

# JEWEL

Joint nEtWork for European  
net-zero manufacturing Leadership



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## OC#1 – NZT DEMO PROJECTS

### FAQ

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# Document information

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# What is JEWEL?

The **Joint nEtWork for European net-zero manufacturing Leadership** (JEWEL) is a European Eurocluster initiative funded under the Single Market Programme (SMP-COSME), aiming to strengthen the competitiveness, resilience and sustainability of European manufacturing ecosystems by accelerating the development, uptake and industrial deployment of net-zero technologies and sustainable manufacturing models, with a particular focus on innovative SMEs.

In line with the European Green Deal, the Net-Zero Industry Act and EU industrial and competitiveness strategies, JEWEL supports manufacturing companies in transforming environmental and energy constraints into drivers of innovation and growth, by providing practical, accessible and market-oriented support that enables the transition from awareness to implementation and from ideas to bankable projects, while preserving industrial performance and strategic autonomy.

JEWEL is built on a pan-European and cross-sectoral cluster-driven approach, capitalising on the proximity of **8 clusters** to industrial ecosystems and their capacity to mobilise companies, technology providers, experts. The consortium covers **7 European countries**, and a wide range of manufacturing value chains and regional innovation ecosystems. This diversity enables JEWEL to address common industrial challenges while taking into account regional specificities and smart specialisation priorities.

The project is structured around **3 complementary pillars** designed to support companies throughout their net-zero transformation journey:

## 1) Net-Zero knowledge and resources hub

JEWEL develops and disseminates shared knowledge on net-zero technologies, energy efficiency solutions, circular economy approaches and sustainable manufacturing methods. Through mapping activities, white papers, workshops and training actions, the project strengthens the capacity of clusters and manufacturing SMEs to understand, assess and adopt relevant technological and organisational solutions.

## 2) Project factory and innovation support

JEWEL supports the emergence of collaborative innovation projects by providing tailored guidance “from idea to project”. Companies benefit from personalised coaching, cross-regional matchmaking, access to expertise and structured service packs aimed at reducing risks, improving project maturity and facilitating access to funding and markets.

## 3) Funding Window for SME-led Innovation projects

To complement non-financial support, JEWEL allocates €1.98 million of financial support to third parties through competitive open calls. This funding targets SME-led projects that demonstrate strong potential to contribute to net-zero manufacturing, resource efficiency, decarbonisation and industrial resilience, while generating tangible economic and technological impacts. JEWEL implements a cascade funding mechanism via the funding window, with 3 open calls launched in 2026 and 2027, to support the deployment of 25 projects related to the Net-Zero Technologies and the manufacturing sector.

Beyond individual company support, JEWEL seeks to create lasting structural effects by strengthening cooperation between clusters at European level. The project contributes to the **consolidation of a meta-cluster network** dedicated to net-zero manufacturing, fostering long-term collaboration, knowledge sharing and alignment of support services across regions.

A description of the JEWEL Open Call can be found in the JEWEL Guide for Applicants and on the official [website of JEWEL](#).

# Consortium composition and applicants' profiles

## 1. Who can apply to JEWEL open call 1 – Net-Zero Demo projects?

Applicants should be:

- Private Entities (registered legal persons)
- Established in **an EU member state or in a participating country listed in the Single Market Programme (SMP)**. The list of the eligible countries is published by the EC: [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)

Applicants to be funded should be **SMEs**.

As well as tech providers, digital providers and manufacturing companies can apply for JEWEL open call 1.

## 2. What is the definition of an SME?

A SME will be considered as such if it complies with the definition of the European Union (2003/361/EC):

- [EU recommendation 2003/361](#) (ES, DA, DE, EL, EN, FR, IT, NL, PT, FI, SV)
- [Document 32003H0361R\(03\)](#) (BG, CS, ET, GA, HR, LV, LT, HU, MT, PL, RO, SK, SL)

The main factors determining whether an enterprise is an SME are

1. **staff headcount (max. 250 FTE)**
2. either **turnover (max. €50 million)** or **balance sheet total (max. €43 million)**

These ceilings apply to the figures for individual firms only. A firm that is part of a larger group may need to include staff headcount/turnover/balance sheet data from that group too.

