



# PowerUp NetZero

## Open Call for Innovation Projects Guidelines for applicants

Version 1.0



Co-funded by  
the European Union

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# PROJECT SUMMARY

The **PowerUp NetZero (Powering Up Net Zero applications through the European Single Market)** project addresses the need for SMEs and start-ups to strengthen their role in Europe's green and digital transition through the adoption and development net-zero technologies. Through targeted support, innovation and adoption calls, focused training, and ecosystem collaboration, the project accelerates solutions in **solar energy, batteries and energy storage, hydrogen technologies, sustainable biogas and biomethane, and Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS)**. Its added value lies in empowering SMEs to scale impactful, future-ready innovations, providing new competences and supporting them in market development and growth.

The project directly supports companies in enhancing their competences, opening to new markets and tackling their obstacles by providing Financial Support to Third Parties (FSTP) to Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) across Europe, for two types of activities:

- **Business innovation / technology adoption activities**, with 19 SMEs to be selected.
- **Innovation projects**, with 14 consortia selected, involving at least 26 SMEs.

The project will launch 2 open calls addressing key challenges on the 5 targeted areas.

The project consortium, composed by six European clusters (working on cleantech, mobility & logistics and digitalisation), from five regions, will build synergies with other initiatives, projects and consortiums, deliver a long-term strategy for sustaining net-zero initiatives. Key outputs include reports on new-to-firm products, services, and business process innovations, as well as policy recommendations related to support SMEs across Europe to better implement, adopt and enhance their net-zero technologies knowledge and thus further develop their markets and impact.

## Project information

Project name	Powering Up Net Zero applications through the European Single Market
Project acronym	PowerUp NetZero
Funding body	European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency
Call / Topic	[SMP-COSME-2024-CLUSTER] — [Joint Cluster Initiatives (EUROCLUSTERS) for Europe's recovery]
Type of action	Support to SMEs and Start-ups
Project start date	1.10.2025
Project end date	1.10.2028
Project duration	36 months
Coordinator	Fondazione Piemonte Innova
Project LinkedIn	<a href="https://www.linkedin.com/company/powerup-netzero">https://www.linkedin.com/company/powerup-netzero</a>

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## ABBREVIATIONS

ACRONYM	MEANING
AI	Artificial Intelligence
BESS	Battery Energy Storage System
BMS	Battery Management Systems
CCS	Carbon Capture and Storage
CEST	Central European Summer Time
CO <sub>2</sub>	Carbon dioxide
DACC	Direct Air Carbon Capture
EC	European Commission
ECCP	European Cluster Collaboration Platform
EISMEA	European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency
EnviPark	Parco Scientifico Tecnologico per L'ambiente Environment Park Torino Spa
ESG	Environmental, Social and Governance
EU	European Union
FAQ	Frequently Asked Questions
FPI	Fondazione Piemonte Innova
FSTP	Financial Support for Third Parties
IPR	Intellectual Property Rights
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
NZT	Net Zero Technologies
PAdES	PDF Advanced Electronic Signature
PowerUp NetZero	Powering Up Net Zero applications through the European Single Market
PV	Photovoltaic
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SMEs	Small and Medium Enterprises.
SMP	Single Market Programme
TRL	Technology Readiness Level
VAT	Value Added Tax

### Document history

Version	Date	Description
1	18/06/2026	First version

# 1. OVERVIEW OF THIS OPEN CALL

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This document presents the **PowerUp NetZero OPEN CALL FOR INNOVATION PROJECTS**, designed to provide financial support to Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in order to enhance their competitiveness, sustainability, and innovation capacity in the field of net-zero technologies.

This Open Call is published and administered by FPI, also on behalf of EnviPark, and the final agreements will be entered into partly with FPI and partly with EnviPark, according to the respective managed budget. FPI and EnviPark shall be each individually liable for the performance of the agreements they will enter into, and there is no joint and several liability between them.

This open call is aimed at supporting the adoption and advancement of **Net-Zero technologies**, fostering innovation in products, processes, and services, and promoting sustainable growth strategies. By participating, SMEs will be able to scale up their solutions, improve resource efficiency, and increase their resilience in an evolving green and digital market.

In particular, the **PowerUp NetZero OPEN CALL FOR INNOVATION PROJECTS** will focus on these key strategic areas, including:

- solar energy
- batteries and storage
- hydrogen
- sustainable biogas and biomethane
- carbon capture and storage

and related digital solutions.

**PowerUp NetZero** has allocated **EUR 1.615.000,00** to support **Innovation Projects**, with financial support for at least 14 projects. The budget is managed by two consortium partners: FPI and EnviPark.

The financial contribution per project proposal ranges from a **minimum of EUR 80.000,00** to a **maximum of EUR 120.000,00**. Projects must be submitted by consortia composed of at least two members and no more than three companies and must address at least one of the challenges described in this document.

Moreover, beneficiaries must ensure a **minimum 20% co-funding rate** of the total budget of the supported activity. Applicants will be required to submit information on their company profile, needs, interests, objectives, as well as indicators, state-of-the-art, implementation, expected outcomes, impact and other specific topics that will be defined in the call fiche.

The call is launched on **June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2026**, and it is expected to have a single **deadline on September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2026**, at 17:00 CEST.

All activities financed by this call must be linked to Net-Zero technologies. Funded activities may last up to **10 months** from the signature of the Grant agreement, and payments will be linked to reporting.

The final results of the funded projects will be presented at a final event, that will be organised by the **PowerUp NetZero** consortium around November 2027 (potentially in Torino, Italy). The participation to this event is mandatory for at least one SME from the beneficiary consortia and must be foreseen within the presented budget.

## 1.1 NET ZERO TECHNOLOGIES ADDRESSED BY THIS CALL

The **PowerUp NetZero OPEN CALL FOR INNOVATION PROJECTS** provides funding to support SMEs in adopting or improving Net-Zero technologies and solutions in their processes, products or services related to net-zero technologies and their applications.

The call focuses in particular on the following five Net-Zero Technologies:

- **Solar energy**
- **Battery and energy storage**
- **H2 technologies**
- **Sustainable biogas and biomethane**
- **Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS)**

## 1.2 STRANDS, TOPICS AND CHALLENGES TARGETED BY THIS CALL

The **PowerUp NetZero OPEN CALL FOR INNOVATION PROJECTS** provides financial support for SMEs tackling specific challenges related to the Net-Zero Technologies adoption and improvements. The Call is divided in 2 strands:

- Strand A: Topics and challenges related to the 5 NZTs.
- Strand B: Challenges launched by the City of Torino

For the purpose of this call, each consortium must propose an application tackling only one of the 2 strands and at least one of the challenges within them. Thus, evaluation will be carried out per strand.

