



GEMSTONE

Green Manufacturing Supporting Recovery and Resilience of Industrial SMEs



Funded by
the European Union



**Financial support to
third parties**

TRAIN & EXPLORE Calls

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This version of the Guide for Applicants integrates the changes needed following the restructuring of the financial sharing of open calls and adjustments of the process for implementation.
This version is applicable from 01 June 2024.



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This guide for applicants is specifically dedicated to the GEMSTONE calls: TRAIN and EXPLORE.

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

- ⇒ **GEMSTONE call – *financial support for Training (TRAIN)***: to facilitate the connexion between training providers and SMEs and support SMEs in engaging capacity building activities related to Green Manufacturing. **Page 9-17**

- ⇒ **GEMSTONE call – *financial support for Exploration (EXPLORE)***: to facilitate SMEs internationalisation strategy by supporting their participation to business fairs and other international event deemed interesting for their activities in targeted countries. **Page 18-25**

Both mechanisms will be opened **from June 2023 until December 2024 with regular cut-offs to select beneficiaries.**



1. About GEMSTONE project

1.1. GEMSTONE facts

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

1.2. GEMSTONE ambition

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

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

GEMSTONE strategy is:

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

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

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



GEMSTONE Call		Opening and closing of the call	MAX Nb of proposals	Individual grant available	MAX amount available in €
TRAIN		June 2023 – December 2024	31	€2.000 per SME	€62.000
EXPLORE		June 2023 – December 2024	32	€1.500 per SME	€48.000
INNOVATE	GREENINNOV	Sept 2023 – Nov 2023	9	€60.000 per project	€540.000
	GREENADOPT	Sept 2023 – Nov 2023	10	€40.000 per project	€400.000
Financial support provided by GEMSTONE project (TOTAL)					€1.050.000

1.3. Green Manufacturing





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

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




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

The applicants are strongly encouraged to check and download the project roadmap via this [link](#).

1.4. GEMSTONE partners

1 – CIMES Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes / France (Coordinator) 	5 – POOL-NET / Portugal 
2 – Pôle EMC2 / France 	6 – Clust-ER MECH / Italy 



<p>3 – Pôle MECATECH / Belgium</p> 	<p>7 – Green and Smart Technology Cluster / Latvia</p> 
<p>4 – Metalklaster / Poland</p> 	

1.5. GEMSTONE contact points

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

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

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

CIMES	Loïc MARIN	l.marin@cimes-hub.com
EMC2	Luisa BOUZOUBAA	luisa.bouzoubaa@pole-emc2.fr
MECATECH	Sophie SCHMITZ	sophie.schmitz@polemecatech.be
MPC	Janusz POULAKOWSKI	j.poulakowski@metalklaster.pl
POOL-NET	Rui Tocha	rui.tocha@toolingportugal.com
MECH	Nicolò Bertolini	nicolo.bertolini@mech.clust-er.it
GREENTECH LATVIA	Anete Grundberga	anete@greentechlatvia.eu



2. GEMSTONE CALLS – Financial support for Training [TRAIN]

This section is dedicated to the **GEMSTONE CALL – Financial support for Trainings [TRAIN]**. If you are willing to apply to GEMSTONE CALL – Financial support for Exploration [EXPLORE], please refer to information in section 3 (page 18).

2.1. GEMSTONE TRAIN - Description of call

GEMSTONE call – *financial support for Training (TRAIN)* aims to facilitate the connexion between training providers and SMEs and to support the SMEs capacity building.

The training to be carried out by the beneficiary in the framework of this call must have:

- a clear link with the challenges of the Green Manufacturing (please refer to the [Project Roadmap](#))
- and help the SME develop a new set of skills that will support its resilient and sustainable development.

The identification of the training services should be made by the applicants before presenting their application.

A [mapping of training providers across Europe](#) has been developed in the framework of GEMSTONE project. This mapping can be used as an inspiring database for the SMEs willing to apply for GEMSTONE TRAIN Call.

2.2. GEMSTONE TRAIN - Beneficiaries of the call

The call is open to **manufacturing, technology and solution providers SMEs¹, and in particular industrial equipment and tool providers**, willing to gain knowledge on solutions offered by Green Manufacturing.

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

1. Aeronautics/Defence
2. Energy
3. Mobility
4. Agriculture/Agrifood
5. Materials.

However, SMEs involved in **other manufacturing sectors** and working on Green Manufacturing challenges are also eligible.

