

On behalf of:



Federal Ministry
for the Environment, Nature Conservation
and Nuclear Safety



of the Federal Republic of Germany

Frequently Asked Questions

Project Selection Procedure Grant programme against marine litter „Marine Debris Framework- Regional hubs around the globe” (Marine:DeFRAG)

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1. Selection procedure and duration of funding

1.1. What does “two stage selection” procedure mean?

Projects are selected by the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU)/ Zukunft-Umwelt-Gesellschaft (ZUG) gGmbH (ZUG) in a two-stage procedure. In the **first stage**, coherent project outlines need to be submitted based on the corresponding funding guideline. If project outlines are promising, the Federal Minister for the Environment, Nature Conservation, and Nuclear Safety (BMU)/ Zukunft-Umwelt-Gesellschaft (ZUG) gGmbH will ask for the submission of a formal project proposal (start of the second stage).

In the **second stage**, the formal project proposal will go through an in-depth evaluation, and after a positive decision by the BMU, the project can begin. All relevant information and templates for the second stage will be made available to successful applicants in writing after the first stage is completed.

1.2. How should the project outline be submitted?

The project outline should be submitted via the online platform easy-Online linked on the ZUG website¹. In addition to the information asked for on easy-Online, a technical project outline in German or English must be uploaded to easy-Online as a PDF file. The templates for the technical project outline can be downloaded from the ZUG website. It is not necessary to submit a hard copy the project outline by mail.

1.3. What is the maximum project duration at the moment?

The maximum project duration is until 31.12.2025. Currently, applicants should not expect subsequent phases to be funded by this grant program and should ensure that the project achieves its objectives in the requested period until 31.12.2025.

1.4. Can projects have already started before the funding has been approved by the BMU?

Projects must not have started implementing their activities before the BMU has approved the funding of the project. Proof of intended or already approved third-party funding for the project must be provided together with information on the respective granter of third party funding and the concrete amount of funding. Implementation of activities before approval can be granted under exceptional, justified circumstances. This needs to be requested separately from the project proposal.

1.5. Will the implementing partners also receive a grant?

No. Only the main implementing organisation (applicant) will receive a grant and will thus be the only partner that receives direct funding from the BMU. The implementing partner is responsible for forwarding these funds to the implementing partners. After the grant has been approved, a subgrant agreement has to be signed with every implementing partner. Generally, all regulations that apply to the recipient of the initial grant itself must be passed on to the implementing partners.

¹ <https://www.z-u-g.org/en/responsibilities-and-tasks/grant-programme-against-marine-litter/>

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2. Applicants

2.1. Who can submit a project outline?

The main implementing organisation must be based in Germany. The following organisations may apply: Implementing agencies, NGOs, companies, universities, research institutions, as well as international and multilateral organisations and institutions based in Germany. Individuals cannot apply for funding.

In order to be capable of successfully implementing a project, the main implementing organisation should, generally, have relevant experience in implementing international projects in the respective region and topic area together with local partners. Furthermore, the project funding applied for should be in proportion to the revenue and capacity of the main implementing organisation.

2.2. What exactly does “based in Germany” mean? Does a German branch of an international organisation fulfil this criterion?

The location of the corporate body of an organisation is determined in the respective constitution, or by the location of the administration. This also applies to German branches of international and multilateral organisations with activities focused in Germany.

2.3. Are research institutions disadvantaged compared to other applicants?

No.

2.4. Can implementing partners work on an expenditure basis?

Implementing partners located in Germany can work on an expenditure basis as well as on a cost basis. Implementing partners not based in Germany have to work on an expenditure basis.

3. Project organisation and implementing partners

3.1. Are there institutions that are excluded from being an implementing partner?

Individuals are not eligible as implementing partners. Private companies can take part in the project as implementing partners as long as they don't solely have a commercial interest in the implementation and gain no economic advantage from receiving funds. Governments may not receive funding for regular ministerial activities.

3.2. How and when should the interest of the political partner and its willingness to cooperate be secured and demonstrated?

In order to implement the projects, the governments of the partner countries must have clearly expressed an explicit interest in cooperating with the Federal Republic of Germany on the prevention of

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marine litter. In the first selection stage, an initial assessment must be made by the main implementing organisation with regards to existing political support and a contact/reference person in the government of the partner country (political partner) must be given.

In the second selection stage, the political endorsement must be ensured by the implementing organisation and the BMU and be submitted prior to the approval of the grant. Further information about this will be supplied at the beginning of the second stage.

3.3. Is it mandatory to include implementing partners in the project?

The collaboration between different partners and the active involvement of local partners is generally necessary to successfully carry out the project and to successfully embed the project in the partner country. To achieve its goals, a project should therefore work together with local implementing partners.

3.4. Is the political partner's department relevant?

For project approval, the governments of the partner countries must have clearly expressed an explicit interest in cooperating with the Federal Republic of Germany on the prevention of marine litter. This support has to come from a political partner. The choice of this partner will depend on the project's thematic approach. The political partner should be the government department that is responsible for this area in the country. However, due to significant differences between countries, a general statement on what specific departments or ministries are most relevant cannot be made.

