



sundanse

Sustainable Sediment solutions for
the Danube - Black Sea system



SUNDANSE – Open Call #2

Freshwater Ecosystems

Annex 1 - Guide of Applicants



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1 What is SUNDANSE?

The [SUNDANSE project](#) (Sustainable Sediment solutions for the Danube - Black Sea system) is a 48-month-long initiative, with a budget of almost €9 million, that unites 20 partners from 10 countries (Romania, France, Belgium, Israel, Serbia, Estonia, Ukraine, Austria, Bulgaria, and Ireland) to address critical environmental challenges in the Danube River and Black Sea system, primarily focusing on disrupted sediment dynamics caused by climate change and human interventions. This Horizon Europe-funded project is a core component of the EU Mission "Restore our Ocean & Waters" and the Danube & Black Sea Lighthouse, with the main goal of developing and implementing smart, science-based, and ecosystem-friendly sediment management solutions to improve navigation, reduce flood risks, and protect biodiversity. The project's key objectives include creating a Sediment Management Handbook for the Danube River basin, developing and validating an advanced Sediment Prediction Tool using measurement and monitoring techniques, and testing innovative solutions in three use cases (Serbia, Romania and Bulgaria). To ensure scalability and broader impact, SUNDANSE will launch two Open Calls to distribute financial support of up to €100,000 each to at least three Associated Regions for the replication of successful management practices, ultimately producing an Action Plan and Roadmap to upscale these solutions across other EU freshwater systems.

The project's overarching objective is to develop a Sediment Management Handbook for the Danube River – Black Sea system, including validated solutions applicable to a wide range of associated regions and other EU freshwater systems. This is supported by specific goals to:

- Develop and validate a holistic Sediment Prediction Tool to accurately model sediment transport and assess the impact of intervention solutions on specific river conditions.
- Extend existing measurement and monitoring infrastructure by conducting an extensive series of campaigns, including using portable prototypes for the direct analysis of microplastics and toxicity, to improve data input for management frameworks.
- Test, pilot, and validate the effectiveness of holistic solutions—such as hydrotechnical works utilizing geotubes and solutions to reduce the impact of inland waterway transport (IWT) vessels on sediment—within the three designated use cases.
- Improve transnational and cross-sectorial cooperation among national authorities and other actors in sediment management by streamlining data, processes, and stakeholder feedback.
- Produce an Action Plan and Roadmap associated regions to scale up the demonstrated sustainable and effective solutions.



2 What is the SUNDANSE - Open Call #2 offer?

The SUNDANSE Open Call #2 for Financial Support to Third Parties (FSTP) has a total budget of €200,000 to fund two projects.

The FSTP aims to:

- Engage local and/or regional authorities from at least 2 'associated regions' that are in Member States/Associated countries, in the countries other than those that are part of the consortium.
- Showcase the feasibility, replicability, and scale-up of the SUNDANSE solutions.
- Replicate the SUNDANSE use cases in new regions and domains that can benefit from the developed technology.
- Fund activities aimed at flow monitoring, sediment quantity monitoring, sediment quality assessment, identification of river pollution sources, and actions to improve awareness raising on sediment flow alterations.

The maximum financial support for each associated region is €100,000 for the entire duration of the action, provided in the form of lump sum grants. SUNDANSE will ensure that the financial support provided to these third parties adheres to principles of transparency, equal treatment, conflict of interest, and confidentiality.

The Open Call is the competitive process by which eligible applicant applies to have access to the SUNDANSE programme.

Applications to the Open Call will be accepted from **8 July 2026 until 30 September 2026, 17:00 CEST**. After the selection is completed, selected applicants will be invited to sign the sub-grant agreement and enter the SUNDANSE Programme.

The SUNDANSE Programme is organised in stages of 2 to 4 months. Stage 1 from M1 to M2, Stage 2 from M3 to M6, Stage 3 from M7 to M9.

During these phases, beneficiaries will have the support of a mentor to monitor project progress and facilitate communication with technical partners.

The programme will select 2 applications, each replicating some of the activities performed in SUNDANSE uses cases defined in section 3.2 and further detailed in Annex 2: Replication Activities Catalogue, providing a maximum contribution of 100 000€, to be paid in form of lump sums at the end of each stage (17% + 58% + 25%).

2.1 Relevant links and contacts

- Project website: <https://sundanseproject.eu/>
- Open call application form: <https://www.f6s.com/sundanse-open-call-2/apply>
- Contact us: info@sundanseproject.eu

SUNDANSE – Sediments Matters – The Freshwater Ecosystems Call documents:

- Annex 1: Guide for Applicants
- Annex 2: Replication Activities Catalogue



- Annex 3: Technical Proposal
- Annex 4: Sub-Grant Agreement
- Annex 5: Declaration of Honor – Single entity

3 Who can apply and how?

3.1 Types of applicants

- This Open Call is open exclusively to local and regional authorities from the regions associated with the SUNDANSE project. For the purpose of this Call, “local or regional authorities” are defined as legal entities, including bodies representing a regional or local authority (such as regional or local agencies, regional planning bodies, regional or local port authorities, and similar entities), whose role is significant and relevant for demonstrating the feasibility, replicability, and scalability of the solutions developed within the SUNDANSE project.
- Eligible applicants must be established in EU Member States/Associated countries in areas other than those that are part of the project consortium.

Consortia applications are not accepted under this Call. Each applicant can submit a maximum of 1 application under this Open Call.

All applicants must have the legal and financial capacity to implement the proposed activities in accordance with the objectives of the SUNDANSE project and the terms of this Call for Proposals.