2.3. GEMSTONE TRAIN - Activities supported

Skills are a critical to achieve the green transition; currently skills mismatches are identified as major obstacles to the greening of the manufacturing industry. Also, the lack of knowledge of the environment-skills nexus is hindering the achievement of an effective transition. Therefore, it is necessary to help people acquire or improve skills that will be essential for the development of their jobs – and this at all level of the company (workforce, management...).

The GEMSTONE financial support must be used by the selected organisation as support to purchase services related to **“green skills”² understood as (i) technical knowledge and skills that enable professionals to**

¹ Micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) definition according to Recommendation 2003/361/EC: ‘enterprises which employ fewer than 250 persons and which have an annual turnover not exceeding EUR 50 million, and/or an annual balance sheet total not exceeding EUR 43 million.’

² [Skilling for the Green Transition](#), Green transition policy brief, European Training Foundation.



effectively use green technologies and processes and (ii) transversal skills, as well as knowledge, values and attitudes needed to live in, develop and support a sustainable and resource-efficient manufacturing industry.

The following categories are eligible:

- **Value, behaviour, normative skills** (values related to responsibility, future, environment, justice, solidarity and tolerance, e.g. environmental awareness. Skills that will allow trainees to better understand the framework of Green Manufacturing and to have a more thorough knowledge of the challenges and impacts)
- **Technical occupational competences** (vocational and technical skills related to technology, emerging products and services. Occupation-specific skills that are related to the particular challenges of a certain job).

Training services can address either upskilling or reskilling. The eligible activities can take the form of individual or group activities. They can be attended online or physically. Training service providers should be established in one of the SMP associated countries (see 2.5 for the list).

2.4. GEMSTONE TRAIN - Available financial support

The total EU funding available for the Call TRAIN is €62 000,00.

The maximum financial support per financial support for Training (TRAIN) is €2.000 in the form of a lump sum. A lump sum is a fixed amount of money that can be used by beneficiaries for the purposes of the activities listed in section 2.3 and their application as per participation in a GEMSTONE financial support for trainings.

8 cut-offs will be organised by GEMSTONE project in order to provide opportunities for applicants until early 2025.

The maximum budget for each cut-off will be as following:

Cut-off number	Date foreseen for the cut-off	Nb max proposal selected	Maximum budget per cut-off TRAIN (€)
1	15 June – 31 August 2023	4	€8.000
2	1 September – 31 October 2023	4	€8.000
3	1 November – 31 December 2023	4	€8.000
4	1 January – 29 February 2024	4	€8.000
5	1 March – 30 April 2024	3	€6.000
6	1 June – 31 August 2024	4	€8.000
7	1 September – 31 October 2024	4	€8.000
8	1 November – 31 December 2024	4	€8.000
TOTAL		31	€62.000

At each individual Call for Projects, the consortium might increase budget if available budget from previous cut-offs was not distributed. For instance, if only 3 applications are selected after the cut-off 1 (one less than foreseen), 5 (1+4) applications could be potentially funded after the cut-off 2.

Before each cut-off, the maximum budget available will be mentioned in the different communication documents announcing the call cut-off.

2.5. GEMSTONE TRAIN - Who can apply?



Maximum one application will be granted per SME.

Cluster organisations/networks are not eligible.

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

- 1) Be a **legal entity**;
- 2) Be a **small or medium sized enterprise (SME)**: Companies must declare their SME status in accordance with the SME definition of the European Union as part of the application (see section 2.8);
- 3) Apply as an **individual organization**;
- 4) Be located in **one of the Single Market Programme (SMP) associated countries**
 - EU Member States
 - Other countries which participate in SMP Work Programmes 2022 and 2023 - [List available here](#)
- 5) Do not have a conflict of interest³ with the partners in GEMSTONE project.

2.6. GEMSTONE TRAIN - Beneficiary obligation

The activities for which the support is granted must be carried out **at the latest by 31th march 2025**.

Note: Applicants may decide to start the training as soon as they have submitted their application even if they are not confirmed to receive a funding through GEMSTONE. In such cases, the application will follow the evaluation process as any other. If the beneficiary is selected, no payments should have been made before the application date to be eligible within GEMSTONE mechanism.