3.5. How important is the choice of implementing partners?

Generally, the choice of implementing partners should result in a successful implementation of the project and ensure access to the relevant stakeholders. To sustainably embed the project and its results in the partner country/ countries, sufficient activities should be implemented by local, professional and experienced implementation partners. Project constellations will be assessed individually for every project. A general answer cannot be given.

4. Budget

4.1. In which currency should the application be given?

All calculations in the financing plan need to be stated in Euro (EUR).

4.2. Are there any guidelines regarding the maximum amount of funding?

The funding volume granted by the BMU is normally between 3 and 5 million EUR per project. The grant needs to be in proportion to the planned activities. Furthermore, the funding volume should be in proportion to the revenue and financial capacity of the main implementing organisation.

4.3. Why should the funding volume be in proportion to the main implementing organisation's revenue?

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The federal government requires that the main implementing organisation is capable of ensuring appropriate use of the funds on a professional and administrative basis.

As the exclusive recipient of funds, it is the responsibility of the main implementing organisation to correctly forward the funds to the implementing partners. This means that, for example, subgrant agreements with the implementing partners have to be concluded, budgets and expenses must be checked during the application and project stage, and reports must be written. To meet those requirements, the availability of sufficient administrative experience and necessary staff is crucial.

4.4. Can partners' contribution to the project also take the form of in-kind contributions?

The applicant and the political partners may, in principle, provide contributions in the form of in-kind contributions. The BMU must be notified of the in-kind and non-cash contributions when applying for funding, but they cannot be listed in the financing plan.

4.5. Is there a fixed limit to the project's administrative overheads?

A flat rate of 10 % of the total eligible expenditure (excluding subgrants) can be accepted for administrative overheads.

4.6. How high must the contribution of an implementing organisation's own funds be to the overall budget? When and where does this have to be provided (project outline or proposal)?

No specific rate for own contributions has been set. However, a significant amount of own funds or the acquisition of third-party funding shows a high level of identification with the project. Appropriate own financial contributions and the mobilisation of additional funding are therefore generally a precondition for project approval. The budgeted own and third-party funds must, as far as possible, already be stated in the project outline.

4.7. Can an institution that is both a political partner and implementing partner also receive a certain percentage of the project resources?

It is not foreseen that an institution will be both a political partner and an implementing partner in one project. Permanent political partner staff, e.g. from partner ministries or subordinate authorities from project funds, cannot be funded.

4.8. What expenditures are eligible for funding?

All expenditures necessary to achieve the project goal using sound financial management and budgetary rigour may be funded. Grants to the main implementing organisation on a cost basis are not envisaged. German implementing partners may work on a cost or expenditure basis. Foreign implementing partners should work on an expenditure bases. An economic advantage for the recipient of the grant is not intended. Luxury goods, environmentally harmful and military goods (incl. firearms), as well as technologies and investments or services oriented towards such purposes, are excluded from any funding without exception.

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5. Partner countries and regions

5.1. What countries can be selected as project countries?

The selected countries must be **ODA-eligible**. This means that they must meet the criteria for recognition as recipients of Official Development Assistance (ODA). Further information on ODA eligibility can be found on the [DAC List of ODA Recipients](#) of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Furthermore, the country or countries should be a significant contributor to marine litter.

5.2. How does the BMU/ZUG define “regional projects”? Do countries in a region have to border each other?

Regional projects are transnational multi-country projects, which take place in one geographic region (e.g., MENA, Sub-Saharan Africa, Central Asia, AOSIS) and whose activities generate a value that exceeds the mere national level. In a region, project countries do not have to be neighbouring. However, regional projects should have an impact on one or more geographically connected marine area(s), river(s) or river catchment(s).

5.3. Are there regions that are specifically relevant for the upcoming call?

Generally, the partner countries should generate a significant amount of marine litter. Furthermore, countries with high predicted inputs of marine litter in the near future are also relevant.

5.4. Do activities of other projects in the partner country or countries impact a project’s eligibility for funding?

Funding a project in a region or partner country where a large number of projects and activities to prevent marine litter are already being implemented does not always represent the most economical and efficient use of funds. Funding projects in a region with fewer already existing projects can often achieve more substantial effects with the same funds. However, the existence of activities and projects funded by other donors in the partner countries are not an exclusion criteria. Instead, it is important that projects are aware of and differentiate themselves from other donor activities in a meaningful way. The creation of synergies with existing projects is particularly important.

6. Miscellaneous

6.1. Is there a limit to the number of political partners and implementing partners that can be listed in the online form (Annex 1 and Annex 2)?

No. If you run out of space in the provided form, you may add additional rows in the document. You can also use the text field under “Other information” to submit additional information.

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6.2. What are Safeguards?

During implementation, the projects should take into account the ZUG Safeguards, which are based on the GCF (Green Climate Fund) safeguards and the IFC (International Finance Cooperation) Performance Standards. The safeguard approach ensures that risks posed by the project are considered in advance and efficiently managed. The approach is subject to universal guiding principles, such as compliance with human rights.