3.1.1 Eligible applicant

Eligible applicants for the SUNDANSE - Open Call #2 are:

- Applicants must be local/regional authorities from associated regions located in EU Member States/Associated countries other than those that are part of the project consortium.
- **SUNDANSE partners can NOT** be involved in the third party(ies) projects, neither their affiliates nor employees – including persons working under employment contract or contract or similar to an employment contract and board members.
- Relevant notes:
 - *Local or regional authorities from an associated region are understood as legal entities, including bodies representing a regional/local authority (such as regional/local agencies, regional planning bodies), whose role is significant and relevant for showcasing the feasibility, replicability and scalability of the solutions developed in the project*
 - *A Local and Regional Authority Declaration will be requested during the application phase*
 - *A signed version of the Declaration of Honor during the contract preparation phase is requested.*

3.1.2 Eligible countries



Eligible countries that may receive funding through this Open Call are legal entities from:

- Entities with a valid VAT, and a legal registration number.
- Eligible countries: Eligible are all regions within the countries containing freshwater ecosystems and that are NOT located in the countries in which the SUNDANSE partners are based. Therefore, eligible regions are within the following countries: Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Kosovo, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Montenegro, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Türkiye, and the United Kingdom.

The SUNDANSE - Open Call #2 follows the rules applied by the EC for the R&D Programme Horizon Europe in terms of geographical coverage, eligibility, and exclusions, which take precedence.

3.1.3 Multiple submissions

- The SUNDANSE - Open Call #2 will accept a **maximum of 1 application** per applicant.
- In case an applicant submits more than 1 application, only the application submitted first (as registered in the system) will be considered.

3.2 Types of projects

The SUNDANSE - Open Call #2 aims to fund innovative projects that expand the deployment, testing and engagement of developed SUNDANSE solutions across new regions.

To be eligible, your project must specifically address at least one of the following core thematic areas related to sediment dynamics and river health:

- Flow monitoring
- Sediment quantity monitoring
- Sediment quality assessment (including the identification of pollution sources of the river(s))
- Actions to improve awareness raising on sediment flow alterations

Eligible projects may be implemented in the following system types:

- **Anthropogenic systems**, including canal, reservoir, and settling basin/tailings pond.
- **Transitional and coastal systems**, including river delta, estuary, coastal lagoon, and tidal flat.
- **Lentic systems**, including open lake, closed lake, and oxbow lake.
- **Lotic systems**, including stream/creek and fluvial lake.

Projects should clearly explain the system type, the local sediment problem, and why the proposed replication activity is suitable for that ecosystem.

Optional Sediment and Water Toxicity Testing

Applicants have the option to include advanced, real-time toxicity testing in their project proposals using a new generation Whole-Cell Fibre-Optic Biosensor (or cuvette) developed by the project's academic partner, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev (BGU) (See Annex 1). *There is no additional cost on the part of the applicant.*

This field-ready analyser is housed in a portable, weatherproof case, making it ideal for on-site monitoring directly from a vehicle or boat without needing a traditional laboratory set up.

How the Technology Works

The system uses a simple three-step process to deliver immediate results in the field:



1. **Collect Sample:** A raw surface water, sediment, or suspended sediment sample is collected from the target site. Unlike standard testing, the sediment does not require any complex chemical or acid pre-treatment.
2. **Insert & Start:** The sample is placed into a vial containing harmless bacteria encapsulated in an alginate gel. The fibre-optic probe is inserted, and the automated measurement begins.
3. **Instant Toxicity Readout:** If bioavailable toxicants or pollutants are present, they trigger a stress response in the bacteria, causing them to emit a live bioluminescent (light) signal. This light travels directly up the optical fibre to an internal digital reader, providing an instant toxicity readout.

Because the light signal is measured directly at the core of the probe, the reading is completely unaffected by the cloudiness or muddiness of the sample. The biosensor can be targeted to look for specific types of damage, including genotoxicity (DNA damage), general cell toxicity, and cell membrane toxicity.

What is Offered to Grantees

If you choose to incorporate this optional technology into your project:

- BGU partners will participate directly in the on-ship measurement campaigns, travelling to the use-case sites to perform the sediment testing alongside local teams.
- BGU will provide the necessary portable photon-counting readers and the engineered bacterial testing probes required for the field campaigns.
- Grantees will be provided with a standardised protocol and expert guidance on sampling, preservation, and testing methods at monitoring stations within your region.
- The results will allow your project to map pollution hotspots quickly, distinguish between toxic and non-toxic sites, and support rapid environmental decision-making.

Applicants are also required to select some of the replicable activities presented in Table 1 and further detailed in **Annex 2: Replication Activities Catalogue**.

TABLE 1: REPLICATION ACTIVITIES OF THE SUNDANSE - OPEN CALL #2

Activity Number	Replication Activity
A1	Baseline assessment of the target area
A2	Flow monitoring
A3	Mapping the target area
A4	Sediment quantity monitoring
A5	Granulometric characterization of suspended and/or benthic sediments
A6	Microplastic contamination assessment in suspended and/or benthic sediments
A7	Analysis of microorganic pollutants (PAHs, PCBs, pesticides, tire additives) in sediment samples
A8	Toxic metal contamination assessment in sediment samples (Pb, Cu, Cd, Zn, etc.)
A9	Toxicity evaluation of suspended sediment samples
A10	Numerical modelling of sediment transport dynamics
A11	Development of normative frameworks for real-time data utilization in pollution management
A12	Assessment of inland waterway transport impact on sediment dynamics

The SUNDANSE - Open Call #2 will look to ensure a balanced distribution of applications among activities. It will widen the pool of involved regions, with an emphasis on new sea basins and countries.