GEMSTONE support should be used by the beneficiary **to pay part or full costs of selected training services**. The use of the project budget will be controlled by GEMSTONE partners after the implementation of the action with:

1. Invoice and proof of payment of the service purchased.
2. Certificate of completion /attendance issued by the training provider.
3. Final survey completed.

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

The following rules must be respected:

- Only costs generated between the submission of the application and the end of lifetime of the sub-contract can be eligible.
 - The period of costs' eligibility starts from the acknowledgment of receipt of the application until the end of the implementation period defined in the SGA.
 - Expenditures incurred before the submission date of the application are not eligible. Expenditures incurred after reporting date are not eligible.
- For the whole call process and the duration of the agreement with CIMES, selected applicants must:

³ A conflict of interest is defined as a situation where one or several persons/institutions are at the center of decision-making where their objectivity and neutrality may be called into question. A conflict of interest thus appears in a natural person having to perform a function of general interest and whose personal interests are in competition with the mission entrusted to him by his administration or his company.



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

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

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

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

2.7. GEMSTONE TRAIN - How to apply?

From the opening date of the call in June 2023, applicants will need to submit their **application form through the [GEMSTONE submission platform](#)** before the deadline provided.

The applicants must use the submission templates and write in English.

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

2.8. GEMSTONE TRAIN – Evaluation and selection

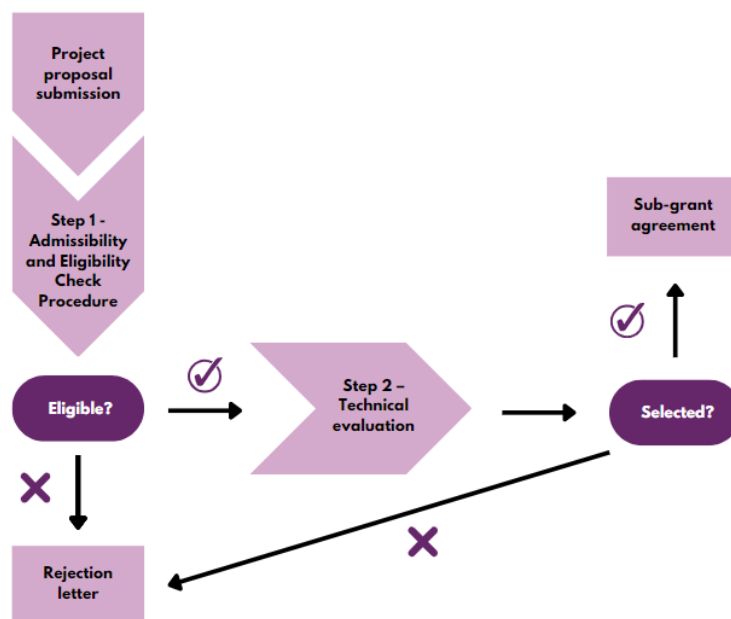


Figure 1: GEMSTONE Evaluation steps

2.8.1. Step 1 - Admissibility and Eligibility Check Procedure

Cut-off limit: For each cut-off, a total of 30 applications maximum will be evaluated according to the principle « first submitted, first evaluated ». From the 31st application at the same cut-off, an invitation to submit the application during the next cut-off will be sent.

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

- **Quality conditions**

1 - Applicants must meet the criteria defined in section 2.5.

A SME self-assessment tool is available via [this link](#). The applicants must provide the proof of their compliance with the SME definition of the EU in their application as annex.

2 - Applications must fit with the scope of the call (section 2.1) and the supported activities (section 2.3).

- **Technical conditions**

1 - Applications must be submitted via the [GEMSTONE application platform](#) by 5.00PM CET of the deadline defined in the cut-off. No application will be taken into account beyond this deadline and/or arriving via any channel other than the dedicated platform.

2 - Applications must be written in English (applications partially written in another language are not eligible) and must not exceed maximum number of characters stated in each text box of the submission template.

The Admissibility and Eligibility Check Procedure will be proceeded by GEMSTONE project partners. Applications not meeting the admissibility and eligibility criteria will be directly discarded. The rejection letter will be sent to the main applicant's e-mail address associated with the application. The complaint procedure will be reminded (see section 2.8.4).