6.3. What does “results and effectiveness of the projects must be verifiable” mean?

By using a logical framework (based on the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)) to describe the project, the project implementation can be monitored and the results and effectiveness of the projects can be verified.

6.4. What is an “exit strategy”?

It should be clear how the project activities will contribute to the sustainability of the project results and how they will be maintained after the end of the funding period. For example, any systems or structures set up by the project should have a sustainable financing structure so that they can continue to bear the costs of operation even after the project is completed. This must already be considered in the project outline.

6.5. How should local stakeholders be integrated?

Projects are expected to implement an appropriate amount of their funding and project activities through national stakeholders in the partner countries in order to integrate the project into national structures and ensure the sustainability of project activities. National stakeholders are implementing organisations and subcontractors with official legal status under the applicable national law. Political partners have to be excluded if this would result in financial support.

6.6. How is the experience in the partner country assessed? Are the local implementation partners' experiences sufficient to demonstrate this experience?

Relevant and long-term experiences in the partner country show interest and a functioning network. While there is no minimum requirement, the main implementing organisation should have relevant experiences in implementing and realizing projects in the relevant topic area and international cooperation with local partners in the project country or region. Furthermore, the involvement and expertise of the local partners are of particular importance.

6.7. Is a project concept that includes in-situ removal of marine litter (the direct removal of waste out of the water) a criterion for exclusion?

Generally, no funding is provided for in-situ removal of marine litter. Exceptions are only possible for the removal of marine litter that cannot reasonably be prevented by a source-based approach. In addition, in-situ removal can be funded as part of an overarching project concept (e.g. as part of awareness-raising measures).

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6.8. Can thermal recycling (the incineration of waste to generate electricity) be funded?

In the interests of sustainability, thermal recycling or the incineration of waste cannot generally be funded.

6.9. What role does the quantification of the achieved reduction of marine litter and the monitoring approach play in the selection of project outlines?

To receive funding, the project's outcome must be verifiable. For the first stage of the selection process (outline selection process), describing a reasonable concept for quantifying and monitoring the project results is particularly important. This should be based on standard methods.

6.10. Are there examples of particularly promising project approaches/types?

The selection procedure aims to collect a wide range of innovative and holistic proposals. Therefore, there is no project type or approach that is most promising. Instead, it is important that the project contributes to a sustainable reduction of marine litter. The project should further follow the requirements described in the funding guidelines and ensure that the project concept is comprehensive, reasonable and technically achievable. Furthermore, the project should consider the needs of the partner country. Transformative and innovative elements should also be included.

6.11. How important is it that project outlines involvement of the private sector?

This depends on the individual project approach and the conditions in the partner country. A general statement cannot be made. However, the involvement of the private sector can contribute to the acceptance of the project in the partner country and thus contribute to the project's sustainability.

6.12. How important are long-term, sustainable reforms in the waste sector compared to local, directly measurable reductions of marine litter?

All projects should aim to be able to achieve both, a long-term, reproducible result as well as direct, local results. In addition to achieving measurable goals while the project is being implemented, the exit strategy should ensure that wide-reaching impacts are achievable or even expandable after the funding has ended. For example, the project can support reforms based on the needs of the partner country. These reforms can create the appropriate political framework conditions for the long-term prevention of marine litter in the partner country. As such, the goal should be to combine both approaches within one project.

6.13. How important is it that a project focuses on the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services?

The grant programme aims to protect the marine environment by reducing the input of litter into it. Therefore, all projects should aim to directly or indirectly reduce inputs of marine litter into the marine environment. As a result, the prevention of litter inputs, which pose a threat to ecologically valuable marine and coastal areas and/or to particularly endangered marine species, is taken into account, as is the global long-distance transport of waste.

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6.14. Why is it only possible to work on an expenditure basis?

It is not possible to forward funds when working on a cost basis. However, the main implementing organisation, the sole recipient of the funds, usually needs to forward funds to the implementing partners in the respective partner countries.

6.15. What are own funds, third-party funds, and in-kind contributions? How many of each should a project have?

Own funds are generally funds provided by the implementing organization to finance part of the total eligible expenses of the project from its own assets. This may also include the use of personnel or facilities for the implementation of the project. In this case, the total eligible expenses must be reduced by the amount of the own funds, since from a grant law perspective there is no need to cover these items from the grant.

Third-party funds are funds provided by third parties (e.g. private donors) who have an interest in the project implementation and make them available to finance part of the total eligible expenses.

In-kind contributions are contributions made by the implementing organizations themselves (e.g. existing infrastructure, materials, equipment or knowledge in the form of existing websites). These are only listed as information in the project proposal, as no payment process takes place.

No funding rate has been set. However, a high level of own contribution or the acquisition of third-party funds indicates a high level of identification with the project. The appropriate use of own funds can only be determined on a case-by-case basis. Full financing of projects from federal funding is only possible in exceptional cases. The main implementing organisation's own funds must be indicated. Funds of an implementing partner do not appear in the financing plan of the implementing organisation, as they are not received in liquid funds by the implementing organisation, but would be included in the financing plan of the respective partner.