



GEMSTONE

Green Manufacturing Supporting Recovery and Resilience of Industrial SMEs



Funded by
the European Union



**Financial support
to third parties**

INNOVATE Calls



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This guide for applicants is specifically dedicated to the GEMSTONE INNOVATE calls: GreenInnov and GreenAdopt.

It outlines the application modalities for the two financial support mechanisms with dedicated objectives:

⇒ GEMSTONE call – *GreenInnov*: Page 11-19

⇒ GEMSTONE call – *GreenAdopt*:Page 20-28

The calls will be opened **from 1st September 2023 until 31th October 2023.**



1. About GEMSTONE project

1.1. GEMSTONE facts

Project Acronym	GEMSTONE
Project Title	GrEen Manufacturing SupporTing recOvery and resilieNcE of industrial SMEs
Project Reference	101074549
Project Topic	SMP-COSME-2021-CLUSTER-01
Project Duration	36 months (September 2022 – August 2025)
Overall Budget	€1.050.000 will directly benefit SMEs in the form of financial support to third parties
Web	https://projectgemstone.eu/

1.2. GEMSTONE ambition

GEMSTONE aims to mobilise manufacturing companies, in particular innovative SMEs, on the challenges of “Green Manufacturing” by developing a dedicated joint service offer and operational and financial support tools around the 3 pillars “Train, Innovate, Explore” to encourage and empower manufacturing companies in their environmental and digital transition process.

The project aims to define, deepen and apply a common methodology on issues related to Green Manufacturing in 5 identified industrial sectors: Aeronautics/Defence, Energy, Mobility, Agriculture/Agri-food, Materials. This ambition is driven by the thoughtful association of European clusters with complementary ecosystems both in terms of expertise and priority targets, bringing together organizations and people facilitating innovation.

GEMSTONE strategy is:

1. To identify key needs and challenges for manufacturing companies around Green Manufacturing,
2. To support manufacturing companies in assessing their needs for new skills related to Green Manufacturing and guide them towards the relevant vocational training offers and providers,
3. To provide services and tools to manufacturing companies to create opportunities for international development in terms of business and innovation around Green Manufacturing,
4. To provide financial support to innovative SMEs to facilitate emergence of new concrete solutions and sustainable value chains within the areas identified by the project.








To this end, the consortium has planned to devote a budget of 1 050 000,00 € for financial support to third parties across a total of three mechanisms: TRAIN, INNOVATE, EXPLORE.

The maximum amount to be granted per SME by GEMSTONE project shall not exceed €60.000,00 in total even in the case of multiple granted support mechanism types to the SME during the lifetime of GEMSTONE (Explore, Train, GreenInnov, GreenAdopt).



GEMSTONE Call		Opening and closing of the call	MAX Nb of proposals	Individual grant available	MAX amount available in €
TRAIN		June 2023 – December 2024	45	€2.000 per SME	€90.000
EXPLORE		June 2023 – December 2024	40	€1.500 per SME	€60.000
INNOVATE	GREENINNOV	1 st Sept 2023 – 31th Oct 2023	5	€60.000 per project	€300.000
	GREENADOPT	1 st Sept 2023 – 31th Oct 2023	15	€40.000 per project	€600.000
Financial support provided by GEMSTONE project (TOTAL)					€1.050.000

1.3. GEMSTONE partners

<p>1 – CIMES Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes / France (Coordinator)</p> 	<p>5 – POOL-NET / Portugal</p> 
<p>2 – Pôle EMC2 / France</p> 	<p>6 – Clust-ER MECH / Italy</p> 
<p>3 – Pôle MECATECH / Belgium</p> 	<p>7 – Green and Smart Technology Cluster / Latvia</p> 
<p>4 – Metalklaster / Poland</p> 	



1.4. GEMSTONE contact points

For any enquiries regarding the GEMSTONE project, please contact the project coordinator:

- Loïc Marin - E-mail: l.marin@cimes-hub.com

For any enquiries regarding information and/ or clarification about the present call, please contact one of the GEMSTONE Committee contacts listed:

CIMES	Loïc MARIN	l.marin@cimes-hub.com
EMC2	Luisa BOUZOUBAA	luisa.bouzoubaa@pole-emc2.fr
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MPC	Janusz POULAKOWSKI	j.poulakowski@metalklaster.pl
POOL-NET	Rui Tocha	rui.tocha@toolingportugal.com
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2. GEMSTONE INNOVATION– BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

2.1. Green Manufacturing

Green manufacturing is both a path and an end combining redesigned production processes and environmentally friendly operations covering all stages and all actors of the manufacturing value chains, from design to end of life, and enabling the transition to truly circular business models and the emergence of longer-lived processes, products or equipment in existing and emerging value chains.

Green manufacturing is a global approach to be understood in the multitude of its challenges, objectives and impacts on the use of energy resources, the consumption of raw materials in a finite world context, the reduction of air pollution, water and soil, waste management, the balance of biodiversity...

These multiple aspects, the consideration and evaluation of which are necessary to make any industrial approach greener, imply that the notion of ecosystem is at the heart of green manufacturing reflections by integrating the place of the human, as a citizen and worker, and that of the territory in these reflections.

2.2. Paths towards green manufacturing

Based on the analysis of industrial companies needs and challenges, GEMSTONE project developed a Roadmap where eight paths toward Green Manufacturing have been identified for manufacturing companies. Each path is detailed in the roadmap document [available here](#).

These paths have been defined by GEMSTONE to present concrete areas that companies could engage into to progress in their environmental transition.

- *Redefining/defining the development of products and services*

The new product development is a process that all new businesses and entrepreneurs follow to generate a customer-focused product that thrives in today's competitive marketplaces. When developing new product, design stage provides for the early identification of ecological traits in the production process. Eco-design considers environmental aspects at all stages of the product development process, striving for products with the lowest possible environmental impact throughout the product life cycle. This means that products and their packaging as well as services are designed to be safe and environmentally sound throughout their life cycle.

- *Raw material substitution*



Replacing hazardous waste, environmentally damaging chemicals, non-renewable or limited materials with greener alternatives is one of the key issues of the green transition. The aim is to develop new, greener materials that emit less CO₂ into the atmosphere, less waste, and less pollution. The ultimate goal is to develop materials that are more environmentally friendly and safer to process and use. Ecofriendly materials have made significant progress in cleansing the atmosphere, reducing pollution, substituting toxic materials, decreasing waste, converting components into resources, and utilising renewable resources. Research and innovation activities are carried out to develop new, innovative and sustainable bio-based materials to improve the circularity and recyclability of products. To be sustainable, the production of biobased products must be integrated into a life cycle assessment (LCA) and eco-design strategy. Currently, there is a growing interest in the development of sustainable biobased composites as a "new alternative to conventional non-renewable synthetic fibres such as (...) carbon reinforced composites".