More detailed can be accessed on [https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/smes/sme-fundamentals/sme-definition\\_en](https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/smes/sme-fundamentals/sme-definition_en)

## 3. How can I check my SME status?

Each funded partner should check its SME status with the SME self-assessment tool published by the EC on the following link:

<https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/sme/public/organisation-name>

A user guide is provided in several languages: <https://ec.europa.eu/docsroom/documents/42921>

The outcome of this self-assessment tool will have to be attached to the application for any SME Applicant (in pdf format).

If you entity is not an SME, it cannot received a direct grant from JEWEL Eurocluster.

## 4. How many partners should compose the consortium?

The consortium should be composed of

- Minimum 2 partner entities
- At least 2 SMEs (cf. SME definition)

All entities applying as one consortium should be autonomous to one another (without any capital or personal links).

Consortium can be composed of more than 2 funded partners, in the limit of the maximal EU grant of 54.000 € per project. Consortium can involve unfunded partner.

SMEs only can be funded by JEWEL open call under the framework of the FSTP mechanism.

## 5. What company profiles should compose the consortium?

The consortium can be composed of:

- A manufacturing company and a tech (solution) provider (or more)
- Two tech or solution providers (or more)

The consortium must involve at least 2 funded SMEs.

## 6. Where should the partners of the consortium be established?

To be eligible for direct funding, SMEs should be established in

- **an EU member state**

or

- **a participating country listed in the Single Market Programme (SMP)**. The list of the eligible countries is published by the EC: [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)

A partner coming outside these countries can participate to the application but without funding.

## 7. In which region am I located according to the “NUTS2” classification (or equivalent)?

If your entity is established **in a EU member state**, the NUTS2 classification is defined by the European Commission, based on [Regulation \(EC\) No 1059/2003](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 May 2003: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Glossary:Nomenclature\\_of\\_territorial\\_units\\_for\\_statistics\\_\(NUTS\)](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Glossary:Nomenclature_of_territorial_units_for_statistics_(NUTS))

You can check your NUTS2 region on the following link: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-manuals-and-guidelines/w/ks-gq-23-010>

If your entity is established in a **non-member state**, here is a definition of the corresponding “NUTS2” regions: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/nuts/correspondence-tables>

## 8. Is an RTO, University, or Center of Research eligible for JEWEL open call 1?

No, RTOs or academic structures cannot be funded directly by the Eurocluster Initiatives, but for the JEWEL open call 1, they can be part of the application as **subcontractors**, for a maximum of 15% of the total budget of the project.

## 9. Is a large company eligible for JEWEL open call 1?

No, large company cannot be funded directly by the Eurocluster Initiatives, but for the JEWEL open call 1, they can be part of the application as **subcontractors**, for a maximum of 15% of the total budget of the project, or as a partner or beneficiary of the JEWEL project implementation without funding.

## 10. Can I submit an application if my company is not yet established?

No, the call is only for registered legal persons (registered before submitting the proposal).

# Expected projects and scope

## 11. What are the Net-Zero Technologies?

The Net-Zero Technologies are detailed and listed in the [Net-Zero Industry Act](#) published by the European Union. For the scope of JEWEL open calls, the key technologies are defined in the [Cross-border Service Pack](#) and in the [Guide for Applicants](#) of the open call.

**4 categories of the NZT** are focused by JEWEL NZT Demo call. **At least one** of these categories should be targeted by each application:

- Battery and energy storage technologies
- Hydrogen technologies
- Electricity grid technologies
- Wind, solar, and other green energy production technologies for decarbonation

The project should address:

- A clearly identified challenge (e.g. energy consumption, emissions, resource efficiency, process optimisation)
- A solution integrating advanced or net-zero technologies (e.g. electrification, energy recovery, AI for optimisation, hydrogen, circular processes)
- A measurable impact (e.g. CO<sub>2</sub> reduction, energy savings, productivity gains, cost reduction)

## 12. How does JEWEL define a “manufacturing SME” or a “manufacturing use case” ?

Application should integrate a manufacturing SME or/and be related to a manufacturing use case. A manufacturing use case refers to a **concrete, industry-driven application** scenario in a specific production challenge is addressed by developing, testing, and demonstrating an innovative solution based on Net-Zero Technologies (NZE).