2.8.2. Step 2 – Technical evaluation

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



2.8.2.1. Criteria

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

Evaluation criteria		Scoring	Weighing
1 - Relevance (15 points)	Does the application fit with the framework and objectives defined by the GEMSTONE project and the GEMSTONE TRAIN Call?	0-5	1
	What are the training's specificities that justify the company's choice?	0-5	2
Threshold: 8 points			
2 – Quality (15 points)	Is the training plan/programme realistic and qualitative?	0-5	1
	To what extent are the expected results linked to the training needs of the applicant organisation?	0-5	2
Threshold: 8 points			
3 – Impact (15 points)	What are the main expected impacts (short, mid and long-term) for the organisation's development and how are they aligned with Green Manufacturing challenges?	0-5	3
Threshold: 8 points			
Bonus criteria	3 extra points will be given to the applications that are resulting from a Resilience Plan*.	0 or 3	1
	2 extra points will be given to the applications that are clearly addressing one of the priority sectors (see section 2.2).	0 or 2	1

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

The meaning of the marks is as follows:

- 0: Fail - The proposal fails to address the criterion under examination or cannot be judged due to missing or incomplete information.
- 1: Very Poor - The criterion is addressed in an inadequate manner, or there are serious inherent weaknesses.
- 2: Poor - While the proposal broadly addresses the criterion, there are significant weaknesses that would hinder the implementation.
- 3: Acceptable - The proposal addresses the criterion well, although significant improvements are possible, and various details are missing on implementation.
- 4: Good - The proposal addresses the criterion very well, although certain improvements are still possible, and some particular details are still missing.
- 5: Very Good - The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion in question. Any shortcomings are minor.

2.8.2.2. Scoring mechanism

Evaluation scores will be awarded based on the criteria mentioned in the section above. The maximum score for *Relevance* will be 15 points, for *Quality* 15 points and for *Impact* 15 points. The threshold for each individual criterion will be 8.



An application will be ranked for funding if and only if it reaches the 3 individual thresholds + 1 point, i.e. a minimum of 25 points.

E.g.: an application with a final score of 35 points but with only 5 points for *Relevance* will not be part of the final list.

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

1. Have received the 3 extra points for the realization of a Resilience Plan;
2. Have received the 2 extra points linked to the priority sectors;
3. Are submitted from a country or a region not covered by the project partners;
4. Have received the highest score in the *Impact* criterion;
5. Have received the highest score in the *Quality* criterion;
6. Have received the highest score in the *Relevance* criterion;
7. Are submitted first (according to the day and then the hour of the submission).

2.8.2.3. Evaluation procedure

Each application will be assessed by 2 shortlisted project partners. The shortlist will be prepared by the project coordinator (CIMES) and the WP5 leader (EMC2). In the event that the applicant is located in a territory (country or region) covered by one or more of the project partners, the latter will be excluded from the evaluation of the application.

The assessment period shall take max. 10 days starting from the closing date of the cut-off.

2.8.3. Information to the applicants

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

- Either a rejection letter in the event of the failure of the application with the detailed explanation. The complaint procedure will be reminded (see section 2.9.4).
- Or a notification letter in the event of the success of the application. The instructions for the next steps will be described, in particular those related to the contractualization process with CIMES, GEMSTONE coordinator.

2.8.4. Complaint procedure

If after receiving the results of one of the evaluation steps, an applicant disagrees with the evaluation result, a complaint can be sent (in English) to the project coordinator's e-mail within 3 days following the official receipt of the evaluation result (weekend days are not counted).

The following information must be included:

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

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

The Review Committee, which consists of the project coordinator (CIMES), the WP5 leader (EMC2) and the Contact Point designated during the application process (in case of the designated CP is either the project



coordinator or the WP5 leader, a project partner will be called following the order of the list of project partners submitted to the European Commission), will examine the complaint on the basis of the information brought forward by the applicant, will assess the case and decide whether the complaint is justified or not and will inform the applicant and the consortium on the decision taken.

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

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

2.8.5. Publication of the results

Once the contracting procedure achieved with all the winning applications (see section 2.10.1), GEMSTONE will announce the winners on the [project webpage](#), the [ECCP profile](#) and social media accounts [LinkedIn](#) and [Twitter](#).

2.9. GEMSTONE TRAIN - Contract and payments

2.9.1. Contracting procedure and requirements

The winning SMEs will start the contracting procedure which cannot be longer than 20 days from the day the notification letters are sent.

