE CALL ANNOUNCEMENT DOCUMENT

Supporting documents listed hereafter will be made available for download on the 2026 Joint Transnational Call dedicated webpage, from Water4All website – www.water4all-partnership.eu.

- **National/regional regulations**
- **Pre-proposal template**
- **Full proposal template**
- **Frequently Asked Questions**

National/Regional Regulations 2026 Joint Transnational Call

"SUSTAINABLE WATER MANAGEMENT"

Joint Transnational Call 2026
Publication Date: 8 September 2026
Pre-proposal deadline: 10 November 2026, 15.00 CET

Co-funded by the European Union

KINGDOM OF THE NETHERLANDS (NL)

	Funding Organisation:	**Dutch Research Council (NWO)**
National Contact Point (NCP)	Name:	Email and Phone:
	Tom van Hoof Steef de Valk	Water4all@NWO.nl +31302594060 +31306001398
Funded modalities	☒ Joint Transnational Call (JTC) – Regular modality ☐ Joint Transnational Call (JTC) – Early Career Researchers Call (ECR) modality ☒ We do NOT fund the Early Career Researchers modality	
Eligible Institutions	An application for funding from NWO may consider the following roles: – *National main applicant* (mandatory): the national applicant who leads the application to NWO and is the foreseen national project leader, in case a project is granted. – *National co-applicant* (optional): national applicants in addition to the national main applicant with an active role and responsibility in realising the project and requesting funding from NWO. A researcher may only request NWO funding for one project (part of a European consortium) in this Call for proposals, either as national main applicant or national co-applicant within an application for NWO funding. **National main applicant** To be eligible to submit a proposal, researchers must be employed for an indefinite period (with the associated employment contract) or have a tenure track agreement at any of the following research organisations: • universities and universities of applied sciences, as described in Section 1.8 subsection 1 of the Dutch Higher Education and Research Act, or universities referred to in the Policy Rules for Universities in the Kingdom of the Netherlands; • university medical centres, as described in Article 1.13, paragraph 1 of the Higher Education and Scientific Research Act; • KNAW institutes and NWO institutes; • TO2 institutions[1]; • Netherlands Cancer Institute; • Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics in Nijmegen; • Naturalis Biodiversity Center; • Advanced Research Centre for NanoLithography (ARCNL); • Princess Máxima Center. Researchers employed at a university of applied sciences and researchers employed at a TO2 institute may also submit as a national main applicant if they have at least a salaried position for a limited period of time. Individuals with a zero-hour or fixed-term employment contract (other than a tenure track appointment) cannot submit a proposal. Applicants with a part-time appointment must ensure adequate supervision of the project and all project members for whom funding is requested. It may be that the national applicant's tenure track employment contract ends before the intended completion date of the project for which grant funding is being requested, or that the national applicant's tenure agreement ends before this date due to their reaching retirement age. In such cases, the proposal must include a statement from the employer. In this statement, the research organisation in question guarantees that the project and all project members for whom funding is being requested will receive adequate supervision for the full duration of the project.	

	Funding Organisation:	**Dutch Research Council (NWO)**
	National co-applicant All requirements regarding the employment contract described under National main applicant', also apply to national co-applicants. National co-applicants must be affiliated with a research organisation either 1) eligible as a national main applicant (see above), or 2) with other research organisations as described in Article 1.1, paragraph 4 of the NWO Grant Rules 2024 that comply with the following cumulative conditions. The organisation must: • be established in the Netherlands; • be a foundation, organisation or legal entity established and governed by public law (in Dutch: publiekrechtelijke rechtspersoon) (all other legal forms, including private and public limited companies, are excluded); • have as its primary goal the independent conduct of its own fundamental research, industrial research or experimental development or with widely disseminating the results of those activities through teaching, publications or knowledge transfer; • be able to state that the organisation keeps separate accounts regarding economic/non-economic activities and that undertakings with decisive influence on the organisation do not enjoy preferential access to the organisation's results. **Note:** Prior to submission of a pre-proposal, NWO will assess whether an organisation complies with Article 1.1, paragraph 4 of the NWO Grant Rules 2024 and is thus eligible to participate as national co-applicant based on the above conditions. This assessment also helps to ensure NWO's compliance with regulations prohibiting state aid. To enable the assessment to be carried out, the intended national co-applicant's organisation must submit the following documents by email to water4all@nwo.nlno later than 20 working days before the submission deadline of the pre-proposal (i.e. by 13 October 2026, 14:00:00 CET): • a recent extract from the Chamber of Commerce; • a deed of establishment and/or current articles of association; • the most recently available annual accounts, including an audit report[2]; • a completed Research Organisation Statement, which is available on the funding page of this Call for proposals. Other relevant documents may also be included. NWO may also request additional information if the above documents do not allow for adequate determination of the organisation's eligibility to act as national co-applicant. If in a full proposal national co-applicants are added to the consortium who are not affiliated with any of the research organisations listed above, these new national co-applicants must be assessed based on the same conditions. Again, the intended national co-applicant's organisation must submit at least the above-mentioned documents by email no later than 20 working days before the submission deadline of the full proposal (i.e. by 9 March 2027, 14:00:00 CET). If the intended national co-applicant's organisation has already been assessed and found to comply with these conditions as part of a different NWO programme, please contact NWO at the above email address well before the applicable deadline to determine whether further assessment is necessary. If the intended national co-applicant's organisation fails to submit the documents required for assessment on time, NWO will not accept the organisation as national co-applicant. If a research organisation was already assessed and approved as a national co-applicant before submitting the pre-proposal, there is no need to have it assessed again for the submission of the full proposal.	
Topics to be funded	☒ Topic 1: Integrated Monitoring and Assessment for Sustainable Water Management ☒ Topic 2: Nature-Based Approaches for Resilient Water Management at Hydrological and hydrogeological system scale ☒ Topic 3: Smart, secure and adaptive water infrastructures ☒ Topic 4: Resilient Water Systems Through Systemic Change, Policy Coherence and Inclusive Governance	