It is characterised by a real industrial context (existing production line, process, or facility), which can be associated to the project by including the manufacturing SME with or without direct funding

In JEWEL Eurocluster open call 1, the collaborative dimension (typically involving at least two SMEs from different regions, combining industrial need and technological solution) is a main focus.

## 13. Which industrial ecosystems are targeted by JEWEL open call 1?

Each application should address **at least one** of the following key ecosystems:

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

Applicants should demonstrate clear links with and impacts on the targeted ecosystems in their proposals.

## 14. Are digital solutions targeted in the JEWEL open call 1?

Yes, digital solutions are eligible, provided they clearly contribute to net-zero manufacturing objectives.

JEWEL Open Call 1 focuses on innovation and demonstration projects supporting the adoption of Net-Zero Technologies (NZE) in manufacturing. In this context, digital solutions are strongly encouraged when they enable or enhance the green transition.

For example, digital technologies are relevant if they:

- Improve energy efficiency (e.g. AI-based energy optimisation)
- Enable process optimisation and waste reduction (e.g. digital twins, predictive maintenance)
- Support integration of clean technologies (e.g. smart control systems for electrification or hydrogen use)
- Facilitate monitoring and reduction of emissions (e.g. carbon tracking tools)

Purely digital projects are not eligible if they:

- Do not relate to a manufacturing process
- Do not contribute to decarbonisation or sustainability
- Are limited to software development without industrial demonstration

Digital solutions are not the end goal, but a means to achieve net-zero manufacturing.

## 15. What does TRL mean ?

TRL means Technology Readiness Level. The TRLs are indicators of the maturity level of a particular technology. This measurement system provides a common understanding of technology status and addresses the entire innovation chain. Originally developed by the NASA, the TRL Scale contains 9 technology readiness levels, from TRL 1 being the lowest to TRL 9 the highest.

The following definitions apply, unless otherwise specified:

TRL 1 – basic principles observed

TRL 2 – technology concept formulated

TRL 3 – experimental proof of concept

TRL 4 – technology validated in lab

TRL 5 – technology validated in relevant environment

TRL 6 – technology demonstrated in relevant environment

TRL 7 – system prototype demonstration in operational environment

TRL 8 – system complete and qualified •

TRL 9 – actual system proven in operational environment

## Finance and budget

### 16. What is the cofinancing rate for projects awarded via the JEWEL open call 1?

SMEs can be funded up to 90% of eligible project costs: the cofinancing rate for SMEs is 10%. This means that the minimum total project cost must be €60,000 and that at least 10% (€ 6,000) must come from private financial resources.

Non-SMEs are not eligible for funding, so their co-financing rate is 0%. They are considered as unfunded partners.

### 17. What is the financial viability check?

It is an online self-evaluation questionnaire provided by the European Commission which allows you to evaluate and confirm that your company is in a healthy financial situation and will be able to successfully implement the project you propose in your application. It is available here:

<https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/lfv/lfvSimulation.do>

The document on how the ratios are calculated is here:  
[https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants\\_manual/agd/h2020\\_calc-financial-viability-ratios-guide\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants_manual/agd/h2020_calc-financial-viability-ratios-guide_en.pdf)

The outcome of the financial viability check must be attached to your application. Once you have filled in the requested fields on the tool, you have to click on "Calculate ratio". The results will appear

on the bottom of the web page. Then, you have to print the page in pdf or take a screenshot, which then can be uploaded in the JEWEL application platform in pdf format.

## 18. What if my entity does not reach the ratio of the financial viability check?

If your entity does not reach the ratio of the financial liability check, your application will not be automatically rejected. If your project is selected for funding, the consortium of JEWEL will evaluate the risk related to your application and project implementation. Depending on the risk analysis, the consortium will suggest you a solution to limit this financial risk, or, if no solution can be found, will reject your application.

## 19. Are applicants required to include the budget plan in the application?

In the application form, it is asked to provide information on how the grant amount will be distributed among the consortium (SMEs), and among the main budget categories (personnel costs, equipment, etc.). Notice that subcontracting cannot exceed 15% of the total budget.