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

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

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

2.9.2. Implementation

The awarded TRAIN applications will be implemented in the proposed timeframe at the application stage, i.e. before defined date at the SGA signature and not later than March 2025. A Project Guardian (chosen among the project partners) will be designated for each project, whose mission is to ensure the smooth running of the project in accordance with the application's share information and the SGA and be the privileged contact between the SME and the project consortium.

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

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

2.9.3. Payment procedure

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



- The signature of the SGA with CIMES as GEMSTONE coordinator: the agreement will detail all rights and duties of the selected organisation and binding conditions for the organisation to receive the financial support.
- No later than 15 days after the training, the presentation to CIMES of the following documents:
 1. Invoice and proof of payment of the service purchased.
 2. Certificate of completion/attendance issued by the provider.
 3. Final survey completed.

After verification of the documents, the payment will be proceeded by CIMES no later than 15 days after the validated verification. The €2.000 lumpsum will be sent via the bank account details provided by each SME.

GEMSTONE Contract and Payment timeline		
Action	Period	Deadline
Reception of the notification letter	1 day	/
Period to provide necessary documents for the SGA	20 days	DAY 1 – DAY 20
Period of the project implementation	2 months	DAY 21 – DAY 81
Final reporting period	15 days	DAY 82 – DAY 97
Payment period	15 days	DAY 98 – DAY 113



3. GEMSTONE CALLS – Financial support for Exploration [EXPLORE]

This section is dedicated to the **GEMSTONE CALL – Financial support for Trainings [EXPLORE]**. If you are willing to apply to GEMSTONE CALL – Financial support for Exploration [TRAIN], please refer to information in section 2 (page 9).

3.1. GEMSTONE EXPLORE - Description of call

GEMSTONE call – *financial support for Exploration (EXPLORE)* aims to facilitate SMEs internationalisation strategy by supporting their participation to business fairs and other international event deemed interesting for their activities, in targeted countries and in relation to Green Manufacturing.

3.2. GEMSTONE EXPLORE - Beneficiaries of the call

The call is open to **manufacturing, technology and solution providers SMEs⁴, and in particular industrial equipment and tool providers**, willing to gain knowledge on solutions offered by Green Manufacturing.

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

1. Aeronautics/Defence,
2. Energy,
3. Mobility,
4. Agriculture/Agri-food,
5. Materials.

However, SMEs involved in **other manufacturing sectors**, and working on Green Manufacturing challenges are also eligible.

3.3. GEMSTONE EXPLORE - Activities supported

Each selected SME in this call will receive a financial support of €1.500 (lumpsum) to be used to support:

- **Participation in trade fairs/international event for companies providing services, technologies, solutions linked to green transition and green manufacturing :**
 - Market exploration;
 - Branding, sales and marketing of company;
 - Demonstrate their solutions/technologies (e.g., booth visitations and exhibitions);
 - Sharing knowledge, experience and information in Green Manufacturing specific areas;
- **Participation in trade fairs/international event, study visits or learning mission having a specific focus on Green manufacturing:**
 - To gain knowledges, explore Green Manufacturing existing solutions;
 - To attend B2B events,
 - To do networking activities, identification of new partners and creation of new business opportunities;
 - To support project development, innovation and research and development;

The events targeted can be organised in any country in the world, **including the EU member states**, with specific attention brought in the targeted strategic areas defined the [Project Roadmap](#):

- North America (Canada and USA);

⁴ Micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) definition according to Recommendation 2003/361/EC: 'enterprises which employ fewer than 250 persons and which have an annual turnover not exceeding EUR 50 million, and/or an annual balance sheet total not exceeding EUR 43 million.'



- Japan;
- ASEAN countries (Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei, Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar, Cambodia).

/!\ The participation to the events in the EU member states must clearly be linked with the meeting of international partners and must show the benefits for the internationalisation strategy.

A [mapping of international events and fairs](#) has been developed in the framework of GEMSTONE. This mapping can be used as an inspiring database for the SMEs willing to apply for GEMSTONE EXPLORE Call.

3.4. GEMSTONE EXPLORE - Available financial support

The total EU funding available for the Call EXPLORE is €48.000,00.

The maximum financial support per financial support for Exploration (EXPLORE) is €1.500 in the form of a lump sum. A lump sum is a fixed amount of money that can be used by beneficiaries for the purposes of the activities listed in section 3.3 and their application as per participation in a GEMSTONE financial support for trainings.