### 1.2.1. Strand A: Topics and challenges related to the 5 NZTs.

#	Topics	Challenges
1	Waste management of <b>solar panels and batteries</b>	1.1. Waste management approaches 1.2. End-of-life management 1.3. 2nd life strategies
2	Materials and critical raw materials concerns	2.1. innovative materials to enhance performance and applicability of solar panels 2.2. battery chemistries as an alternative to Li-ion 2.3. alternative materials to substitute the critical ones*
3	Storage alternatives to <b>batteries</b>	3.1. innovative storage alternatives to batteries. 3.2. solutions to improve grid stability and flexibility
4	Digital solutions for PowerUp NetZero <b>NZT</b>	4.1. monitoring solutions to improve accuracy, scalability, cost-efficiency 4.2. predictive maintenance solutions 4.3. Open Battery Management Systems (BMS)
5	Value chain efficiency	5.1. improve efficiency of <b>hydrogen</b> value chain. 5.2. improve efficiency of <b>Sustainable biofuels</b> value chain. 5.3. improve efficiency of <b>CO2</b> value chain.
6	<b>CO2</b> and <b>hydrogen</b> coupling	6.1. Technologies to improve efficiency and scaling up of coupling CO2 with hydrogen

7	<b>Carbon capture</b> technologies	7.1. capture technologies for small-scale emitters 7.2. Direct Air Carbon Capture (DACC)
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### 1.2.2. Strand B: City of Turin Challenges

#	Topics	Challenges
B	<b>City of Turin Challenges</b>	B.1. Systems capable of capturing, absorbing, or transforming greenhouse gas emissions. B.2. Solutions for reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the urban mobility sector. Ensuring a link to batteries, hydrogen, and solar panel integration, etc. B.3. Digital solutions for predictive analysis; simulation of evolving scenarios; urban and environmental planning; real-time monitoring during implementation.

A more detailed description of the eligible activities can be found in Section 2.3.

## 2. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

This section sets out the eligibility criteria related to applicants, activities and proposals under this call.

### 2.1 ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Applicants must be Consortia of SMEs (also including start-ups provided they are SMEs) **established in an EU Member State** or in a country participating in the **Single Market Programme (SMP)** at the moment of the call launching date. More information in this sense can be found below, in Section 2.2.

To be eligible, applicants must:

- **qualify as an SME** in line with [Commission Recommendation 2003/361/EC](#) and the [SME user guide](#). Without prejudice to the detailed provisions of the applicable Recommendation 2003/361/EC the general main requisite is that they have fewer than 250 employees and either an annual turnover not exceeding EUR 50 million or an annual balance sheet total not exceeding EUR 43 million.
- in all cases, including start-ups, have at least one closed and validated financial year.
- be established in an eligible country under the Call.

Applicants are not eligible if they:

- are under liquidation or in difficulty (Article 2(18) of Commission Regulation (EU) No 651/2014).
- are excluded from receiving EU funding under national or EU law under art. 138 Regulation EU 2024/2509.
- receive or have received other public funding for the same activities (double funding).

- are intermediary organisations (i.e. any entity whose primary purpose is to distribute or channel funds to other entities, rather than directly implementing project activities; this includes but is not limited to: financial intermediaries, holding companies whose primary function is fund management, and entities acting as sub-granting bodies under other EU programmes for the same activities covered by this call).
- have conflict of interest with the PowerUp NetZero Consortium.

During the eligibility check phase and, in any case, before the agreement is signed, Applicants may be asked to provide valid official registration documents. Failure to provide them within 7 working days may result in the proposal being declared ineligible.

Consortia must be composed of at least two and no more than three SMEs.

## 2.2 ELIGIBLE COUNTRIES

SMEs established in the Member States of the European Union (EU) and Countries participating in the Single Market Programme (SMP) are eligible to apply to this call.

The list of SMP participating countries is available here: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/smp/guidance/list-3rd-country-participation\\_smp\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/smp/guidance/list-3rd-country-participation_smp_en.pdf), the eligible countries are the ones related to COSME strand (SMP COSME), 'Competitiveness of SMEs'.

### *Information on specific countries*

#### **HUNGARIAN companies**

According to [Council Implementing Decision 2022/2506](#) it is prohibited to enter into legal commitments involving Union funding with specific entities. This prohibition applies to the entire chain of Union financing.

This Decision stipulates that legal commitments must not be signed with any public interest trusts established on the basis of the Hungarian Act IX of 2021 or any entity maintained by such a public interest trust. This applies as of 16 December 2022 for as long as the measures are in place.

In practical terms, regarding financial support to third parties, Hungarian entities receiving **PowerUp NetZero** FSTP funds must demonstrate not being part of the entities linked to the Decision.

## 2.3 ACTIVITIES ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING

The **PowerUp NetZero OPEN CALL FOR INNOVATION PROJECTS** provides financial support for helping SMEs and start-ups adopt or improve net-zero technologies and solutions in their processes, products or services. The call for innovation projects targets companies working together to implement:

- PoC or testing of new / improved environmentally friendly products
- net-zero solutions and services.
- pilot /demonstration actions.

A high degree of innovation is expected in response of this call. Funded activities could address technical risks associated with the demonstration of innovative technologies and solutions, such as optimising technology processes and operational parameters and/or improving the characteristics of their products/solutions. Innovation projects should demonstrate an innovative net-zero technology or solution in an operational or in a Virtual & Industrially Relevant environment (TRL 6-7) but are not necessarily expected yet to reach large scale demonstration or commercial production. [10 months duration].

At least 14 projects are expected to be selected to receive a grant of EUR 120.000,00 to carry out their proposal and to demonstrate the applications of net-zero technologies, as well as the impacts they have. The projects will be submitted by partnerships of at least two Small and Medium Companies (SMEs): Overall at least 28 companies will receive grants, as part of the selected financed projects.