3.3 Funding conditions



The total fixed lump sum grant for the entire project is capped at 100,000€. The following maximum percentage limits apply to the final 100,000€ grant amount,

Direct Costs:

- **Personnel Cost:** This cost covers the remuneration of staff directly working on the project. The total Personnel Cost may not exceed 65% of the maximum grant.
- **Mobility Cost:** This includes expenses related to travel and subsistence for project activities. The total Mobility Cost may not exceed 5.40% of the maximum grant.
- **Consumables/Depreciation Cost:** This covers costs for necessary materials, supplies, and equipment depreciation. The total Consumables/Depreciation Cost may not exceed 4.50% of the maximum grant.
- **Subcontracting Cost:** This covers essential work contracted out to external third parties. The total Subcontracting Cost may not exceed 4.50% of the maximum grant.

Indirect Costs (Overheads):

A flat rate of 25.00% must be applied to the calculated Subtotal. This 25% rate is the maximum allowable overhead rate.

3.4 Application process

The F6S platform will be the single-entry point for all applications to the SUNDANSE - Open Call #2. Interested applicants should register at the SUNDANSE F6S page (<https://www.f6s.com/sundanse-open-call-2/apply>). **Proposals submitted by any other means will NOT be evaluated.**

The relevant links and timings for the application process are provided in Table 2 but are subject to change.

TABLE 2: APPLICATION PROCESS AND TIMELINE

Phase	Description	Timeline
Application	Fill in and submit application including: • Application form on F6S: https://www.f6s.com/sundanse-open-call-2/apply	Launch date: 08/07/2026 Submission deadline: 30/09/2026 (17:00 CEST)
Eligibility & Technical check	SUNDANSE Consortium performs internal checks the eligibility criteria of the applications	01/10/2026 to 09/10/2026
Application evaluation	An evaluation board reviews the received applications, scoring them based on the evaluation criteria. The evaluators rank the applications and a ranking list is established. The Selection Committee will decide the list of finalists and the Reserve List.	12/10/2026 to 20/11/2026
Announcement of the results	All applicants receive a written letter about approval or rejection of their project. The successful projects start the onboarding phase in the SUNDANSE Programme.	27/11/2026



The submission date for applications is final. All other dates, including those of the programme, may be subject to change.

3.5 Other application requirements and considerations

- **Submission:** Applications must be submitted via <https://www.f6s.com/sundanse-open-call-2/apply>. Any other submission method will not be accepted.
- **Complete application:** All mandatory questions must be answered and all requested documents must be uploaded. Incomplete applications will be disqualified.
- **Accept terms:** Applicants must agree to the application's terms and conditions.
- **English language:** All applications and programme communication must be in English.
- **Document format:** Unless otherwise agreed, all documents in all phases must be submitted electronically in PDF format without printing restrictions.
- **Deadline:**
 - Failure to submit the application by the submission deadline, regardless of cause (e.g., network issues, multiple browsers or windows), is not acceptable as an extenuating circumstance. It is recommended to apply well before the deadline.
 - Resubmissions are possible provided the call deadline has not passed but are only guaranteed if requested at least 2 business days before the deadline via support@f6s.com.
 - The deadline may be extended only in case of unforeseen F6S platform technical issues. All applicants will be notified of the new deadline.
- **Review future documents:** Applicants are encouraged to get familiar with the documents that will be required in the contracting phase (see Section 5 - Contracting Phase)
- **Notifications:** Applicants are encouraged to enable F6S notifications for the programme in their profile settings to ensure communications regarding their application are received.
- **Applicants list:** A full list of applicants containing their basic information will be created for statistical and transparency purposes, and shared with the European Commission.
- **Applicants are encouraged, but not required, to collaborate with academia, environmental consultancy services, or similar technical partners where this strengthens the quality, credibility, or feasibility of the proposed work.** Where applicable, a letter of support from the collaborating entity is strongly encouraged. Such collaboration will not be mandatory for eligibility, but applicants should explain the nature of the collaboration, the partner's role, and the added value to implementation.

4 How will applications be evaluated and selected?

The SUNDANSE Remote evaluation and selection stage will follow a three-phase process:

- (1) Admissibility and eligibility check
- (2) Remote expert evaluation
- (3) Ranking and selection of applicants.

The process is represented in Figure 1.