- ***More resource - efficient production processes (energy, water, raw materials)***

Resource efficiency in production processes is a function of the relationship between product output and resource input. It is an assessment of how efficiently resources are used to add economic value. To be more environmentally friendly, competitive and profitable, it is necessary to use fewer resources and to optimise them. There are three main ways to improve the efficiency of production processes: "eco-efficient product design, resourceefficient manufacturing processes at the plant level and integrated optimisation of the manufacturing value chain". Through the twin transitions of green and digital, companies could reap the benefits of technological innovations. The introduction of more environmentally friendly techniques and infrastructure into the manufacturing process can become an integral part of the implementation of innovative methods. Technological innovation means taking an existing product and transforming it to meet the new requirements of the ecological transition so as to reduce waste of energy, water, raw materials and all operating supplies. source input. It is an assessment of how efficiently resources are used to add economic value.

- ***Cleaner production process***

Cleaner production is the process by which resources and energy are used "efficiently, along with the elimination of toxic raw materials and the reduction of toxicity of all emissions and solid waste". Pollution and emissions include all chemical substances (solid, liquid and gaseous) that are caused by production and use, as well as all emissions to air, water and land, including emissions and excess heat from energy consumption. It involves reducing the amount and toxicity of emissions and waste at source during the production process as well as the conservation/reuse of energy sources such as heat. The methodology aims to anticipate and prevent emissions of pollutants. Appropriate technological innovations can be used in support by helping to reduce or eliminate pollution and waste at source through, among other things, technical improvements in the production process and use of materials.

- ***Waste management and promotion of product reuse and recyclability***

The transition to a circular economy implies that "the value of products, materials and resources is maintained as long as possible, and the amount of waste generated is minimised". Waste is generated at all stages of the life cycle of materials, namely extraction, production and distribution, consumption of products and services, and then processing. To be cleaner and greener, manufacturing companies need to adopt a waste management strategy that promotes the reuse or recyclability of products. Reuse is an operation by which waste is reused, possibly by diverting its original use. Recycling is the operation by which the raw material of a waste product is used to make a new object. Technological innovation can be useful in developing innovative recycling tools. Digital tools can be deployed to support a waste management strategy. For example, "Digital technologies can track products, components and materials and make the resulting data securely accessible".



- ***The development of new business models***

The transition to a circular economy will accelerate in the coming years and is expected to become the dominant model by 2030 according to European strategy projections. Companies are being asked to rethink their business model in order to remain competitive in the future. The circular economy implies thinking about new business models that reduce the use of resources, limit pollution and waste production. The sharing economy is one of them. It is a concept that values renting or borrowing instead of buying or owning goods. It may involve sharing industrial equipment such as a conveyor belt, a forklift, machinery or space such as warehouses. Another model called "Product as a Service" aims to have the customer buy a service for a limited period of time, while the supplier retains ownership of the product and has an incentive to maintain, service, improve and transform it at the end of its use. Finally, industrial symbiosis is the process whereby the waste or by-products of one industry or industrial process become the raw materials of another. In this context of developing new business models, it is certain that the digital transition should play a major role in the logistical tracking of products.

- ***Building Maintenance***

Improved inventory planning, better tracking and monitoring of the production process, lowering damage from spills, leakage, and drag-out, and ensuring adequate equipment maintenance are all examples of building maintenance.

- ***Improved Productivity***

Improving productivity requires changing factory management to reduce waste, conserve raw materials, and utilize waste products. In addition, establishing a viable business in the manufacturing sector necessitates high levels of efficiency. This ensures that you meet your output targets on all occasions, as your bottom line relies on strong production to remain healthy.

2.3. GEMSTONE INNOVATE Open Call

The objective of GEMSTONE INNOVATE open call is to **financially support SMEs projects allowing to build capacity and to accelerate development of innovative technologies and processes strengthening environmental and digital transition of European manufacturing industry**. These solutions must fall under Green Manufacturing scope defined in GEMSTONE project roadmap.

The open call aims to favour emergence and demonstration of new concrete solutions, within one of the following thematic areas:

- **Circular design**

Circular Design is a way of realising the concept of the circular economy. Traditionally, the economy follows a linear model: make, produce, consume, dispose. This vision of the economy is no longer sustainable and leads to a host of environmental problems (over-exploitation of natural resources, waste, toxic materials). The circular economy requires us to rethink product design. Circular design is based on the following principles: choice of materials that can be reused and recycled without loss of quality, optimising the lifespan of the products (repairable materials, modular design, etc.), energy efficiency in product design. It consists to create durable, reusable, repairable and recyclable products that generate zero waste to support a circular economy.

Examples of project expected under this thematic:

- *Design and production of products supporting circular economy strategy for industrial companies,*
- *Development and implementation of manufacturing processes supporting circular economy strategy,*
- *Development of materials that are more environmentally friendly and safer to process and use,*



- *Replacement of non-renewable raw materials with renewable ones,*
- ...

- **Optimal use (incl. process innovation and digital technologies)**

Optimal use in production processes is a function of the relationship between product output and resource input. It is an assessment of how efficiently resources are used to add economic value. To be more environmental-friendly, competitive and profitable, it is necessary to use fewer resources and to optimise them. Through the green and digital transition, companies could reap the benefits of technological innovations. The introduction of more environmental-friendly techniques and infrastructure into the manufacturing process can become an integral part of the implementation of innovative methods. Technological innovation means taking an existing product and transforming it to meet the new requirements of the ecological transition so as to reduce waste of energy, water, raw materials and all operating supplies.

Examples of project expected under this thematic:

- *Process production optimisation,*
- *Remanufacturing,*
- *Development of solutions based on Reduce, Reuse, Repair concept for end-of life material and/or product,*
- *Lower and cleaner energy consumption (Cleaner energy sources, less non-renewable energy, Energy consumption measurement tools, digitalisation, 4.0 for manufacturing...),*
- *Production technologies and monitoring,*
- ...

- **Value recovery**

Value recovery is the application of recycling or recovery strategies in the post-use phase of a product. Products and materials are reprocessed to minimise waste and the use of resources. The aim is to enable products and materials to be returned to the production process while ensuring that they are optimally recovered. The following may be considered as recovery processes: the recovery of materials and products from waste, residues and by-products, the recovery of energy from residual biomass, biowaste and bioresidues, or the recovery of waste heat.

Examples of project expected under this thematic:

- *Waste management and product design that promotes the reuse or recyclability of products,*
- *Integrated optimisation of the manufacturing value chain,*
- *Industrial symbiosis platforms,*
- ...