Table 1 - Open Call budget information

Amount destined to Innovation projects	Number of projects	Total budget per project (for consortium of at least 2 companies)	Project co-funding rate
<b>EUR 1.615.000,00</b> <i>FPI: EUR 1.255.000,00</i> <i>EnviPark: EUR 360.000,00</i>	Minimum 14 (implemented by consortia of at least 2 SMEs)  <i>FPI will provide financial support for at least 11 projects and EnviPark will provide financial support for at least 3 projects).</i>	Maximum EUR 120.000,00  <i>Each company can receive maximum EUR 60.000,00 as FSTP.</i>	At least 20%

**All activities must have linkages with at least one of the project's 5 Net-Zero Technologies (Solar energy, Battery and energy storage, H2 technologies, Sustainable biogas/ biomethane, and Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS)).**

Proposals must: explain which specific activity(ies) will be developed and how; provide information about each SME and the consortia; and present a timeline and a budget for the proposed activities. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to measure the impact of the financial support received are also asked within the application form, as they will support the monitoring process that will be put in place together with the **PowerUp NetZero Consortium**.

All information that needs to be included in the proposal is better explained in the following sections.

## 2.4 DURATION OF THE ACTIVITIES

The activities carried out by the beneficiaries of the projects selected and co-financed can last up to ten (10) months from the signature of the agreement and, in any case, must be completed by: 30<sup>th</sup> November 2027.

## 2.5 LANGUAGE

The application form **must be filled in English**, the official language for **PowerUp NetZero OPEN CALLS**. Submissions done in any other language will not be evaluated. English is also the only official language during the whole execution of the programme. This means any requested documentation will have to be submitted in English in order to be considered eligible. In case the documents are written in any other language, then the applicant should provide the translated version in English, together with the original one.

## 2.6 ABSENCE OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Applicants shall not have any actual and/or potential conflicts of interest:

- among Consortia participating to the **PowerUp NetZero OPEN CALL** (e.g. a consortium participating to the call cannot have one or more member in common with another consortium, affiliated entities of a member of consortium cannot be member of another consortium, companies with the directors in common may not participate in different consortia)
- with the **PowerUp NetZero Consortium**, during both the selection process and the whole project development or any other conflict which may compromise the impartial and objective implementation of the **PowerUp NetZero OPEN CALL** and of the subsequent agreement.

All cases of potential conflicts of interest must be declared and will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Applicants cannot be **members of PowerUp NetZero** Consortium or affiliated entities nor their employees or co-operators under a contractual agreement.

'Affiliated entity' means any legal entity that is directly or indirectly controlled by another entity, controls an entity, or is under common control with an entity.

### 3. FINANCIAL SUPPORT PROVIDED

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**PowerUp NetZero** has destined 1.615.000,00 EUR for supporting innovation projects. It is expected that the financial support will be granted to minimum 14 projects (at least 28 companies).

Each beneficiary of this call, intended as a consortium of at least 2 SMEs, can receive up to 120.000,00 EUR in the form of a lump sum. The grant may cover a maximum of 80% of the total eligible costs. The remaining 20% must be co-financed by the beneficiary through private financial sources, thus it cannot be covered by other EU or public funds.

To be noted that each SME cannot receive more than 60.000,00 EUR overall from the **PowerUp NetZero** project.

EXAMPLE 1: Application presented for a total budget of 150.000,00 EUR. The project provides 80% of the budget (120.000,00 EUR) and the Consortia must cover the 20% (30.000,00 EUR).

EXAMPLE 2: Application presented for a total budget of 120.000,00 EUR. The Consortia must cover the 20% (24.000,00 EUR) and the project provides the rest of the budget (96.000,00 EUR, 80%).

EXAMPLE 3: Application presented for a total budget of 200.000,00 EUR. The project provides up to 120.000,00 EUR (60%) and the Consortia must cover the rest (80.000,00 EUR, 40%).

EXAMPLE 4: Application presented for a total budget of 100.000,00 EUR. The Consortia must cover the 20% (20.000,00 EUR) and the project provides the rest of the budget (80.000,00 EUR, 80%)

The total amount of the lump-sum will be defined in the agreement (see section 6 for further information about the agreement and payments).

#### 3.1 ELIGIBLE COSTS

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The financial support to be distributed will have to cover the activities described in the Application Form based on a justified cost-budget split. Each partner will have to indicate its proper budget. The costs are exclusively meant for performing the eligible activities as outlined above, in order to achieve the deliverables defined within each project. They must be actually incurred by the Beneficiary in connection with and for the purpose of implementing the project and during the period of the project implementation. They must comply with the applicable national law on taxes, labour and social security and they must be reasonable, justified and must comply with the principle of sound financial management, in particular regarding economy and efficiency.

Eligible costs may include:

- A. Staff effort dedicated to the implementation of the project activities – maximum 80% of the budget per each SME of the consortium
- B. Technical consultancy, subcontracting costs of specific tasks were justified and necessary.

- C. Equipment, consumables, or other goods and services necessary for the implementation of the project.
- D. Travel and accommodation where necessary, promotion and communication, related to project activities
- E. Travel and accommodation costs for the participation to the final event that will be organised by PowerUp NetZero consortium (most likely in Torino, Italy, in November 2027).
- F. Any other costs that are necessary for achieving the project objectives.

The budget will be defined as a lump sum at the time of the grant preparation. It will be distributed in two or three instalments during the project duration, based on milestones and deliverables achieved.

Ineligible costs are (a) costs that do not comply with the conditions set out above, and (b) costs declared under another regional, national, European grant (including grants awarded by a Member State and financed by the EU budget and grants awarded by bodies other than the Agency for the purpose of implementing the EU budget. In no case refundable VAT or other deductible taxes may be considered eligible costs.

## 3.2 CO-FUNDING

Beneficiaries must ensure a **minimum co-funding rate of 20%** of the total eligible budget of the supported activity, to be covered through private financial sources. Applicants should plan budgets in line with the co-funding rate applicable to the requested grant amount.

By “financial resources” the call refers to a **financial investment**, i.e. capital funding, and **not**, for example, staff costs, in-kind contributions, or similar items. In practical terms, this means that, in addition to the FSTP funding, SME projects will be required to be co-financed through private capital or other sources, provided that such contributions are always structured as financial investments. Beneficiaries will be required to provide a formal self-declaration confirming their commitment to cover the required co-funding share of at least 20% of the total eligible budget through private financial resources. This commitment must be clearly reflected in the submitted project budget (Excel template), where the allocation and use of the co-funding contribution must be explicitly detailed. While the overall co-funding rate must reach a minimum of 20% at project level, a minimum contribution of 5% may be ensured at individual partner level, allowing flexibility among consortium members in defining their respective co-funding shares.