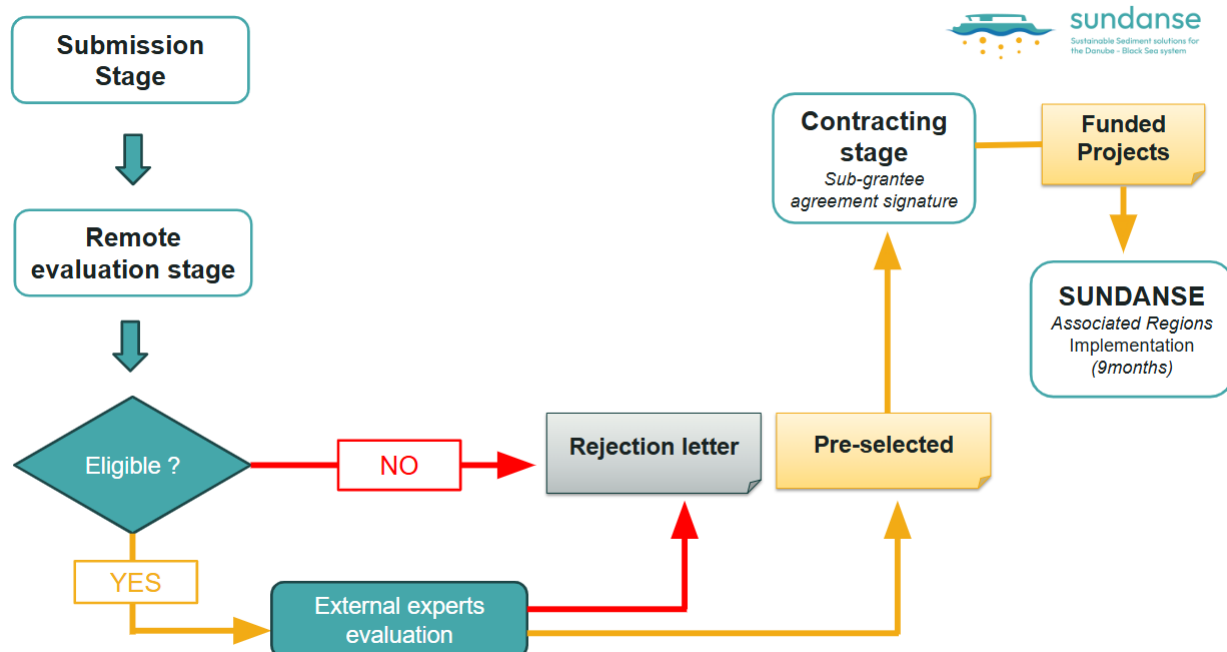


FIGURE 1: SUNDANSE EVALUATION AND SELECTION PROCESS

SUNDANSE reserves the right to request at any moment of the process additional information and/or documentation to clarify any doubts regarding the eligibility of the applicant and/or the application.

4.1 Eligibility check

An initial eligibility verification will be done to filter out and eliminate non-eligible applications. An application is only considered eligible if it meets **all the eligibility criteria and requirements** listed in Section 3.

The eligibility check enables the establishment of a shortlist of applications to be evaluated in the next step of the evaluation process. Applications marked as non-eligible (for not meeting one or more of the eligibility criteria) will receive a rejection letter with justification.

Following the initial eligibility verification, an internal screening will be conducted by the SUNDANSE Selection Committee. The overall summary and general objectives of all proposals included in the List of Eligible Applications will be systematically reviewed against the following core items:

- **Project Scope:** The objectives of the proposal must strictly fit within the technical scope of the project as described in this Guide for Applicants. Applications that clearly define their regional objectives and explicitly demonstrate that they will replicate or pilot more than one activity described in the Replication Activities Catalogue will be prioritised during selection.
- **Section 1 (Project Description) and Section 5 (Permits)** of the technical proposal template are reviewed exclusively during the initial internal screening phase to verify baseline scope alignment, ecosystem eligibility, and required regulatory permissions. These two sections serve as standalone contextual gates to clear the administrative screening; they are not evaluated by the expert board and do not factor into the qualitative or quantitative scoring of your proposal.

Each proposal will be independently reviewed by one assigned partner from the Selection Committee (excluding the platform manager, F6S). Following these individual reviews, the Selection Committee will meet collectively to review the partners' assessments, validate any proposed exclusions based on scope



or geographical requirements, and officially generate the initial acceptance list for the remote expert evaluation phase.

4.2 Expert evaluation

The expert evaluation board is a collective body composed of individual members with relevant experience in the SUNDANSE domains, having signed and duly agreed in advance a written commitment of confidentiality and absence of any conflicts of interest that might influence the impartial and objective analysis and evaluation of all submitted proposals. Proposals passing the admissibility and eligibility check will move on to the external remote evaluation phase. The external evaluation will be done remotely by expert evaluators. Evaluators will be selected from a pool of experts that will be established through a call for expressions of interest. The experts will be evaluated and selected based on their knowledge of the SUNDANSE challenges and topics and general experience in the evaluation of proposals (e.g., Horizon 2020, HE, FSTP programmes).

The evaluators will perform evaluations on an individual basis, not as representatives of their employer, their country, or any other entity. They are required to be independent, impartial, and objective. All evaluators are required to sign a contract, which includes a declaration of confidentiality and the absence of conflicts of interest. Evaluators will also be bound by strict confidentiality regarding the evaluation process and during the evaluation process. At least two external evaluators will evaluate each proposal and will be distributed across the proposals based on their expertise and, whenever possible, country of origin.

4.3 Evaluation criteria & scoring

Each application will be reviewed by a minimum of two experts from the expert evaluation board. The applications will be distributed considering their expertise. Table 3 indicates the SUNDANSE Open Call evaluation criteria.

Applicants are encouraged, but not required, to collaborate with academia, environmental consultancy services, or similar technical partners where this strengthens the quality, credibility, or feasibility of the proposed work. A concrete collaboration agreement or support letter can strengthen implementation quality, technical credibility, and replicability. **Demonstrating this collaboration in the proposal will be considered by the evaluators under the Excellence criterion.**

TABLE 3: SUNDANSE OPEN CALL EVALUATION CRITERIA

Criteria Name	Description
1. Excellence	• Ambition. The applicants must demonstrate to what extent the proposed third party(ies) project contribute to the project scope and have a European dimension. They must demonstrate how they will contribute to the uptake of the SUNDANSE innovative solutions, facilitating different activities that could help reuse, demonstration and replication of the SUNDANSE outcomes. • Problem description and motivation: applicants should provide description of the problem or the necessity of a certain region to apply one or more solutions proposed by SUNDANSE.



2. Impact	• Environmental and social impact: The applicants must demonstrate the project contribution towards environmental, socio-economic impacts to contribute to sustainable development, Green Deal and other European policies • EU relevance and policy alignment: Applicants must clearly show how the project aligns with the European Green Deal, the Mission Ocean & Waters goals, the Water Framework Directive (WFD), and other relevant European freshwater policies. The proposal must describe the concrete, long-term positive changes the project will generate.
3. Implementation	• Approach and Strategy: The applicants must demonstrate their planned approach and strategy to implement the project and demonstrate capacity to achieve their aims. The attractiveness, feasibility, and potential for regional replication of the project will be prioritised. • Work Plan, Risks, and Mitigation: Applicants must provide a realistic work plan detailing deliverables, milestones, and key performance indicators (KPIs). The proposal must identify potential technical, financial, or operational risks and describe credible mitigation measures to manage them within the 9-month timeframe. • Resources and Infrastructure: Demonstrate the quality, necessity, and effectiveness of the assigned human, technical, and financial resources. Applicants should outline how they will access critical infrastructure and explain how the project team complements one another to match the project objectives. • Team: Applicants must detail the team's composition, proving their technical capacity and experience to deliver the proposed solutions. This includes a clear breakdown of individual role allocation, gender balance among the personnel, and demonstrated access to critical technical infrastructure. • Budget: Applicants must present a clear, realistic, and estimated budget breakdown corresponding to both the total project costs and the specific project phases (Project Definition, Project Implementation, and Project Evaluation). The budget must strictly comply with the maximum financial caps and percentage limits set for personnel, mobility, consumables, subcontracting, and overheads.