Drafting a budget will also help to evaluate the project's feasibility and plan the activities accordingly. The budget should be distributed between partners according to their role and project commitments.

As the grant is a lump-sum, no detailed financial reporting will be needed. However, beneficiaries must implement the activities as described in the approved proposal and ensure that the lump-sum is used to support the execution of the project.

## 20. What are the types of costs eligible for my project?

Staff costs, equipment, consumable expenses, subcontracting, travel costs and other direct goods and services necessary for the implementation of the project are eligible for JEWEL applications.

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

## 21. How much can I get from JEWEL open call 1?

The maximum grant per project for JEWEL open call 1 is €54,000 representing maximum 90% of the total eligible costs (budget).

The partners are free to decide the way of splitting this grant and have to draft a budget proposal in their application. Drafting a budget will also help to evaluate the project's feasibility and plan the activities accordingly following the commitment and role of each partner.

## 22. What means an "in-kind contribution"?

An in-kind contribution refers to non-cash resources provided by the SME to the project, which are necessary to implement the project, and represent a real economic value for the company. These private contributions are not paid as money and is provided through internal resources, for example:

- Staff time
- Use of equipment or production lines owned by the company
- Use of materials or components from the stock of the funded company
- Access to facilities (factory space, labs, utilities) owned by the funded company

In JEWEL Open Call 1, the private contribution must be a real financial contribution, meaning: at least **10% of the budget should come from cash resources that are not in-kind contributions** such as staff time or equipment use. In other words, the SME must co-finance the project with its own money or external funding, covering at least 10% of the total project budget.

Examples of eligible (non in-kind) private contributions:

- Internal financial resources: company's own funds (cash from operating budget), Equity / retained earnings used to finance the project (example: An SME pays part of subcontracting or equipment costs from its own bank account.)
- External financing: Bank loans, Private investors (e.g. shareholders, venture capital)
- Direct payments linked to the project: purchase of equipment or services paid directly by the SME (external invoice), subcontracting costs not covered by the grant

## 23. How much can I get from JEWEL Eurocluster Initiative?

JEWEL will launch 3 open calls, between Spring 2026 and Spring 2027 for a total EU grant of €1,980,000. Each SME can get a limited grant of €60,000 from the JEWEL Eurocluster initiatives.

## 24. Who can be funded in JEWEL open calls?

Only SMEs can be directly funded. Other types of entities (large corporations, RTOs, Academic institutions, others) can participate to the consortium as unfunded partners or subcontractors.

## 25. Is subcontracting authorized?

Yes, subcontractors can participate to a JEWEL application to open call 1, for a maximum of 15% of the total budget of the project. The subcontractor(s) and its (their) added value should be described in the proposal.

## 26. If my application is selected, when will I get the grant?

The payment scheme is processed as the following:

- 40% pre-financing at project start (about September 2026)
- 60% at the end of the project, after completion of the reporting phase and conditions detailed in the Guide for Applicants (chapter 11). The maximum duration of the project is 9 months.

## 27. Will I need to provide invoices and other financial documents on how I spent the grant money?

The lump sum is a simplified method meaning that beneficiaries (the awarded SMEs) are not required to present accounting documents like invoices, timesheets, etc., to prove that the cost was actually incurred.

JEWEL project consortium will assess the progress of the funded projects and quality of the work during 2 reporting phases (mid-term and final reporting) minimum, but not the accountancy of the participating SMEs .

In this sense, the awarded projects will be asked to demonstrate the implementation of the project in line with workplan and budget proposals. In any case, the lump sum methodology does not release the awarded SMEs from the obligation to collect documentation to confirm the costs under fiscal regulation. Applicants shall bear in mind that by participating in the JEWEL Eurocluster Initiative, receiving the grant and signing the Sub Grant Agreement , they will also be responsible towards the competent tax authorities, and the EC audit bodies such as the European Court of Auditors (ECA) and the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF).