For the purpose of this call, private financial resources include but are not limited to: own capital and reserves of the applicant companies, commercial bank loans, private equity or venture capital investments, and other non-public financial contributions. Any co-funding deriving from EU programmes, national public grants, or regional/local public subsidies cannot be counted towards the required 20% co-funding contribution.

Costs from B to F from the list above can be part of the co-fund.

## 4. PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

The **PowerUp NetZero OPEN CALL FOR INNOVATION PROJECTS** supports SMEs tackling net-zero technologies applications in order to support the creation of new products/solutions and improvement of current ones in response to the specific challenges coming from the analysis of needs within the Net-Zero ecosystem and/or the specific challenge coming from the City of Turin (Italy).

## 4.1 APPLICATION FORM

The submission of the **PowerUp NetZero** OPEN CALL FOR INNOVATION PROJECTS application must be exclusively sent through the EU Survey platform at the following link:

[https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/PowerUpNetZero\\_Call\\_InnovationProjects](https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/PowerUpNetZero_Call_InnovationProjects)

Moreover, the following documents must be uploaded to access the evaluation step:

- Activities timeline budget and KPIs: an excel file describing activities timeline, budget and KPIs. Template provided by **PowerUp NetZero**.
- Declaration of Honour. Template provided by **PowerUp NetZero**, must be signed and dated.
- SME Financial Viability Self-Check available at the following link (the generated result must be submitted as an annex to the application form):  
<https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/lfv/lfvSimulation.do>

All of the above documents must be uploaded as part of the online application. Only applications containing all of the above will be considered complete.

Furthermore, to allow participants to prepare their application before introducing the information in the online form, a supporting word document is available to help participants develop their application offline. Please note, however, that only the application form filled online and submitted will be considered eligible.

All documents are available at this [webpage](#).

The consortium suggests downloading a copy of the submitted application form, as it will support the project development in case you are selected and might be useful in case of complaints.

### *Sustainability, Gender Equality, Diversity and Ethical Considerations*

The PowerUp NetZero project promotes a broad and integrated approach to sustainability, encompassing environmental, social and ethical dimensions.

Applicants are therefore encouraged to demonstrate how their proposed projects contribute not only to the advancement of Net-Zero technologies, but also to wider societal goals. In particular, proposals should, where relevant:

- Indicate potential contributions to the **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and related Targets**: <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>;
- Promote **gender equality, diversity and social inclusion**, both in the project design and implementation (e.g. team composition, inclusive approaches, equal opportunities);
- Ensure an **ethical, responsible and trustworthy use of technologies**, taking into account aspects such as data governance, transparency, environmental impact and societal implications, in line with the AI Act (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32024R1689>). Therefore, in case applicants use AI tools to support proposal drafting, they are invited to clearly disclose such use in the proposal and confirm that the final content has been reviewed and validated by human experts.

Applicants to the PowerUp NetZero Open Calls are invited to take all appropriate measures to foster equal opportunities within their organisations and throughout the implementation of the proposed action.

Please include information on how these aspects are addressed directly in your application. The extent to which sustainability, inclusiveness and ethical considerations are integrated into the project will be taken into account during the evaluation, as part of the overall quality of implementation and organisational maturity of the proposal.

## 4.2 NUMBER OF PROPOSALS PER APPLICANT TO THIS CALL

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Each SME may participate to only one Consortia, and each Consortia may submit only one application to this call.

In the case of multiple submissions by the same applicant, only the last one received (as per timestamp of the IT system) will enter the evaluation process, the rest will not be considered, meaning, they will be declared non-eligible.

If the submitted proposal is declared non-eligible or fails to reach the thresholds needed to proceed to the evaluation, the applications that were submitted earlier by the same applicant will not be considered for evaluation.

## 4.3 DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION OF APPLICATIONS

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This **PowerUp NetZero** OPEN CALL FOR INNOVATION PROJECTS will be open for 3 months.

- **Deadline for submission will be 15<sup>th</sup> September 2026 at 17:00 CET.**

Only proposals submitted before the deadline will be accepted. After the call closure, no additions or changes to received proposals will be considered.

Applications are all evaluated in a competitive manner after the call closure; submission before the deadline does not imply a first-come, first-served principle.

Further details about timeline and deadlines are available in the following section.

## 4.4 CONTACT POINT

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For any information related to the call and applications, please check first the FAQ document. If the answer is not there, send an email to [punz@piemonteinnova.it](mailto:punz@piemonteinnova.it) specifying the topic of the request and the question/doubt/information needed.

Questions can be asked via email from the day the call is published until 5 working days before the deadline, meaning until 8<sup>th</sup> September 2026.

Information about the project, its objectives and activities can be found on **PowerUp NetZero** profile at the [European Cluster Collaboration Platform](#) and the [LinkedIn page](#).

# 5. EVALUATION PROCESS

## 5.1 PROCEDURE AND TIMELINE

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The **PowerUp NetZero** OPEN CALL FOR INNOVATION PROJECTS will be available for 3 months. The **deadline for submission is Tuesday, 15<sup>th</sup> September 2026 at 17:00 CEST.**

Only applications written in English and submitted via the link provided in Section 4.1 will be considered eligible.

The following table shows all the main dates for the open call management.

Table 2. Timeline of PowerUp NetZero Open Call for Innovation Projects

Open Call	Date
Publishing date	Thursday, 18 <sup>th</sup> June, 2026

<b>Deadlines for submission</b>	Tuesday, 15 <sup>th</sup> September 2026 at 17:00 CEST
<b>Evaluation period</b>	1 month
<b>Eligibility communication</b>	Friday, 25 <sup>th</sup> September 2026
<b>Selection communication</b>	Monday, 19 <sup>th</sup> October 2026
<b>Acknowledgement of the selection outcome and acceptance of funding agreement terms and conditions (successful applicants) via email to <a href="mailto:punz@piemonteinnova.it">punz@piemonteinnova.it</a></b>	Within 5 working days after receiving communication of selection, the SME leading the Consortium must send via email the formal acceptance of the grant, in order to receive the agreement to be signed.  Thus: within 26 <sup>th</sup> of October 2026.
<b>Signature of the agreement deadline</b>	13 <sup>th</sup> November 2026  Starting of projects: 16 <sup>th</sup> November
<b>Project duration</b>	Maximum 10 months from the signature of the agreement.
<b>First interim payment</b>	25% of total amount, if “SME Financial Viability Self-Check” (+) of all SMEs that are part of the Consortia fulfil the criteria for triggering this payment.  According to the agreement and after approval of an interim report.
<b>Second interim payment</b>	25-50% of total amount  According to the agreement and after approval of an interim report.  April 2027
<b>Final reporting</b>	Within 30 <sup>th</sup> September 2027
<b>Final payment</b>	50% of the total amount. According to the agreement and after approval of the final report and after the participation to the final event.  The payments will be carried out by the relevant consortium partner (Fondazione Piemonte Innova or EnviPark as appropriate) and will be done within 60 days (2 months) after approving the final reporting documents.