The evaluators will follow the 3 evaluation criteria listed in Table 3.

The independent experts will score each award criterion on a scale from 0 to 5 (decimal point scores may be given): **Error! Reference source not found.** defines how individual criteria will be scored.

Each evaluator will produce an Individual Evaluation Report. The threshold for individual criteria is 3. The overall threshold, applied to the sum of the three individual scores, will be 10. The final score will be calculated as an average of the individual assessments provided by the Evaluators. If a proposal scores less than 3 in any criterion or an overall score less than 10, the proposal is automatically rejected. Each



evaluator will record their individual assessment of each proposal using an Individual Evaluation Report (IER). A single Evaluation Summary Report (ESR) will be then prepared by the Evaluation Panel, representing opinions and scores on which the evaluators assessing the application agree.

After the individual scoring by the independent evaluators, the Selection Committee will:

- Check for large differences (over 2 points per criterion) between evaluators.
- If differences exist, evaluators meet to discuss and agree on scores.
- If an agreement isn't reached, another expert will be invited to provide a third assessment.

4.3.1 Ranking & Selection

Following the Remote expert evaluation, all applications will be ranked in a single list based on their overall score, which is calculated from the average scores given by the evaluators (summary of criterion 1 to 3). If multiple applications have the same overall score, the following tie-breaking criteria will be applied in this order:

1. The highest score in the Excellence Section.
 2. Gender balance among the personnel responsible for carrying out the activities
- As a result of the Independent Evaluation, a 'Ranking List' will be produced.
3. **Country Diversity Cap:** No two selected applications can be from the same country.
 4. **Procedure for Duplicates:** In the event that multiple top-ranked applications originate from the same country, only the single highest-scoring application from that country will be selected for funding. The Selection Committee will then systematically bypass any subsequent lower-scoring applications from that same country and move further down the ranking list to select the next highest-scoring eligible proposal from a different, unrepresented country.
 5. **Reserve List Allocation:** Lower-scoring applications that are bypassed solely due to this country-balancing rule will remain eligible and be placed on the Reserve List in their original scoring order. They may be invited to the contracting phase if a selected entity from a different country fails to provide the required contractual data or clear the mandatory administrative checks.

4.4 Appeals

Within three (3) working days of receiving (1) a rejection letter informing the application as non-eligible or (2) an ESR of non-acceptance, an applicant may submit a request for an appeal if they believe the results of the eligibility checks have not been correctly applied, or if they feel that there has been a shortcoming in the way their application has been evaluated.

All requests for appeal must be sent to the SUNDANSE team to info@sundanseproject.eu and must:

- Focus on aspects concerning the evaluation of the application (e.g. admissibility or eligibility checks, evaluation procedure, etc), not their merits.
- Clearly describe the complaint.
- Be received within the time limit (3 working days) from the reception of a rejection letter considering the application as non-eligible or the ESR information letter delivered.
- Sent by the entities' legal representative that has also submitted the application.



Note that the evaluation is carried out by highly qualified experts. SUNDANSE will neither question nor interfere with their original evaluation. Mere repetitions of the content of the application or disagreements with the result or reasoning of the technical evaluation will not be considered.



5 What happens after selection?

Selected applicants will be invited to the contracting phase, where administrative and financial details and documents are verified and validated.

Furthermore, to carry out mandatory Know Your Customer (KYC) checks, proof of residency and proof of ID from one or more members of the organisation are required.

The steps of this phase are:

1. Inclusion of comments (if any) provided in the Evaluation Summary Report as part of the sub-grant agreement (contract).
2. Validation of the entities based on the provision of the following documentation (available at <https://sundanseproject.eu/sundanse-open-call-2/>):
 - Formal proof of the entity's legal existence and tax activity.
 - Declaration of Honour signed by the legal representative of the entity.
 - Bank Account Information
3. Signing of the sub-grant agreement (Annex 4) between SUNDANSE Consortium represented by its Coordinator (UNIVERSITATEA DUNAREA DE JOS DIN GALATI), the treasurer (F6S EU Tech Innovation Network DAC) and the Lead Beneficiary.

Additional considerations:

- A valid VAT is mandatory.
- The sub-grant agreement (contract) is final and cannot be altered.
- Electronic digital signatures are required for signed documents (unless otherwise agreed).
- Deadlines for document submission will be provided and will normally be concluded within two weeks.
- Failure to complete the negotiation in time will result in rejection.

6 What is the SUNDANSE – The Freshwater Ecosystems Call Programme and its requirements?

6.1 Programme phases

The SUNDANSE Freshwater Ecosystems Call programme has a total duration of 9 months and is divided into three stages.

6.1.1 Stage 1 – Project Definition (2 months)

Beneficiaries (local or regional authorities from associated regions) will define their project and prepare an Individual Mentoring Plan and Project Specification, outlining planned activities, milestones, and expected outputs for the following stages. This document will be annexed to the Subgrant Agreement and must include a publishable summary of results obtained at this stage.

Means of verification: Submission of Report #1 containing the Individual Mentoring Plan (IMP) Project Specification which must include the detailed plan for the implementation and evaluation, milestones and means of verification refining all the measurable outcomes defined in the applicant's proposal.