The instrument called GreenInnov has been designed to provide companies with support in the exploration and development of advanced green solution for industries. GreenAdopt will facilitate the adoption of green smart solutions by industrial European SMEs.



3. GEMSTONE CALL – GreenInnov

This section is dedicated to the **GEMSTONE CALL – GreenInnov**. If you are willing to apply to GEMSTONE CALL – GreenAdopt, please refer to information in section 4 (page 20).

3.1. GreenInnov - Description of call

	GreenInnov
<u>Scope</u>	GreenInnov aims to support SMEs in the exploration and development of an advanced green solution for industries.
<u>Goal</u>	The main goal of this instrument is to support the development of a new green technology, service, product or production process with focus on prototyping in a industrial environment.
<u>Level of TRL</u>	TRL 5 – 6 (prototyping)
<u>Maximum funding</u>	60 000€ per project
<u>Number of funded projects expected</u>	5
<u>Project duration</u>	6-10 months
<u>Participants</u>	Minimum 1 SME Small interregional ¹ consortia are promoted but not mandatory.
<u>Type of support</u>	Lump sum
<u>Total budget available</u>	300 000€

3.2. GreenInnov - Beneficiaries of the call

The call is open to manufacturing, **technology and solution providers SMEs²**, and in particular industrial equipment and tool providers.

Profiles of the applicants:

The project must be led by an SME.

Only for-profit SMEs can be directly funded.

Cluster organisations/networks are not eligible.

Mid-caps, Large Group and Centres of Research can be considered as partners without funding.

Sectors:

The project targets in priority applicants active in the following 5 industrial sectors:

- Aeronautics/Defence
- Energy
- Mobility
- Agriculture/Agrifood
- Materials

¹ At least two SMEs from different regions as defined by NUTS-2 ([list available here](#)).

² Micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) definition according to Recommendation 2003/361/EC: ‘enterprises which employ fewer than 250 persons and which have an annual turnover not exceeding EUR 50 million, and/or an annual balance sheet total not exceeding EUR 43 million.’



However, other manufacturing sectors can be considered.

3.3. GreenInnov – Supported activities

GreenInnov financial support aims to fund the following type of activities (TRL 5-6):

- Prototype development; Technical prototyping; Technical testing, and market testing; Prototype/system integration design and development,...

Applications must fall under one of the 3 thematic areas identified in section 2.3. Applicants should clearly mention the area selected in their application.

3.4. GreenInnov - Available financial support

The total EU funding available for the Call GreenInnov is €300.000,00.

The maximum financial support per project is €60.000 in the form of a lump sum.

For proposals submitted with a consortium composed of more than 1 SME, the partners should share the financial contribution according to their workplan.

Eligible costs are:

- Direct staff costs: costs related to hours of the staff of the beneficiary dedicated to actual work under the project.
- Subcontracting costs: subcontracting costs are allowed but must be duly justified and may only cover a limited part of the action. These costs shall not exceed 20% of the project budget.
- Other direct costs: travel costs, further direct incurred costs can be claimed for equipment (only depreciation costs), consumables, etc.

3.5. GreenInnov - Eligibility conditions

To be eligible, applicants must satisfy **all** the following conditions:

- Applicants are located in one of the Single Market Programme (SMP) associated countries
 - EU Member States
 - Other countries which participate in SMP Work Programmes 2022 and 2023 ([List available here](#))
- Proposals can be supported by one applicant only, which is a for profit SME, or by a consortium of at least 2 legal entities coming from two different NUTS 2 regions of European member states and SMP associated countries. In the event of a consortium, the leader partner must be a for-profit SME.
- SMEs must prove their compliance with the SME definition of the European Union as part of the application by providing the result of the SME self-assessment tool³ [available via this link](#) as annex.
- The legal entities involved in the consortium must be independent (no capital link nor no personal link among the two entities).
- Proposals must respect the conditions described in the present guide for applicants, namely the section 3.1. (Type of proposals and maximum financial contribution, TRL envisaged and the project maximum duration), at least one key domain of the GEMSTONE project and the type of action indicated.
- Proposals must be written in English, in scope and all sections of the template complete, and submitted through the dedicated platform **before 31st October at 17:00 CET**.

³ SME “self-assessment”: SME definition guide [available here](#)



- SMEs that are under liquidation, in difficulty⁴, or excluded from the possibility of obtaining EU funding under the provisions of both national and EU law, or by a decision of both national or EU authority are not eligible to apply for funding. SMEs must provide the outcome of SME Financial Viability Self-Check self-assessment to prove their financial capacity (<https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/lfv/lfvSimulation.do>) as annex⁵.
- Applicants can be involved in one (1) application to the GEMSTONE Innovate open call only: it is not allowed to apply for both GreenInnov and GreenAdopt. In the event that an SME applies twice (or more) for the same call or once for each call, all of its applications will be rejected.
- Applicant may not have any conflict of interest⁶ with the partners in GEMSTONE project.

3.6. GreenInnov - Beneficiary obligation

The activities for which the support is granted **must be carried out within a maximum of 10 months** after the signature of the sub-grant agreement (SGA).

A lump sum is a fixed amount of money which can be used by beneficiaries for several purposes related to the implementation of the project activities. Applicants must provide an explanation in their application on how the lump sum will be used among partners to reach the project results.

A smooth monitoring of the implementation of the project will be ensured by the Project Guardian designated to be the regular contact of the selected SME(s) (see 3.9.2). An intermediate technical report will be requested at the middle of the implementation period to assess the project progress according to what the SME (or the consortium) had planned. At the end of the project, the beneficiaries will provide a final technical report. Those deliverables are mandatory and final payment will be made after acceptance of the documents.

The beneficiaries must keep the original documents of their expenses in case of an audit for a period of at least 5 years after the end of the GEMSTONE project (August 2025).

The following rules must be respected:

- For the whole call process and the duration of the agreement with CIMES, selected applicants must:
 - Provide information on the activities undertaken (non-confidential), for communication and dissemination purposes, to both GEMSTONE project and EISMEA - European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency;
 - Comply with the obligations that the European Commission set in the GEMSTONE Grant Agreement, including, among others: Article 12 - Avoid conflicts of interest; Article 13 - Confidentiality and security; Article 14 – Ethics and Value, Article 17.2 - Visibility; Article 18 – Specific rules for carrying out the action; Article 19 - Information; Article 20 – Record keeping; Article 33 Liability for damages (see the [link](#));
 - Allow the Agency, the Commission, the European Anti-fraud Office (OLAF) and the Court of Auditors to exercise their powers of control on documents, information, even stored on electronic media, or on the recipient's premises.