The evaluation process is presented in **Errore. L'origine riferimento non è stata trovata.** The evaluation phase will start after the submission deadline date with an eligibility check of the Application Form and all required documentation, that will take maximum 8 working days. The eligibility check will be carried out by the **PowerUp NetZero** Consortium partners. The applicants will receive an e-mail about the outcome of the eligibility check after it is finalised.

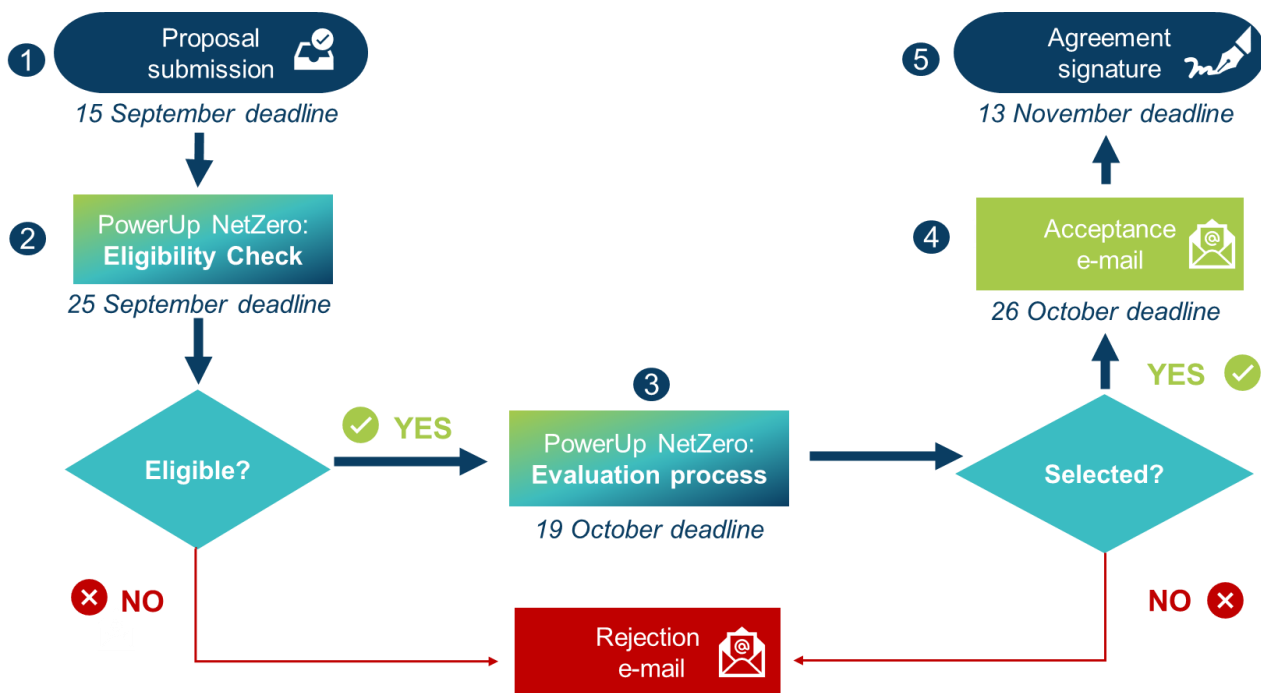


Figure 1 - PowerUp NetZero Open Call for Innovation Projects evaluation stages. This timeline corresponds to 2026.

The applications of eligible SMEs following the eligibility checks will be evaluated by an Evaluation Panel, consisting of at least 2 representatives of the **PowerUp NetZero** project consortium, preferably not belonging to the same country as the one of the applicants, that could ask (if necessary) for the support of external experts, with wide expertise in the topic of the proposal.

For Strand B, the City of Torino will also participate in the evaluation panel.

The proposals will be evaluated against the evaluation criteria (see section 5.2): relevance, impact, and implementation. The final scores of each application will be calculated as an average of the individual assessments provided by each member of the Evaluation Panel. In case the scores from the Evaluation Panel representatives differs significantly, a meeting will be organised to present each evaluation and support it with specific comments, 2 more representatives of the **PowerUp NetZero** partners will also participate to provide an extra opinion about the proposal in question, in case the original representatives of the Evaluation Panel do not arrive to a common ground.

Consortia composed of partners from different countries will be considered as a positive factor when evaluating the applications.

Following the evaluation process, the ranking of the proposals will be generated according to the highest obtained scores. Once the evaluation process is completed, the Coordinator SME of each consortium will receive an email with the final results.

The final results of the evaluation procedure will be sent to each Consortium Coordinator by the 19<sup>th</sup> October 2026. In case of a delay in the evaluation procedure, this will be communicated to the applicants 5 days before the expected time via email.

## 5.2 SELECTION AND EVALUATION CRITERIA

Eligible proposals will be ranked according to the evaluation criteria shown in the table below. Only full points will be awarded, no half points.