## Application process

### 28. How can I apply for JEWEL Open Call?

Applicants should introduce they project **online**. A dedicated platform as been published for JEWEL open calls. Here is the process to apply:

- 1) Create your account on [JEWEL application platform](#)
- 2) Fill in the required fields and attach the mandatory documents
- 3) Submit your application before June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2026 at 5 PM (CET)

### 29. How long does it take to fill in the application?

2 working days should be enough to fill in the JEWEL application. The application duration depends on the level of maturity of your project and idea.

Please note that each field on the application has a character limit, so it is recommended to keep the proposal focused on the requested information.

It is recommended to create an account on the at an early stage and to start drafting the application. Applicants can enter text/data and come back as many times as necessary before submitting the final version. It is also recommended to submit the application quite in advance before the deadline in order to avoid last-minute problems.

### 30. Where can I find a virgin application form in pdf format to prepare my application?

Once registered on the platform, you will see a link to download the form in pdf format. This pdf form is a tool to help you prepare your application, which must be submitted via the online application form only.

### 31. Will I be able to modify my proposal after submission?

Yes, after you submit your application, you can edit it as many times as you wish, until the deadline on June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2026 may at 5 PM CET.

### 32. What happens if I do not submit my application within the deadline?

Applications are not accepted after the deadline. Failure of meeting the submission deadline for any reason, including extenuating circumstances, will result in the rejection of the application .

### 33. Which additional documents can I attach to my application?

Only 2 document types can be attached to your application. Both document types are mandatory **for each funded partners**:

- The outcome of the [SME self-assessment tool](#) in pdf format,
- The outcome of the [Financial viability check](#) in pdf format.

Into the application form (<https://jewel-eurocluster.grantplatform.com/>), you will find dedicated fields where these documents can be uploaded.

You can add illustrations or additional documents for specific fields into your application (optional).

### 34. Should my consortium partner(s) submit a separate application form?

No, as a consortium you should submit only one application on behalf of your partners, thus you need to gather all necessary information from consortium partners. At the beginning of the application form, you will be asked to provide the name and contact details of the person, who will be the contact point and coordinator in your consortium.

Once registered on the JEWEL open call platform, you will be able to share your application online with your consortium partners.

### 35. Can I submit two project ideas?

No. If more than one proposal is submitted by any applicant, by any consortium, only the last edited proposal (counting back from the deadline) which has been submitted will be evaluated. The other proposals submitted by or including the same company will be automatically rejected.

## Evaluation and selection process

### 36. What are the selection criteria?

The criteria are detailed in the Guide for Applicants (chapter 9). Each proposal will be evaluated by external independent evaluators with 3 main awarding criteria: Excellence, Impact and Implementation.

### 37. How can my application get bonus points?

5 additional (bonus) points will be assigned to applications including an **international consortium**, after the external evaluation stage. To be evaluated as international, the consortium should include funded SMEs coming from different countries.

### 38. What is the evaluation and implementation calendar?

- Eligibility check (administrative assessment): 1 – 12 June 2026
- External evaluation: 8 June – 26 June 2026
- Results notification to applicants: early July
- Sub-grant agreement signature: 6 July – 31 August 2026
- Project implementation period: 1 September 2026 – 30 May 2027 maximum (9 months maximum).

## Support to the applicants and projects

### 39. What support can I get as an applicant to JEWEL open call 1?

To help potential applicants defined their proposal to JEWEL open call, the programme offers an **online helpdesk**: fill in the form and a dedicated partner from JEWEL consortium or from the Ambassadors' network of JEWEL will come back and guide you through JEWEL offer services and open calls.

The contact details and list of the JEWEL partners and ambassadors are published on the website: <https://evoluma.pl/en/jewel>

If you are facing any technical issue related to the application platform, please contact the following email address: [camille.le-guenec@pole-emc2.fr](mailto:camille.le-guenec@pole-emc2.fr)

### 40. What support can I get during the project implementation?

During the implementation stage, a **project guardian** from the JEWEL consortium will be assigned to each project. The role of the project guardian will be:

- organisation of follow-up sessions to coordinate and control the correct implementation and execution of the project
- dissemination of administrative and financial information (i.e. reporting templates)
- collection of feedbacks from the awarded projects and reporting
- communication and promotion of actions and activities relevant to the awarded projects
- answering questions from the awarded projects



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