The selected organisation must have the financial capacity to carry out the activities described in their application and to properly manage the financial support granted to them. Before applying, SMEs will have

⁴ According to the Commission Regulation No 651/2014, art. 2.18

⁵ Guidance on H2020 Financial Viability Ratios : [available here](#)

⁶ A conflict of interest is defined as a situation where one or several persons/institutions are at the center of decision-making where their objectivity and neutrality may be called into question. A conflict of interest thus appears in a natural person having to perform a function of general interest and whose personal interests are in competition with the mission entrusted to him by his administration or his company.



to check their financial situation by filling out the SME Financial Viability Self-Check and provide the result of the self-assessment. <https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/lfv/lfvSimulation.do>.⁷

Each participant must be in alignment with **all** the following situations:

- Is no bankrupt or being wound up, is not having affairs administrated by the courts, has not entered into an arrangement with creditors, has not suspended business activities, is not the subject of proceedings concerning those matters or is not any analogous situation arising from a similar procedure provided for in national legislation or regulations;
- Is in compliance with its obligation relating to the payment of social security contributions and the payment of taxes, in accordance with the legal provisions of the country in which it is established.

3.7. GreenInnov - How to apply?

Applicants will need to submit their **application through the [GEMSTONE submission platform](#)** between 1st of September and 31st of October, 2023 at 5.00 PM (CET).

After the submission, all the applicants will receive a confirmation email with the registered date and time of the submission. This email is the acknowledgement of receipt of the application.

3.8. GreenInnov – Evaluation and selection

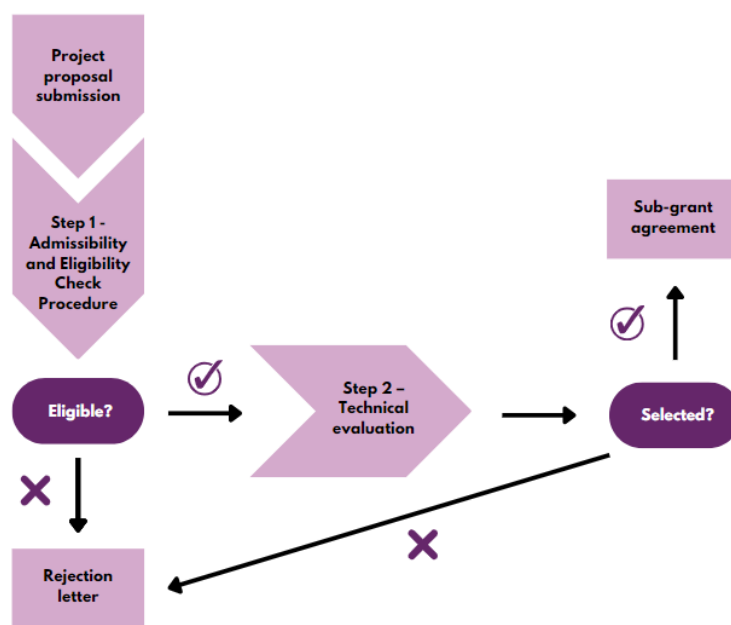


Figure 1: GEMSTONE Evaluation steps

3.8.1. Step 1 - Admissibility and Eligibility Check Procedure

The Admissibility and Eligibility Check Procedure will be proceeded by GEMSTONE project partners. Applications not meeting the admissibility and eligibility criteria will be directly discarded. The rejection letter will be sent to the main applicant's e-mail address associated with the application. The complaint procedure will be reminded (see section 3.8.4).

Eligible proposals will enter the evaluation phase (step 2) if all the following quality and technical conditions are met:

⁷ Guidance on H2020 Financial Viability Ratios : [available here](#)



Quality conditions:

- Applicants must meet the criteria defined in the guide for applicants
- Applications must be complete, with all the information, documents and annexes.

Technical conditions:

- Applications must respect the deadline, language and way of submission (see Section 3.5).

3.8.2. Step 2 – Technical evaluation

Each eligible application (following the Admissibility and Eligibility Check Procedure) will enter the technical evaluation.

3.8.2.1. Criteria

The evaluation and ranking of applications will be based on a set of criteria in addition to the above-mentioned main eligibility requirements. The following table explains the different aspects which will be considered for each evaluation criterion.

Evaluation criteria		Scoring	Weighing
1 – Excellence (30 points)	Alignment to GEMSTONE project's priorities and Green Manufacturing	0-5	2
	Innovation of the project	0-5	2
	Technical quality	0-5	2
Threshold: 15 points			
2 – Impact (30 points)	Environmental impact	0-5	2
	Economic impact	0-5	2
	Social and ecosystem impact	0-5	2
Threshold: 15 points			
3 – Implementation (30 points)	Workplan/Implementation programme	0-5	2
	Budget	0-5	2
	Risk assessment and management	0-5	1
	Team composition	0-5	1
Threshold: 15 points			
Bonus criteria (10 points)	5 extra points will be given to the applications that are building an interregional consortium.	0 or 5	1
	3 extra points will be given to the applications that are resulting from a Resilience Plan*.	0 or 3	1
	2 extra points will be given to the applications that are clearly addressing one of the priority sectors (see section 3.2).	0 or 2	1

*Resilience Plans are established with the project partners in the framework of GEMSTONE WP4.

The meaning of the marks is as follows:

- 0: Fail - The proposal fails to address the criterion under examination or cannot be judged due to missing or incomplete information.
- 1: Very Poor - The criterion is addressed in an inadequate manner, or there are serious inherent weaknesses.
- 2: Poor - While the proposal broadly addresses the criterion, there are significant weaknesses that would hinder the implementation.
- 3: Acceptable - The proposal addresses the criterion well, although significant improvements are possible, and various details are missing on implementation.



- 4: Good - The proposal addresses the criterion very well, although certain improvements are still possible, and some particular details are still missing.
- 5: Very Good - The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion in question. Any shortcomings are minor.

3.8.2.2. Scoring mechanism

Evaluation scores will be awarded based on the criteria mentioned in the section above. The maximum score for Excellence will be 30 points, for Impact 30 points and for Implementation 30 points. The threshold for each individual criterion will be 15.

An application will be ranked for funding if and only if it complies with the two following conditions :

- It reaches the threshold of 15 point for each criteria,
- It reaches as a total mean score minimum of 46 points.

In case of ex-aequo, priority will be given to applications that:

1. Have received the 5 extra points for the interregional consortium;
2. Have received the 3 extra points for the realization of a Resilience Plan;
3. Have received the 2 extra points linked to the priority sectors;
4. Have received the highest score in the *Excellence* criterion;
5. Have received the highest score in the *Impacts* criterion;
6. Have received the highest score in the *Implementation* criterion;
7. Cover a country not represented in the GEMSTONE consortium;
8. Are submitted first (according to the day and then the hour of the submission).