Table 3 - Evaluation criteria for PowerUp NetZero Open Call for Innovation Projects

Evaluation criteria	Threshold	Max Points
<b>SECTION 1 – Excellence</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>30</b>
Ambition: motivation behind the application to this open call, scope of the proposal, soundness and pertinence of objectives with the scope of the call		10
Innovation: how the proposed project/solution is aligned with the objectives and goals of the SMEs involved in the consortium and which further innovation is expected from it?		10
Coherence: how the proposal is aligned with the selected <b>PowerUp NetZero</b> topic (s) and challenge(s) (from the call) and contribution derived from the development and/or exploitation of Net-Zero Technologies		10
<b>SECTION 2 – Implementation</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>30</b>
Appropriateness of the consortium & team: evaluate completeness and complementarity (the provided solutions match with the needs of the final users), expertise and composition of the team and its operational capacity.		10
Soundness of the workplan: relevance of the tasks described, deliverable expected and the timing of the activities, identification of potential risks associated and their mitigation measures		10
Cost-effectiveness of the workplan: quality and effectiveness of the resources assigned to the project in order to get the proposed objectives/deliverables		10
<b>SECTION 3 – Impact</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>40</b>
Contribution to increase the innovation/net-zero level of SMEs with industrial and market relevance. Credibility of the expected environmental and climate impact of the project proposed (Green impact)		15
Contribution to specific ESG performance levels within the companies and/or to the sector.		5
Business impact: improvement of existing product or services or new market opportunities.		10
Scalability: degree of exploitation, transferability of results and replicability of the activities developed to other end users and other sectors (if possible)		10
<b>TOTAL SCORE</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>100</b>

A minimum **overall score of 70 points** is required to be admitted to the final selection stage. It is foreseen that at least 14 projects will be selected to be supported:

- at least 13 projects for Strand A.
- 1 project will be selected for strand B.

The number of projects supported is indicative and depends on the final ranking and awarded lump-sum amounts.

### *Use of AI*

The Evaluation Panel acknowledges that AI tools may be used in proposal preparation; applicants are therefore requested to include a short statement on AI usage (if any) and to confirm that the final submission has been validated by human experts.

Following the evaluation process, the ranking of the proposals will be generated according to the highest obtained scores.

### *Prioritisation in case of equal scores*

In case a group of applicants score equal points, the prioritisation will be carried out as follows:

- 1<sup>st</sup> criterion: **PowerUp NetZero** technologies addressed by proposals: priority to Net-Zero Technologies not yet addressed.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> criterion: **PowerUp NetZero** challenge addressed by proposals: priority to challenges not yet addressed.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> criterion: Presence of SMEs or start-ups from EU regions different from the countries of individual **PowerUp NetZero** partners
- 4<sup>th</sup> criterion: Random drawing.

### *Costs*

The cost estimations will be assessed against the proposed activities under the implementation criterion. The Evaluation Panel will also make sure that the cost estimates are reasonable and non-excessive.

If overestimated costs are found, this will be recorded in the Evaluation Summary Report. This misalignment will also be reflected in a modified lump sum amount that will be proposed by the **PowerUp NetZero** consortium to the participant by email as part of the communication of selection, in case the SME or start-up is selected.

If the PowerUp NetZero Consortium proposes a reduced lump sum amount, the applicant will be notified by email and will have 5 working days to either: (a) accept the modified amount, in which case the Agreement will reflect the new amount; or (b) provide a written justification of the original budget, which the Consortium will review within 5 additional working days. If no agreement is reached, the application will not be funded. The applicant may lodge a complaint under Section 5.3.

## **5.3 ENQUIRIES AND COMPLAINTS**

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If, after receiving the results of the evaluation, you consider that a mistake has been made, you can send your complaint in English by email to [punz@piemonteinnova.it](mailto:punz@piemonteinnova.it) including at least the following information:

- Contact details (including email address).
- The subject of the complaint.
- Explanation and evidence regarding the complaint.
- Copy of the submitted application form (downloadable in pdf from the website).

Companies will have seven calendar days to submit their complaints starting from the day after the communication of the results was sent. The **PowerUp NetZero** Consortium will review the complaint within no more than seven calendar days from its reception.

Anonymous complaints, or complaints with incomplete information will not be considered nor reviewed.

## 5.4 COMMUNICATION OF RESULTS AND ACCEPTANCE

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Once all proposals are evaluated, **PowerUp NetZero** will send to the coordinator company an email detailing the evaluation results (proposal score and short comment from evaluators). This email will also contain the decision to fund/not to fund the proposal.

All partners in the selected consortia will be then requested to sign a contract, defined as an “agreement”, with the relevant **PowerUp NetZero** project partner (Fondazione Piemonte Innova or EnviPark). The requested confirmation and acceptance must be communicated within 5 working days from the notification of the project approval, sending all requested documents. The agreement will state all the requirements and conditions to be fulfilled in order to receive the lump-sum.

All applicants, whether selected or not, will receive a notification of the evaluation outcome.

See also Section 6.

## 5.5 CONTACT POINT

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For any information, please send an email to [punz@piemonteinnova.it](mailto:punz@piemonteinnova.it) specifying the topic of the request and the question/doubt/information needed.

Information about the project, its objectives and activities can be found on **PowerUp NetZero** webpage: <https://profile.clustercollaboration.eu/profile/cluster-partnership-initiative/06aeb7f7-6519-429b-a5b0-7e83caf9c3b1>

# 6. AGREEMENT

## 6.1 Preparation and signature of the Agreement

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Once the beneficiaries have been selected, they will receive the agreement proposed by **PowerUp NetZero** defining the total lump sum to be received, the conditions, obligations and the timeline for reporting and payments. The agreement will be signed by each beneficiary and the leader of **PowerUp NetZero OPEN CALL FOR INNOVATION PROJECTS**, namely Fondazione Piemonte Innova (FPI) or Environment Park (EnviPark). The agreement will also include all the relevant information related to the company, and about FPI, as well as the principles, obligations<sup>1</sup>, and conditions to be fulfilled by the beneficiaries, related to:

- **Conflict of interests:** The beneficiaries must take all measures to prevent any situation where the impartial and objective implementation of the Agreement could be compromised for reasons involving family, emotional life, political or national affinity, economic interest or any other direct or indirect interest ('conflict of interests'). They must formally notify the **PowerUp NetZero** Consortium without delay of any situation constituting or likely to lead to a conflict of interests and immediately take all the necessary steps to rectify this situation. The **PowerUp NetZero** Consortium may verify that the measures taken are appropriate and may require additional measures to be taken by a specified deadline.

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<sup>1</sup> Following the requirements of the Grant Agreement signed by the PowerUp NetZero Consortium related to providing Financial Support to Third Parties (FSTP).