6.1.2 Stage 2 – Project Implementation (4 months)

Beneficiaries will carry out the activities defined in their proposal and Report #1.

At the end of this stage, beneficiaries must deliver the Report #2 on Project Implementation, including a summary of results obtained and the revision of the plan for the evaluation phase.

6.1.3 Stage 3 – Project evaluation (3 months)

Beneficiaries will carry out the activities defined in their proposal and Report #2.

At the end of the project, beneficiaries must deliver the Report #3 with the following mandatory outputs:

1. Stakeholder Engagement Outputs
2. Regional Action Plan & Roadmap
3. Evaluation of resources usage and impact of the project

TABLE 4: SUNDANSE FSTP PROGRAMME STAGES AND PAYMENTS

	Stage duration (months)	Mandatory deliverables	Fixed Lump Sum
Stage 1: “Project Definition”	2	Report #1: Individual Mentoring Plan project specifications (IMP) ¹	Up to 17 000 EUR



Stage 2 “Project Implementation”	4	Report #2: Project implementation	Up to 58 000 EUR
Stage 3 “Project evaluation”	3	Report #3: • Stakeholder Engagement Outputs • Regional Action Plan & Roadmap • Evaluation of resources usage and impact of the project	Up to 25 000 EUR
TOTAL	9 months		Up to 100 000 EUR

¹The **Individual Mentoring Plan [IMP]** is the document that establishes the individual budget, KPIs, Deliverables and a schedule that will be taken into account when evaluating the Grantees' performance at the Milestones Review.

6.1.4 Participation in Events

During the programme, selected grantees are encouraged to participate in relevant events (e.g., workshops, video calls, webinars, online training, virtual conferences) organized or supported by the SUNDANSE project. This will allow beneficiaries to stay closely involved with the project, share experiences, and build capacity to implement innovative SUNDANSE solutions in their associated regions.

6.2 SUNDANSE Freshwater Ecosystems Call third parties programme evaluation

Selected grantees will define, at the beginning of the support programme together with their allocated mentors, their Individual Mentoring Plan (IMP). The IMP will include project deliverables, milestones, and, if applicable, KPIs, as well as a detailed budget and allocation of resources.

The grantees' performance will be evaluated at Milestone Reviews, which are conducted at the completion of each stage (whenever a payment is due). Mentors evaluate performance according to the following criteria:

- **Deliverables' Quality** – scored by Mentors based on the deliverables defined in the IMP.
- **Technical Performance Indicators** – scored by Technical Mentors based on KPIs in the IMP.
- **Deadline Compliance** – scored by Mentors.

Each criterion is scored from 0 to 10. The final score is calculated with the following weights:

- Deliverables' Quality: 30%
- Technical Performance Indicators: 60%
- Deadline Compliance: 10%

Based on the final score:

- **Beneficiaries over threshold** (7 points) will successfully receive the next payment and become eligible to continue in the programme.



- **Beneficiaries under threshold** will be proposed by the Mentors as candidates to leave the programme. If confirmed by the Selection Committee, they will not receive payment for the next stage(s) and must exit the programme.

The beneficiaries which haven't reached the threshold will be proposed, by the 'Mentors', as candidates to leave the Program. And, if this decision is finally ratified by the 'Selection Committee', they will have to leave the Program and won't receive the payment for the next stage(s). The 'Selection Committee' will review and validate the 'Mentors' proposal, putting special attention to the 'under threshold' cases, if any, by taking into consideration all possible objective reasons for underperformance (i.e. external factors which might have influenced the beneficiaries' performance). The 'Selection Committee' will take the final decision, approve the payments, and ensure the provision of adequate, transparent information to such beneficiaries on the reasons of their exclusion, while organizing a redress option for complaints that disagree with the decision.

6.2.1 Remediation Process for Underperformance

In the event that a beneficiary falls below the successful performance threshold (7 points) at a Milestone Review, the program will implement a structured remediation process before any contractual penalties or exclusions are enforced:

- **Formal Notification:** The beneficiary will receive an immediate, detailed written evaluation from their allocated mentors outlining the specific areas of underperformance, technical deficiencies, or missing deliverables.
- **5-Day Correction Window:** The beneficiary will be granted a formal correction period of five (5) working days from the date of receiving the notification to revise, update, and resubmit the unsatisfactory reports or deliverables to their mentors.
- **Final Review and Decision:** The updated submission will be reassessed by the allocated mentors and passed to the Selection Committee. If the revised documentation remains deeply unsatisfactory or fails to demonstrate a credible effort to meet the program's quality standards, the Selection Committee will proceed with formal measures, which may include withholding the current stage payment and issuing a notice of termination from the program.

6.3 Programme review

Each project will go through 3 reporting periods, each one highlighting the end of a stage.

TABLE 5: SUNDANSE - REVIEW AND PAYMENTS SUMMARY

Stage	Item	Description
Stage 1	Requirement	Submission and approval of Report #1
	Result	Payment of 17% of the maximum grant amount.
	Timeline	M3 (March 2027) or up to 1 month after the approval of Report #1
Stage 2	Requirement	Submission and approval of Report #2
	Result	Payment of 58% of the maximum grant amount.
	Timeline	M7 (July 2027) or up to 1 month after the approval of Report #2



Stage 3	Requirement	Submission and approval of Report #3
	Result	Payment of 25% of the maximum grant amount.
	Timeline	M10 (October 2027) or up to 1 month after the approval of Report #3

Reports must be submitted 10 working days before the end of each reporting period. During the reporting period, representatives of the beneficiary should be ready to present their work and answer questions. After each successful reporting period and within 5 working days, the beneficiary should send the relevant payment request document.