3.8.2.3. Evaluation procedure

Each application will be assessed by 2 external experts and 1 GEMSTONE partner. The evaluation board for each application will be structured by the project coordinator (CIMES) and the WP5 leader (EMC2):

- The GEMSTONE partner will be chosen within the consortium;
- The external experts will be chosen from a group of experts validated by the project partners following a Call of Expression of Interest. The experts will be chosen on the basis of their skills and knowledge related to the subject of the applications.

Whether for the partner or the external experts, anyone having a link in any way with the applicant(s) will be excluded from the evaluation of the application. The GEMSTONE partner who will evaluate the projet will be from a different country as the applicants.

The assessment period shall take max. 30 days starting from the closing date of the call.

3.8.3. Information to the applicants

Following the evaluation, the applicants will be informed and the evaluation results will be sent via the main applicant's e-mail address associated with the application:

- Either a rejection letter in the event of the failure of the application with the detailed explanation. The complaint procedure will be reminded (see section 3.8.4).
- Or a notification letter in the event of the success of the application. The instructions for the next steps will be described, in particular those related to the contractualization process with CIMES, GEMSTONE coordinator.

3.8.4. Complaint procedure



If after receiving the results of one of the evaluation steps, an applicant disagrees with the evaluation result, a complaint can be sent (in English) to the project coordinator's e-mail within 3 business days following the official receipt of the evaluation result.

The following information must be included:

- contact details and name of the application
- the subject of the complaint
- information and evidence regarding the alleged breach

In case of such complaints are received, a re-evaluation will only be carried out if there is evidence of a shortcoming affecting the final decision on whether to fund the proposal. This means, for example, that a problem related to one evaluation criterion will not lead to a re-evaluation if a proposal has failed on other criteria. In addition, a re-evaluation that would not change anyhow the final selection list will not be considered.

The Review Committee, which consists of the project coordinator (CIMES), the WP5 leader (EMC2) and the Contact Point (CP) designated during the application process (the GEMSTONE partner who evaluated the application), will examine the complaint on the basis of the information brought forward by the applicant, will assess the case and decide whether the complaint is justified or not and will inform the applicant and the consortium on the decision taken. In case of the designated CP is either the project coordinator or the WP5 leader, a project partner will be called following the order of the list of project partners submitted to the European Commission.

If the complaint is considered justified, the Review Committee will notify the external experts to re-evaluate the application and the related assessment part, subject to the complaint. The evaluators will then provide the Review Committee with an updated assessment. The final decision on the complaint will be communicated by the Review Committee to the applicant in writing within 7 business days from the date of submitting the complaint.

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

3.8.5. Publication of the results

Once the contracting procedure is achieved with all the selected applications (see section 3.9.1), GEMSTONE will announce the funded projects on the [project webpage](#), the [ECCP profile](#) and social media accounts [LinkedIn](#) and [Twitter](#).

3.9. GreenInnov - Contract and payments

3.9.1. Contracting procedure and requirements

The selected SMEs will start the contracting procedure which cannot be longer than 30 days from the day the notification letters are sent.

Before signing the Subgrant Agreement (SGA), each selected SME must provide documentary evidence:

- Bank account details;
- Legal Status and Location, i.e. Commerce Registration Copy or equivalent;
- Tax registration certificate.

The following documents could be asked to selected SMEs after the selection procedure and before contracting:



- Copy of the profit and loss account
- Balance sheet for the last two years for which accounts have been closed. Failing that, appropriate statements from banks shall be submitted.

In case of SMEs (or startups) without a financial history or track-record, an audit of their current fiscal period (certified by an external auditor) or a self-declaration, including a Business Plan for the on-going financial year could be required.

After the validation of the documentary evidence, the SGA will be signed between the GEMSTONE consortium represented by the project coordinator (CIMES) and each SME entitled to receive EU grants.

3.9.2. Implementation

The awarded GreenInnov applications will be implemented in the proposed timeframe at the application stage, i.e. max. 10 months after the SGA is signed. The project foresees all selected projects to start at the same time - beginning February 2024. Applicants should consider this starting date in the proposal and organise the activities accordingly.

A Project Guardian (chosen among GEMSTONE partners) will be designated for each project. The Project Guardian mission is to ensure the smooth running of the project in accordance with the application's information. It is the privileged contact between the SME and the project consortium.

If it is impossible to implement the project within the deadline for acceptable reasons, the details of the report must be exposed to the designated Project Guardian and the project coordinator, an implementation postponement may be envisaged on a case-by-case basis. If the postponement is not accepted and therefore the implementation of the project not validated, the payment will not be granted.

Therefore, any deviations in the awarded projects' timeline, including the successful evaluation of the final reports after the GEMSTONE completion date, would result in non-payments.

3.9.3. Payment procedure

There will be a pre-financing within 30 days from the signature of the Contract. Payment will be realised in two instalments.

Vouchers	Payment scheme
Green Innov	2 instalments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pre-financing: within 30 days from the signature of the contract (50%) - Final: within 30 days from the completion of the assessment of the final progress performance report (50%)

In the case of a single-SME project

Please note that the selected SME will receive the financial support on the basis of:

- The signature of the SGA with CIMES as GEMSTONE coordinator: the agreement will detail all rights and duties of the selected organisation and binding conditions for the organisation to receive the financial support.
- No later than 30 days after the end of the implementation of the project, the presentation to CIMES of the following documents:
 1. The final technical report,
 2. The completed final survey.



After acceptance of the documents, the final payment will be proceeded by CIMES no later than 30 days after the validated verification.

In the case of a multi-SME project

Please note that the selected SMEs will receive the financial support on the basis of:

- The signature of the SGA with CIMES as GEMSTONE coordinator: the agreement will detail all rights and duties of the selected organisations and binding conditions for the organisations to receive the financial support. An individual contractualisation will be made with each SME involved in the project and the first installment of 50% of the project budget will be paid in a differentiated manner to SMEs according to the budget validated during the selection.
- No later than 30 days after the end of the implementation of the project, the presentation to CIMES of the following documents:
 1. The final technical report,
 2. The completed final survey.

After acceptance of the documents, the final payment will be proceeded by CIMES no later than 30 days after the validated verification. The last installment of 50% of the project budget will be paid in a differentiated way to SMEs according to the budget validated during the selection.



4. GEMSTONE CALL – GreenAdopt

This section is dedicated to the **GEMSTONE CALL – GreenAdopt**. If you are willing to apply to GEMSTONE CALL – GreenInnov, please refer to information in section 3 (page 11).