- **Replacement of consortium members:** The consortia composition as submitted in the proposal is fixed in principle. Any change to the consortia composition must be requested in writing to the Contractor (FPI/EnviPark) at least 30 days before the intended change date, stating the reasons and providing all eligibility documentation for any new entity. The Contractor reserves the right to accept or refuse such requests and may consult EISMEA if necessary. Unauthorised changes to the consortium composition may result in reduction or full recovery of the grant.
- **Confidentiality and security - Sensitive information:** The beneficiary must keep confidential any data, documents or other material (in any form) that is identified as sensitive in writing ('sensitive information') - during the implementation of the action and for at least until the time-limit set out in the [Privacy policy](#). Sensitive information may be used solely for the purposes of implementing the Agreement and may be disclosed only to personnel or third parties strictly involved in the action and bound by confidentiality obligations. The **PowerUp NetZero** Consortium may disclose sensitive information to its staff and to other EU institutions and bodies. It may moreover disclose sensitive information to third parties, if: (a) this is necessary to implement the Agreement or safeguard the EU financial interests and (b) the recipients of the information are bound by an obligation of confidentiality. The confidentiality obligations no longer apply if: (a) the disclosing party agrees to release the other party (b) the information becomes publicly available, without breaching any confidentiality obligation (c) the disclosure of the sensitive information is required by EU, international or national law. Specific confidentiality rules (if any) will be set out in the agreement.
- **Classified information:** The parties must handle classified information in accordance with the applicable EU, international or national law on classified information (in particular, Decision 2015/44417 and its implementing rules). Deliverables which contain classified information must be submitted according to special procedures agreed with the granting authority. Action tasks involving classified information may be subcontracted only after explicit approval (in writing) from the granting authority. Classified information may not be disclosed to any third party (including participants involved in the action implementation) without prior explicit written approval from the granting authority. Specific security rules (if any) will be set out in the agreement.
- **Ethics:** Activities must be carried out in accordance with the highest ethical standards and applicable EU, international, and national legislation. Any specific ethics requirements will be detailed in the Agreement.
- **Values:** the beneficiary must commit to and ensure the respect of basic EU values (such as respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and human rights, including the rights of minorities). Specific rules on values (if any) will be set out in the agreement.
- **Visibility of the EU emblem:** conditions and requirements will be included in the agreement.
- **Specific rules** for carrying out the action, settled in the agreement.
- **Keeping records and supporting documents:** the beneficiaries must - at least until the time-limit set out by the **PowerUp NetZero** Consortium in the Agreement (5 years after the **PowerUp NetZero** project end, i.e.: 31/12/2033) - keep records and other supporting documents to prove the proper implementation of the action (meaning, the participation to the event). In addition, the beneficiaries must - for the same period - keep the following to justify the amounts declared: adequate records and supporting documents to prove proper implementation and fulfilment of the conditions as described in the agreement.
- **Consequences of non-compliance:** If a beneficiary breaches any of its obligations under the agreement, the lump-sum may be reduced or terminated.

A template of the agreement will be available at least one month before the call deadline. It will be published at the webpage of the call: here.

The beneficiaries must complete the agreement with the required information and the legal representative of all involved SMEs must sign it. The agreement must be **signed using a certified electronic signature** (encrypted digital signatures, such as those produced using e-signature software, preferably PAdES - PDF Advanced Electronic Signature) and sent via email to [punz@piemonteinnova.it](mailto:punz@piemonteinnova.it) within 5 working days after its reception. It will then be counter-signed by FPI or EnviPark and a fully signed copy will be sent back via email to the company.

If a beneficiary prefers to sign the contract by hand, this must be notified to FPI when the communication of selection is received, thus before receiving the agreement. In this case, the signed Agreement must be received by post within the deadline specified by FPI.

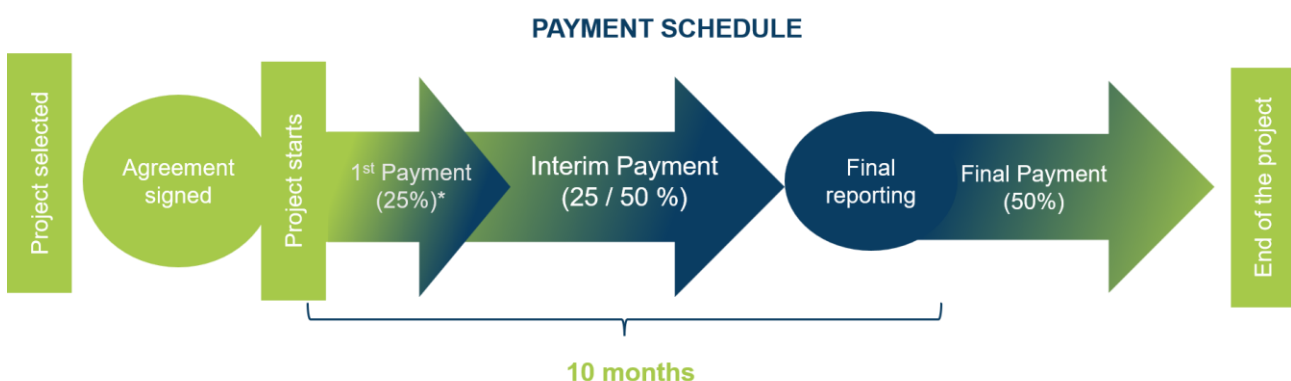
In all cases mentioned above, the signature of the Agreement implies full acceptance of its terms and conditions.

## 6.2 PAYMENTS

The total amount of the lump-sum will be defined in the agreement.

The financial support will be provided in up to 3 instalments, based on the deliverables achieved and linked to the submission of reports (as stated above), as follows:

1. First payment of 25% of total amount will be made 2 months after the activity starting date, linked to a **first report** stating the activities carried out until that moment, which should be of a value at least equal to the amount of the first payment [please note that the first interim payment of 25% will be carried out only if all Consortia's SMEs' Financial Viability Self-Check (see Section 4.1) meets the relevant criteria].
2. Interim payment of 25% (or 50% in case the first payment was not activated) of total amount will be made 5 months after the activity starting date, linked to a **mid-term progress (second) report** stating the activities carried out until that moment (the costs already borne by the Beneficiary should be specified).
3. Final payment of 50% of the total amount will be carried out after the end of the funded activity and will be linked to the **final report**, including full description of the activities realised and the achievements obtained and all supporting documents relating to completion of the Action.



\*The 1<sup>st</sup> payment will be carried out only if "SME Financial Viability Self-Check" fulfils the criteria for triggering this payment.