7 What else is important to know?

7.1 Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)

Solutions developed and results achieved by the third parties belong to the third parties. Applicants will remain the sole owners of their respective IPRs and retain the IPR for their solutions.

Regarding the evaluation and the review processes, each evaluator will sign an Agreement including confidentiality clauses before receiving access to the applications database to protect the applicants' intellectual property and sensitive non-disclosed information.

7.2 On conflicts of interest

Applicants must not have any actual and/or potential conflict of interest with the SUNDANSE selection process and during the project implementation. All cases of conflict of interest will be assessed case by case.

7.3 Ethical issues

SUNDANSE complies with the fundamental ethical issues particularly those outlined in the "European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity".

- All applicants must submit a self-assessment ethics questionnaire, available in the Proposal Template
- If the applicant confirms the existence of potential ethical issues, they must contact the SUNDANSE Helpdesk for guidance, as required.
- The SUNDANSE will verify the declaration's consistency with the application contents and may contact applicants to resolve any ethical issues.
- Applications that fail to properly address ethical issues or inadequately deal with privacy aspects will be rejected.

7.4 Data protection



In order to process and evaluate applications, and manage project implementation, the SUNDANSE consortium will need to collect Personal and Industrial Data.

- F6S Network Ireland Limited, will act as Data Controller for data submitted through the F6S platform for these purposes. Please see our privacy policy [here](#).
- A Data Protection Officer (DPO) has been appointed by F6S generally, to ensure compliance with data protection regulations, such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), and that personal data is collected, processed, and stored in a secure manner.
- The F6S platform's system design and operational procedures ensure that data is managed in compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (GDPR).
- Each applicant will accept the F6S terms to ensure compliance. Please refer to <https://www.f6s.com/privacy-policy> to review the F6S platform's privacy policy and data security policy.
- Apart from the F6S platform, data will also be stored in the F6S Google Drive, and in the project repository on SharePoint managed by the project coordinator UNIVERSITATEA DUNAREA DE JOS DIN GALATI (UDJG).
- Note that the SUNDANSE consortium must retain generated data until five years after the balance of the SUNDANSE project is paid or longer if there are ongoing procedures (such as audits, investigations or litigation). In this case, the data must be kept until their conclusion.

7.5 Confidentiality

Confidentiality obligations:

- Selected applicants are required to maintain confidential any project data, documents, invoices and other materials (in any form) during the implementation of the activities and for 5 years after project completion.
- This confidentiality period can be extended by agreement with the EC and the SUNDANSE consortium.
- Information shared during the project, whether written or spoken, is only considered confidential if the SUNDANSE agrees and confirms it in writing within 15 days.
- Confidential information must only be used for project implementation, unless otherwise agreed upon.
- Any information shared during the application stage will be treated as confidential.

7.6 Promotion of the action and ensuring visibility of the EU funding

The beneficiary must promote the project, the SUNDANSE project and its results, by providing targeted information to multiple audiences (including the media and the public) in a strategic and effective manner and to highlight the financial support of the EC, including on the official third-party website. The SUNDANSE Communication team will guide and support these communication activities to selected beneficiaries.

7.7 Checks and reviews

The EC may, at any time during the implementation of the sub-project and up to five years after the end of the sub-project, arrange for a check and review activity to be carried out, by external auditors, or by the



EC services themselves, including the European Anti-Fraud office (OLAF). The procedure shall be deemed to be initiated on the date of receipt of the relevant letter sent by the EC.

There will be no financial checks, reviews, or audits to check costs, since beneficiaries have no obligation to document the costs incurred for the action. Checks, reviews, and audits will focus on the technical implementation of the action.



8 Relevant links and contacts

The SUNDANSE Consortium will provide information to the applicants via the F6S page, so that all information (questions and answers) are visible to all participants.

- Project website: <https://sundanseproject.eu/>
- Open call application form: <https://www.f6s.com/sundanse-open-call-2/apply>
- Contact us: info@sundanseproject.eu
- Online Q&A/ discussion board: <https://www.f6s.com/sundanse-open-call-2/discuss>
- F6S platform support team: support@f6s.com
(For issues with the submission, resubmission, access to the platform, etc.)

9 Relevant Open Call definitions

TABLE 6: ACRONYMS & DEFINITIONS

Acronym	Explanation/ Definition
AWU	Annual Work Unit
EC	European Commission
ESR	Evaluation Summary Report
IMP	Individual Mentoring Plan
KYC	Know Your Customer

TABLE 7: TERMS & DEFINITIONS

Term	Definition
Applicant	The legal entity that intend to submit or that submitted an application to the Open Call.
Application Eligibility Criteria	Criteria used to assess if an application can be considered for the open call. Possible values (Yes/No).
Application Eligible or Non-Eligible	Application that is or is not compliant with eligibility criteria.
Application Timestamp	Timestamp of the final submission of an application. If the application is reopened and resubmitted the last date will be considered.
Bank Account Information	Form where the beneficiary provides information of the bank account to which payments will be made during the project implementation.
Beneficiary or 3rd Party	An entity that submitted an application to the open call that was accepted to be funded, and have signed, or are in the process of signing, a sub-grant agreement.
Contract Deadline	Date and time until when the selected entities need to provide contractual information.
Declaration of Honour (DoH)	Declaration where the applicant/ beneficiary declares they accept all conditions of the open call, acceleration process & programme. One DoH is required for each applicant/ beneficiary.
External Evaluator	Expert hired by the consortium to assist in the evaluation of the Open Call. External evaluators cannot have conflicts of interest and are bound by a confidentiality agreement.
F6S Application Form	Application form available in F6S Platform.
F6S Platform	Platform provided by F6S.
FSTP	Financial support to third parties. Payments made to entities that are not members of the consortium.
FSTP – Lump Sum	Payment made to the third party based on the achievement of a milestone.