4.1. GreenAdopt - Description of call

	GreenAdopt
<u>Scope</u>	GreenAdopt aims to facilitate the adoption of green smart solution by industrial European SMEs. The ambition of the call is to foster the implementation of a new green technology, service, product or business production process in a real operational environment.
<u>Goal</u>	Proposals will aim at implementing functional solution and demonstrate the green transition of the SMEs.
<u>Level of TRL</u>	TRL 7 – 8
<u>Maximum funding</u>	40 000€ per project
<u>Number of funded projects expected</u>	15
<u>Project duration</u>	6-10 months
<u>Participants</u>	At least 2 SMEs from different regions ⁸ (1 end-user SME and 1 technology or solution provider SME). Transnational consortia are promoted.
<u>Type of support</u>	Lump sum
<u>Total budget available</u>	600 000€

4.2. GreenAdopt - Beneficiaries of the call

The call is open to **manufacturing, technology and solution providers SMEs⁹**, and in particular industrial equipment and tool providers.

Profiles of the applicants:

The project must be led by an SME.

Only for-profit SMEs can be directly funded.

Cluster organisations/networks are not eligible.

Mid-caps, Large Group can be considered as partners without funding.

Sectors:

The project targets in priority applicants active in the following 5 industrial sectors:

- Aeronautics/Defence
- Energy
- Mobility
- Agriculture/Agrifood

⁸ At least two SMEs from different regions as defined by NUTS-2 ([list available here](#)).

⁹ Micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) definition according to Recommendation 2003/361/EC: 'enterprises which employ fewer than 250 persons and which have an annual turnover not exceeding EUR 50 million, and/or an annual balance sheet total not exceeding EUR 43 million.'



- Materials

However, other manufacturing sectors can be considered.

4.3. GreenAdopt – Supported activities

GreenAdopt financial support aims to fund the following type of activities:

- Validation or/and demonstration of a solution, product, process, service or technology in a manufacturing environment in collaboration with another SME
- Implementation of a tested solution, product, process, service or technology in real environment in collaboration with another SME

Applications must fall under one of the 3 thematic areas identified in section 2.3. Applicants should clearly mention the area selected in their application.

The ambition is to select 5 applications per thematic area. If it is impossible to do this, the partners will select the applications that have received the best ratings, regardless of the thematic area considered.

4.4. GreenAdopt - Available financial support

The maximum financial support per project is €40.000 in the form of a lump sum.

The SMEs in the consortium should split the financial contribution according to their workplan.

Eligible costs are:

- Direct staff costs: costs related to hours of the staff of the beneficiary dedicated to actual work under the project.
- Subcontracting costs: subcontracting costs are allowed but must be duly justified and may only cover a limited part of the action. These costs shall not exceed 20% of the total budget.
- Other direct costs: travel costs, further direct incurred costs can be claimed for equipment (only depreciation costs), consumables, etc.

4.5. GreenAdopt - Eligibility conditions

To be eligible, applicants must satisfy **all** the following conditions:

- Applicants are located in one of the Single Market Programme (SMP) associated countries
 - EU Member States
 - Other countries which participate in SMP Work Programmes 2022 and 2023 ([List available here](#))
- Proposals shall gather **at least 2 for-profit and independent SME** based in two different NUTS 2 regions of European member states and SMP associated countries composing the following consortium:
 - one SME representing the **technology or solution provider**
 - and another SME representing the **industry side (end-user)**
- SMEs must prove their compliance with the SME definition of the European Union as part of the application by providing the result of the SME self-assessment tool¹⁰ [available via this link](#) as annex.
- The legal entities involved in the consortium must be independent (no capital link nor no personal link among the two entities).

¹⁰ SME “self-assessment”: SME definition guide [available here](#)



- Proposals must respect the conditions described in the present guide for applicants, namely the section 4.1. (Type of proposals and maximum financial contribution, TRL envisaged and the project maximum duration), at least one key domain of the GEMSTONE project and the type of action indicated.
- Proposals must be written in English, in scope and all sections of the template complete, and submitted through the dedicated platform **before 31st October at 17:00 CET**.
- SMEs that are under liquidation, in difficulty¹¹, or excluded from the possibility of obtaining EU funding under the provisions of both national and EU law, or by a decision of both national or EU authority are not eligible to apply for funding. SMEs must provide the outcome of SME Financial Viability Self-Check self-assessment to prove their financial capacity (<https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/lfv/lfvSimulation.do>) as annex¹².
- Applicants can be involved in one (1) application to the GEMSTONE Innovate open call only: it is not allowed to apply for both GreenInnov and GreenAdopt. In the event that an SME applies twice (or more) for the same call or once for each call, all of its applications will be rejected.
- Applicant may not have any conflict of interest¹³ with the partners in GEMSTONE project.

4.6. GreenAdopt - Beneficiary obligation

The activities for which the support is granted **must be carried out within a maximum of 10 months** after the signature of the sub-grant agreement (SGA).

A lump sum is a fixed amount of money which can be used by beneficiaries for several purposes related to the implementation of the project activities. Applicants must provide an explanation in their application on how the lump sum will be used among partners to reach the project results.

A smooth monitoring of the implementation of the project will be ensured by the Project Guardian designated to be the regular contact of the selected SME(s) (see 4.9.2). An intermediate technical report will be requested at the middle of the implementation period to assess the project progress according to what the consortium had planned. At the end of the project, the beneficiaries will provide a final technical report. Those deliverables are mandatory and final payment will be made after acceptance of the documents.

The beneficiaries must keep the original documents of their expenses in case of an audit for a period of at least 5 years after the end of the GEMSTONE project (August 2025).

The following rules must be respected:

- For the whole call process and the duration of the agreement with CIMES, selected applicants must:
 - Provide information on the activities undertaken (non-confidential), for communication and dissemination purposes, to both GEMSTONE project and EISMEA - European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency;
 - Comply with the obligations that the European Commission set in the GEMSTONE Grant Agreement, including, among others: Article 12 - Avoid conflicts of interest; Article 13 - Confidentiality and security; Article 14 – Ethics and Value, Article 17.2 - Visibility; Article 18 – Specific rules for carrying out the action; Article 19 - Information; Article 20 – Record keeping; Article 33 Liability for damages (see the [link](#));

¹¹ According to the Commission Regulation No 651/2014, art. 2.18

¹² Guidance on H2020 Financial Viability Ratios : [available here](#)

¹³ A conflict of interest is defined as a situation where one or several persons/institutions are at the center of decision-making where their objectivity and neutrality may be called into question. A conflict of interest thus appears in a natural person having to perform a function of general interest and whose personal interests are in competition with the mission entrusted to him by his administration or his company.