Figure 2 - Payment Schedule for PowerUp NetZero Open Call for Innovation Projects

Summarising, payments will be made in three instalments:

- 25% first payment, if all the relevant financial criteria are met.
- 25% or 50% first or second payment.
- 50% final payment, after completion of the project activities and approval of the final report.

To be noted that beneficiaries of this call can also apply to the other **PowerUp NetZero OPEN CALL (BUSINESS INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY ADOPTION SERVICES: [available here](#))**, but the same SME cannot receive more than 60.000,00 EUR overall from the **PowerUp NetZero** project.

Interim and final payments will be executed by the relevant **PowerUp NetZero consortium partner** (FPI or EnviPark, as appropriate), in accordance with the agreement, within 60 days (2 months) from acceptance of the relevant reporting documents. The final payment is subject to submission and acceptance of the final reporting package, including the mandatory feedback questionnaire referenced in the Agreement.

This information, together with the reporting timeline and reporting requirements, will be included in the Agreement to be signed by the beneficiaries and FPI or EnviPark, the **PowerUp NetZero OPEN CALL FOR INNOVATION PROJECTS** leaders.

### 6.2.1 General payment terms and obligations of beneficiaries

- All payments will be made in Euro.
- Expenditures incurred before the Agreement signature date, or after the project duration period, are ineligible for remuneration.
- Submission of an application does not constitute an entitlement for funding.
- Lump-sum funding must be used exclusively to achieve the objectives defined in the Agreement, in a transparent manner consistent with the principles of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

**PowerUp NetZero** will not be responsible for paying any costs applied for and incurred by the beneficiaries in case of non-compliance with the terms and conditions of the **PowerUp NetZero** Open Calls.

## 6.3 Monitoring and Reporting

As mentioned, in order to receive the lump-sum grant as set out in the Agreement, beneficiaries must comply with the monitoring and reporting obligations defined by the **PowerUp NetZero** Consortium throughout the implementation period.

Within **one month from the signature of the Agreement**, beneficiaries must submit a **first operational report**, aimed at providing a more detailed description of the operational set-up of the project, including the planned activities, implementation approach, roles of the partners and updated timeline. The approval of this report will be a prerequisite for the **first payment**.

In addition, throughout the project duration, beneficiaries must submit a **monthly self-assessment report**. This document will serve as a light monthly monitoring tool, allowing the **PowerUp NetZero** Consortium to verify that the project is progressing as planned. These monthly self-assessments will **not be formally evaluated** but only checked for monitoring purposes.

At mid-term, beneficiaries must submit a **second report** describing the progress achieved against the objectives and work plan set out in the application form and in the Agreement. This report will be subject to an assessment by the Consortium and will be followed by a review meeting with the beneficiaries. In case of a positive assessment, the related **interim payment** will be released.

At the end of the project, beneficiaries must submit a **formal final report**, including a comprehensive description of the activities implemented, results achieved, and objectives fulfilled. The final reporting phase will also include a **final presentation meeting** and participation in the **final event**. Following the successful assessment of the final report and completion of the final review steps, the **final balance payment** will be released.

During the implementation period, the **PowerUp NetZero** partners may also request additional supporting documents or clarification, if deemed necessary, in order to verify progress and proper implementation of the funded activities.

## 6.4 COMMUNICATION OBLIGATIONS

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For dissemination of the activities funded by **PowerUp NetZero**, the recipients must credit the **PowerUp NetZero** project through proper citation and appearance of the **PowerUp NetZero** logo, the EUROCLUSTERS logo and the EU emblem, with the disclaimer “This activity has received funding from the **PowerUp NetZero** project that is co-funded by the European Union”.

The **PowerUp NetZero** project will provide a communication package to all beneficiaries and this information will be also included in the agreement.

In order to communicate efficiently about the outcomes of this **PowerUp NetZero OPEN CALL FOR INNOVATION PROJECTS**, the **PowerUp NetZero** Consortium will disseminate several information about the awarded proposals and the implemented activities, also through its social media (LinkedIn, consortium websites and social media), including:

- Description of the supported activities.
- Beneficiaries’ information: SME or start-up name and country.
- Duration of the activities.

Detailed information will be further gathered throughout the project.

## 7. CONFIDENTIALITY, IPR AND DATA PROTECTION

### 7.1 INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS (IPR)

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IPR will remain property of the SMEs. There are no IPR obligations toward the European Commission (EC). However, any communication or publication of the beneficiaries shall clearly indicate that the project has received funding from the European Union and the **PowerUp NetZero**, therefore displaying the EU and logo on all printed and digital material, including websites and press releases.

However, by accepting the Agreement, beneficiaries grant EISMEA and the PowerUp NetZero Consortium a royalty-free, non-exclusive right to use non-sensitive results for information, communication, dissemination and publicity purposes, in accordance with Article 7 of the Agreement. This does not affect the beneficiaries' rights to commercialise their results or to protect them through patents or other IPR instruments.

### 7.2 CONFIDENTIALITY AND GDPR DATA PROTECTION

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By submitting the application, the applicant consents that the content of the application form will be shared with **PowerUp NetZero** partners. The privacy policy is available [here](#) as well as linked in the application form.

**PowerUp NetZero** consortium has the right to use non-sensitive information relating to the activities, materials and documents received from the beneficiaries for policy, information, communication, dissemination and publicity purposes — during the project implementation and afterwards. All this information will be included in the agreement that will be signed by the beneficiary and FPI, coordinator of **PowerUp NetZero**.

In case external experts are involved in the evaluation process, they will sign a statement regarding the non-divulgence of the content of the proposals.

## 8. ANNEX I: SMES AND START-UPS CHECKLIST

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In order to submit a complete application to **PowerUp NetZero** OPEN CALL FOR INNOVATION PROJECTS, SMEs and start-ups must present the following documentation:

- ✓ Application form duly filled and submitted online on [EUSurvey](#)
- ✓ Activities timeline, budget and KPIs.
- ✓ One Declaration of Honour (DoH) signed by each SME.
- ✓ SME Financial Viability Self-Check available at the following link (the generated result must be submitted by each SME): <https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/lfv/lfvSimulation.do>

As mentioned, a word template reproducing the content of the online application form is available as a supporting document, to help participants to organise and develop the proposal to be presented under this call. All relevant documents can be downloaded at this webpage: <https://piemonteinnova.it/second-powerup-netzero-open-call-innovation-projects/>