	Funding Organisation:	**Dutch Research Council (NWO)**
Eligible Costs	**The available budget modules are:** ***1. Personnel:*** Salary costs can be claimed for the following positions: *1.1 Postdoc:* at least 1 position, for at least 12 months, for at least 0.5 fte, according to UNL or UMCNL rates, a benchfee is available; *1.2 Non-scientific personnel (NWP):* according to UNL or UMCNL rates; *1.3 Research leave:* max. 10% of the grant amount, according to UNL or UMCNL rates; *1.4 Personnel at universities of applied sciences, TO2 institutes and other organisations:* using the Government Tariff Manual (HOT), Table 2, under 2.2 'average total salary cost per salary scale', column 'Hourly rate productive hours, excluding VAT'; ***2. Materials:*** For project-specific material costs, up to 25% of the grant amount. Subsequently, up to 50% of the material budget can be used for work by third parties. Engagement of students may be included here according to the usual internship fee or HOT rates.[3] ***3. Knowledge utilisation:*** For activities that promote the use of knowledge from the research, mandatory and at most 20% of the grant amount. ***4. Project management:*** Up to 5% of the grant amount. It is recommended to use the NWO budget template in the pre-proposal stage to confirm eligibility of budget items and correct use of tariffs. For full proposals, it is mandatory to submit the NWO budget form for the funding requested at NWO at the time of the transnational deadline to water4all@nwo.nl. A detailed "Explanation of budget modules and indexing" can be found on the NWO funding page of this Call for proposals. Do not hesitate to contact the national contact point in case of questions.	
Funding Commitment	**Total Amount for the Call (national contribution)**	**Maximum Amount Per Proposal**
	€ 2,000,000	**€ 400,000**
Other Funding Criteria	Please note the following: – An application for NWO funding has one national main applicant, responsible for research and financial management. National co-applicants within an application for NWO funding are allowed. – Researchers employed at a university in the Kingdom of the Netherlands, umc or a research organisation, as referred to in Article 1.1, first paragraph, subparagraphs c to h of the NWO Grant Rules 2024 may not apply for a scientific or post-doc position for themselves. – PhD positions cannot be applied for in this call, due to the maximum project duration of 3 years. – Overhead costs are not eligible for NWO funding.	
Relevant documents	Relevant forms and documents to apply for funding in the Netherlands are available on the NWO website: www.nwo.nl/water4all	
Additional Info	The NWO Grant Rules 2024 and the Approval of Funding for Scientific Research are applicable to all applications for NWO funding. Any arrangements made regarding the grant from NWO must comply with the NWO Grant Rules 2024 and the European legislation on state aid. Once proposals are recommended for funding on a transnational level, the consortia will be notified by the Water4All JTC 2026 – Call Secretariat and subsequently, the national granting process will be initiated by NWO. Under the Dutch General Administrative Law Act, any interested party has the right to lodge an objection to the decision taken by NWO within six weeks of the date of the decision letter. Further information about the objection's procedure can be found on the NWO website: www.nwo.nl/en/lodging-an-objection. NWO will, if necessary, apply a one-off indexation of personnel costs when awarding a grant. The current UNL/UMCNL/HOT rate on the national decision date applies. Please refer to the "Explanation of budget modules and indexing" on the NWO funding page, for more information on indexing. As stipulated in the NWO Grant Rules, Article 3.2, paragraph 2, the project cannot start until the conditions set out in the grant award decision regarding the start of the project are met. Please note, these conditions will include a signed Consortium agreement by all partners in the transnational project. Submission of financial and scientific reports at national level is required in accordance with the rules of NWO. Granted consortia will be informed.	
Useful Links	www.nwo.nl/water4all	

1 The TO2 Institutions are Deltares, NLR, TNO, WUR and MARIN
2 No audit report is necessary for organisations not legally required to have their annual accounts audited. However, such organisations must be able to provide proof of exemption from this legal requirement.
3 All activities included in this budget module must fit the European Commission definition of 'knowledge transfer activities' in the State aid framework for research and development and innovation (OJ 2022, C 414).