- Allow the Agency, the Commission, the European Anti-fraud Office (OLAF) and the Court of Auditors to exercise their powers of control on documents, information, even stored on electronic media, or on the recipient's premises.

The selected organisations must have the financial capacity to carry out the activities described in their application and to properly manage the financial support granted to them. Before applying, SMEs will have to check their financial situation by filling out the SME Financial Viability Self-Check and provide the result of the self-assessment. <https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/lfv/lfvSimulation.do>.

Each participant must be in alignment with **all** the following situations:

- Is no bankrupt or being wound up, is not having affairs administrated by the courts, has not entered into an arrangement with creditors, has not suspended business activities, is not the subject of proceedings concerning those matters or is not any analogous situation arising from a similar procedure provided for in national legislation or regulations;
- Is in compliance with its obligation relating to the payment of social security contributions and the payment of taxes, in accordance with the legal provisions of the country in which it is established.

4.7. GreenAdopt - How to apply?

Applicants will need to submit their application through the [GEMSTONE submission platform](#) between **1st of September and 31st of October, 2023 at 5.00 PM (CET)**.

After the submission, all the applicants will receive a confirmation email with the registered date and time of the submission.

4.8. GreenAdopt - Selection and evaluation

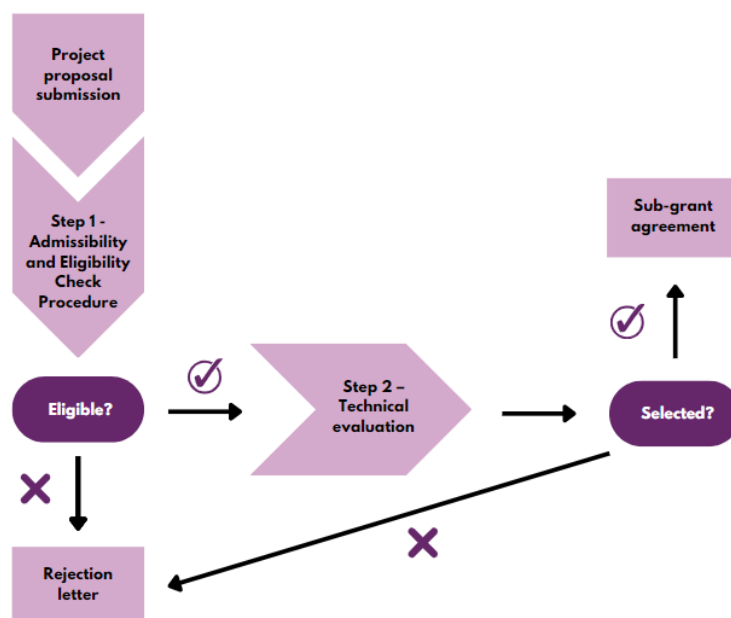


Figure 2: GEMSTONE Evaluation steps

4.8.1. Step 1 - Admissibility and Eligibility Check Procedure

The Admissibility and Eligibility Check Procedure will be proceeded by GEMSTONE project partners. Applications not meeting the admissibility and eligibility criteria will be directly discarded. The rejection letter will be sent to the main applicant's e-mail address associated with the application. The complaint procedure will be reminded (see section 4.8.4).



Eligible proposals will enter the evaluation phase (step 2) if all the following quality and technical conditions are met.

Quality conditions :

- Applicants must meet the criteria defined in the guide for applicants
- Applications must be complete (with all information, documents and annexes)

Technical conditions :

- Application must respect the deadline, language and way of submission described in section 4.5 to be taken into account.

4.8.2. Step 2 – Technical evaluation

Each eligible application (following the Admissibility and Eligibility Check Procedure) will access the Technical evaluation.

4.8.2.1. Criteria

The evaluation and ranking of applications will be based on a set of criteria in addition to the above-mentioned main eligibility requirements. The following table explains the different aspects which will be considered for each evaluation criterion.

Evaluation criteria		Scoring	Weighing
1 –Excellence (30 points)	Alignment to GEMSTONE project’s priorities and Green Manufacturing	0-5	2
	Innovation of the project	0-5	2
	Technical quality	0-5	2
Threshold: 15 points			
2 – Impact (30 points)	Environmental impact	0-5	2
	Economic impact	0-5	2
	Social and ecosystem impact	0-5	2
Threshold: 15 points			
3 – Implementation (30 points)	Work plan/Implementation programme	0-5	2
	Budget	0-5	1
	Risk assessment and management	0-5	1
	Team composition	0-5	2
Threshold: 15 points			
Bonus criteria (10 points)	5 extra points will be given to the applications that are building a transnational consortium.	0 or 5	1
	3 extra points will be given to the applications that are resulting from a Resilience Plan*.	0 or 3	1
	2 extra points will be given to the applications that are clearly addressing one of the priority sectors (see section 3.2).	0 or 2	1

*Resilience Plans are established with the project partners in the framework of GEMSTONE WP4.

The meaning of the marks is as follows:

- 0: Fail - The proposal fails to address the criterion under examination or cannot be judged due to missing or incomplete information.
- 1: Very Poor - The criterion is addressed in an inadequate manner, or there are serious inherent weaknesses.



- 2: Poor - While the proposal broadly addresses the criterion, there are significant weaknesses that would hinder the project implementation.
- 3: Acceptable - The proposal addresses the criterion well, although significant improvements are possible, and various details are missing on implementation.
- 4: Good - The proposal addresses the criterion very well, although certain improvements are still possible, and some particular details are still missing.
- 5: Very Good - The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion in question. Any shortcomings are minor.

4.8.2.2. Scoring mechanism

Evaluation scores will be awarded based on the criteria mentioned in the section above. The maximum score for Excellence will be 30 points, for Impact 30 points and for Implementation 30 points. The threshold for each individual criterion will be 15.

An application will be ranked for funding if and only if it complies with the two following conditions :

- It reaches the threshold of 15 point for each criteria,
- It reaches as a total mean score minimum of 46 points.

In case of ex-aequo, priority will be given to applications that:

1. Have received the 5 extra points for the transnational consortium;
2. Have received the 3 extra points for the realization of a Resilience Plan;
3. Have received the 2 extra points linked to the priority sectors;
4. Have received the highest score in the *Excellence* criterion;
5. Have received the highest score in the *Impacts* criterion;
6. Have received the highest score in the *Implementation* criterion;
7. Cover a country not represented in the GEMSTONE consortium;
8. Are submitted first (according to the day and then the hour of the submission).