Term	Definition
Internal evaluation committee	Group of appropriately qualified persons of the consortium partners that are assigned the responsibility of performing evaluations or reviews at any stage of the open call implementation or programme.
Local & Regional Authority	Local or regional authorities from an associated region are understood as legal entities, including bodies representing a regional/local authority (such as regional/local agencies, regional planning bodies), whose role is significant and relevant for showcasing the feasibility, replicability and scalability of the solutions developed in the project
Mentor	Person from the consortium that works closely with the beneficiary to foster communication with the consortium and assess progress of the project. The mentor may be part of an evaluation committee.
Open Call	Competitive process to access a Programme.
Open Call and Programme deadlines	The project has planned the programme carefully, but unexpected things can happen. The application deadline is fixed, and will only change if something unforeseen occurs. Other dates, including of the programme, are flexible and may be adjusted as needed, and communicated to all applicants.
Open Call close date	Date and time when applications close.
Open Call selection prioritisation	Rules used to order applications.
Proof of Bank Account Information	The account where the funds will be transferred will be indicated via a specific form signed by the entity, individuals, and the bank owners. The holder of the account will be the entity/ individual.
Proof of Legal Existence	Company/ organisation register, official journal or other official document per country showing the name of the organisation, the legal address and registration number and a copy of a document proving VAT registration (in case the VAT number does not show on the registration extract or its equivalent).
Proof of Local and Regional authorities status	Proof of the Local and Regional authorities status condition is required at the application stage: • If the applicant has been fully validated as a Local and regional authority on the Beneficiary Register of the EC Participant Portal, the PIC number must be provided. • Provision of the signed (with a valid e-signature) Local and Regional Authority Declaration
Reserve List	Eligible applications that were not selected for funding which can be invited in case selected applications do not provide contractual data.
Schedule for payments to Beneficiaries	All payments to beneficiaries are dependent on the successful review of deliverables/ reports at the end of each stage, and reception by the consortium of the corresponding payment request. All payments will be made with undue delay preferably no later than 30 calendar days after the reception of the financial statement.
Score, Expert	Unless otherwise stated, experts will rank each criterion with marks between 0 and 5. Half point scores are not given. Score values will indicate the following assessments:



Term	Definition
	• 0: Fail. The application 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 unsatisfactory manner. • 2: Poor. There are serious inherent weaknesses. • 3: Good. While the application broadly addresses the criterion, there are significant weaknesses that would need correcting. • 4: Very Good. The application addresses the criterion well, although certain improvements are possible. • 5: Excellent. The application successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion in question. Any shortcomings are minor.
Score, Per Committee	When the evaluation is made by a committee, the average score of each criterion is rounded to the nearest point or half point (1, 1.5, 2, ..., 4, 4.5, 5), before computing the overall score. Overall score is the sum of the scores of each criterion multiplied by the respective weight, rounded to the nearest integer value.
Selected application	Application that was selected to participate in the Open Call Implementation.
Sub-grant Agreement	Signed between the Project Consortium, represented by its Coordinator and the beneficiary. The sub-grant agreement will also include the comments (if any) of the application's ESR to the work plan.

10 Annex 1: Whole-Cell Fibre-Optic Biosensor



A New Generation Whole-Cell Fiber-Optic Biosensor for Real-Time, On-Site Sediment and Water Toxicity Monitoring

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Abstract

Evaluating toxicity in aquatic environments is essential for assessing the impact of pollutants on ecosystems. For this purpose, we have developed a portable whole-cell fiber-optic toxicity analyzer capable of rapid, real-time detection of environmental toxicity. The system is easy to operate, field-ready, and designed for on-site deployment without laboratory infrastructure. It provides reliable, immediate toxicity readouts to support environmental monitoring and decision-making.

Background

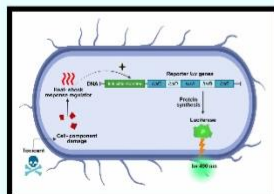


Figure 1. Schematic representation of a lux-based biosensor cell for toxicant detection. Toxicants trigger luciferase expression through receptor activation, stress-response pathways, or cell damage signals, leading to activation of lux reporter genes and bioluminescence emission at 490 nm as an indicator of toxicity.

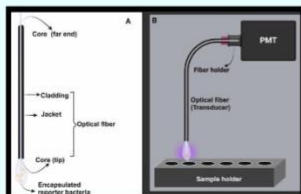


Figure 2. The basic components of the whole-cell, fiber-optic biosensors. (A) Optical fiber with a bioreporter immobilized onto the core. (B) Light-tight portable black box encasing all the biosensor components.

Figure 3. Our publication showcasing the technology behind the biosensor and its applications.

- We have established a working protocol for testing sediments with a fiber-optic biosensor.
- We have shown that sediments and water can be monitored at the point-of-site using fiber-optics.
- We have shown we are able to distinguish between toxic and non-toxic environmental samples.

Carmeli et. al., *Biosensors*, 2025

The Biosensor

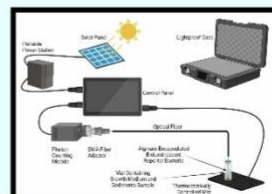


Figure 4. Illustration of the portable fiber-optic toxicity analyzer for real-time, on-site assessment. The system combines a photon-counting module and an optical fiber probe inserted into a vial containing alginate-encapsulated bioluminescent bacteria exposed to environmental samples. Measurements are temperature-controlled and managed through an integrated control unit. All components are enclosed in a lightproof, field-ready case powered by a portable energy source.



Figure 5. The portable toxicity analyzer prototype; external (left), internal design (right).



Acknowledgments

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Conclusions

- The portable toxicity analyzer enables rapid, real-time environmental toxicity assessment directly in the field.
- Its ease of use and field-ready design support faster environmental monitoring and informed decision-making.