4.8.2.3. Evaluation procedure

Each application will be assessed by 2 external experts and 1 GEMSTONE partner. The evaluation board for each application will be structured by the project coordinator (CIMES) and the WP5 leader (EMC2):

- The GEMSTONE partner will be chosen within the consortium;
- The external experts will be chosen from a group of experts validated by the project partners following a Call of Expression of Interest. The experts will be chosen on the basis of their skills and knowledge related to the subject of the applications.

Whether for the partner or the external experts, anyone having a link in any way with the applicant(s) will be excluded from the evaluation of the application. The GEMSTONE partner who will evaluate the projet will be from a different country as the applicants.

The assessment period shall take max. 30 days starting from the closing date of the cut-off.

4.8.3. Information to the applicants

Following the evaluation, the applicants will be informed and the evaluation results will be sent via the main applicant's e-mail address associated with the application:

- Either a rejection letter in the event of the failure of the application with the detailed explanation. The complaint procedure will be reminded (see section 4.8.4).



- Or a notification letter in the event of the success of the application. The instructions for the next steps will be described, in particular those related to the contractualization process with CIMES, GEMSTONE coordinator.

4.8.4. Complaint procedure

If after receiving the results of one of the evaluation steps, an applicant disagrees with the evaluation result, a complaint can be sent (in English) to the project coordinator's e-mail within 3 business days following the official receipt of the evaluation result.

The following information must be included:

- contact details and name of the application
- the subject of the complaint
- information and evidence regarding the alleged breach

In case of such complaints are received, a re-evaluation will only be carried out if there is evidence of a shortcoming affecting the final decision on whether to fund the proposal. This means, for example, that a problem relating to one evaluation criterion will not lead to a re-evaluation if a proposal has failed on other criteria. In addition, a re-evaluation that would not change anyhow the final selection list will not be considered.

The Review Committee, which consists of the project coordinator (CIMES), the WP5 leader (EMC2) and the Contact Point (CP) designated during the application process (the GEMSTONE partner who evaluated the application), will examine the complaint on the basis of the information brought forward by the applicant, will assess the case and decide whether the complaint is justified or not and will inform the applicant and the consortium on the decision taken. In case of the designated CP is either the project coordinator or the WP5 leader, a project partner will be called following the order of the list of project partners submitted to the European Commission.

If the complaint is considered justified, the Review Committee will notify the external experts to re-evaluate the application and the related assessment part, subject to the complaint. The evaluators will then provide the Review Committee with an updated assessment. The final decision on the complaint will be communicated by the Review Committee to the applicant in writing within 7 business days from the date of submitting the complaint.

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

4.8.5. Publication of the results

Once the contracting procedure is achieved with all the selected applications applications (see section 4.9.1), GEMSTONE will announce the funded projects on the [project webpage](#), the [ECCP profile](#) and social media accounts [LinkedIn](#) and [Twitter](#).

4.9. GreenAdopt - Contract and payments

4.9.1. Contracting procedure and requirements

The selected SMEs will start the contracting procedure which cannot be longer than 30 days from the day the notification letters are sent.

Before signing the Subgrant Agreement (SGA), each selected SME must provide documentary evidence:

- Bank account details;



- Legal Status and Location, i.e. Commerce Registration Copy or equivalent;
- Tax registration certificate.

The following documents could be asked to selected SMEs after the selection procedure and before contracting:

- Copy of the profit and loss account
- Balance sheet for the last two years for which accounts have been closed. Failing that, appropriate statements from banks shall be submitted.

In case of SMEs (or startups) without a financial history or track-record, an audit of their current fiscal period (certified by an external auditor) or a self-declaration, including a Business Plan for the on-going financial year could be required.

After the validation of the documentary evidence, the SGA will be signed between the GEMSTONE consortium represented by the project coordinator (CIMES) and each SME entitled to receive EU grants.

4.9.2. Implementation

The awarded GreenAdopt applications will be implemented in the proposed timeframe at the application stage, i.e. max. 10 months after the SGA is signed.

A Project Guardian (chosen among GEMSTONE partners) will be designated for each project. The Project Guardian mission is to ensure the smooth running of the project in accordance with the application's information. It is the privileged contact between the SME and the project consortium.

If it is impossible to implement the project within the deadline for acceptable reasons, the details of the report must be exposed to the designated Project Guardian and the project coordinator, an implementation postponement may be envisaged on a case-by-case basis. If the postponement is not accepted and therefore the implementation of the project not validated, the payment will not be granted.

Therefore, any deviations in the awarded projects' timeline, including the successful evaluation of the final reports after the GEMSTONE completion date, would result in non-payments.

4.9.3. Payment procedure

There will be a pre-financing within 30 days from the signature of the Contract. Payment will be realised in two instalments.

Vouchers	Payment scheme
GreenAdopt	2 instalments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pre-financing: within 30 days from the signature of the contract (50%) - Final: within 30 days from the completion of the assessment of the final progress performance report (50%)

Please note that the selected SMEs will receive the financial support on the basis of:

- The signature of the SGA with CIMES as GEMSTONE coordinator: the agreement will detail all rights and duties of the selected organisations and binding conditions for the organisations to receive the financial support. An individual contractualisation will be made with each SME involved in the project and the first installment of 50% of the project budget will be paid in a differentiated manner to SMEs according to the budget validated during the selection.
- No later than 30 days after the end of the implementation of the project, the presentation to CIMES of the following documents:



1. The final technical report,
2. The completed final survey.

After acceptance of the documents, the final payment will be proceeded by CIMES no later than 30 days after the validated verification. The last installment of 50% of the project budget will be paid in a differentiated way to SMEs according to the budget validated during the selection.



5. IPR and Data Protection

5.1. Intellectual Property Rights

The results and Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) developed during the project implementation will be the property of the corresponding SME/consortium. The applicants are advised to discuss and include to their internal consortium agreement Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) issues and the use and dissemination of the results generated by the project teams through the funding obtained.

5.2. Confidentiality and GDPR Data Protection

The list of applicants in the call will be prepared containing their basic information for statistical purposes and clarity, which will be also shared with EC for transparency. The applicants' list will not be public but will serve as statistics in project communication materials. The final list of the awarded projects and SME applicants/beneficiaries will be made public, including name of the projects, abstract, legal name of the companies, sector, country/region of origins, results of the project, duration of the projects and project budget.

To process and evaluate proposals, GEMSTONE will need to collect personal and industrial data, in particular through the submission platform. This information will be shared with external evaluators with whom Non-Disclosure Agreements will be signed to protect the confidential information given by the applicants. The GEMSTONE consortium ensures that data are managed in compliance with The General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (GDPR).

Please note that GEMSTONE requests the minimum information needed to deliver the evaluation procedures or the implementation of the funding programme. Further legal and financial information will only be requested if the SME is selected to be funded and must respect the requirements imposed by the contracting procedure.

5.3. Gender equality

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