8 cut-offs will be organised by GEMSTONE in order to provide opportunities to SMEs until early 2025.

The maximum budget for each cut-off will be available as following:

Cut-off number	Date foreseen for the cut-off	Nb max of proposal selected	Maximum budget per cut-off EXPLORE
1	15 June – 31 August 2023	4	€6.000
2	1 September – 31 October 2023	4	€6.000
3	1 November – 31 December 2023	4	€6.000
4	1 January – 29 February 2024	4	€6.000
5	1 March – 30 April 2024	4	€6.000
6	1 June – 31 August 2024	4	€6.000
7	1 September – 31 October 2024	4	€6.000
8	1 November – 31 December 2024	4	€6.000
TOTAL		32	€48.000

At each individual Call for Projects, the consortium might increase budget if available budget from previous cut-offs was not distributed. For instance, if only 3 applications are selected after the cut-off 1 (one less than foreseen), 5 (1+4) applications could be potentially funded after the cut-off 2.

Before each cut-off, the maximum budget available will be mentioned in the different communication documents announcing the call cut-off.

3.5. GEMSTONE EXPLORE - Who can apply?

Maximum one application will be granted per SME.

Cluster organisations/networks are not eligible.

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

- 1) Be a **legal entity**;



- 2) Be a **small or medium sized enterprise (SME)**: Companies must declare their SME status in accordance with the SME definition of the European Union as part of the application (see section 2.8);
- 3) Apply as an **individual organization**;
- 4) Be located **in one of the Single Market Programme (SMP) associated countries**
 - EU Member States
 - Other countries which participate in SMP Work Programmes 2022 and 2023 - [List available here](#)
- 5) Do not have a conflict of interest⁵ with the partners in GEMSTONE project.

3.6. GEMSTONE EXPLORE - Beneficiary obligation

The activities for which the support is granted must be carried out **at the latest by 31th march 2025**.

Note: Applicants may decide to plan their travel as soon as they have submitted their application even if they are not confirmed to receive a funding through GEMSTONE. In such cases, the application will follow the evaluation process as any other. If the beneficiary is selected, no payments should have been made before the application date to be eligible within GEMSTONE mechanism.

GEMSTONE support should be used by the beneficiary **to pay part or full of the following costs**:

- transportation costs to attend the event (flight tickets, visas, local transportation...);
- accommodation;
- event tickets/booth.

The use of the project budget will be controlled by GEMSTONE partners after the implementation of the action with:

1. Invoice and proof of payment for the participation to the event.
2. Documents justifying actual presence during the event (photos, agenda, event book...)
3. Final survey completed.

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

The following rules must be respected:

- Only costs generated between the submission of the application and the end of lifetime of the sub-contract can be eligible.
 - The period of costs' eligibility starts from the acknowledgment of receipt of the application until the end of the implementation period defined in the SGA.
 - Expenditures incurred before the submission date of the application are not eligible. Expenditures incurred after reporting date are not eligible.
- For the whole call process and the duration of the agreement with CIMES, selected applicants must:
 - Provide information on the activities undertaken (non-confidential), for communication and dissemination purposes, to both GEMSTONE project and EISMEA - European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency;

⁵ A conflict of interest is defined as a situation where one or several persons/institutions are at the center of decision-making where their objectivity and neutrality may be called into question. A conflict of interest thus appears in a natural person having to perform a function of general interest and whose personal interests are in competition with the mission entrusted to him by his administration or his company.



- Comply with the obligations that the European Commission set in the GEMSTONE Grant Agreement, including, among others: Article 12 - Avoid conflicts of interest; Article 13 - Confidentiality and security; Article 14 – Ethics and Value, Article 17.2 - Visibility; Article 18 – Specific rules for carrying out the action; Article 19 - Information; Article 20 – Record keeping; Article 33 Liability for damages (see the [link](#));
- Allow the Agency, the Commission, the European Anti-fraud Office (OLAF) and the Court of Auditors to exercise their powers of control on documents, information, even stored on electronic media, or on the recipient's premises.

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

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

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

3.7. GEMSTONE EXPLORE - How to apply?

From the opening date of the call in June 2023, applicants will need to submit their application form through the [GEMSTONE submission platform](#) before the deadline provided.

The applicants must use the submission templates and write in English.

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

3.8. GEMSTONE EXPLORE - Selection and evaluation

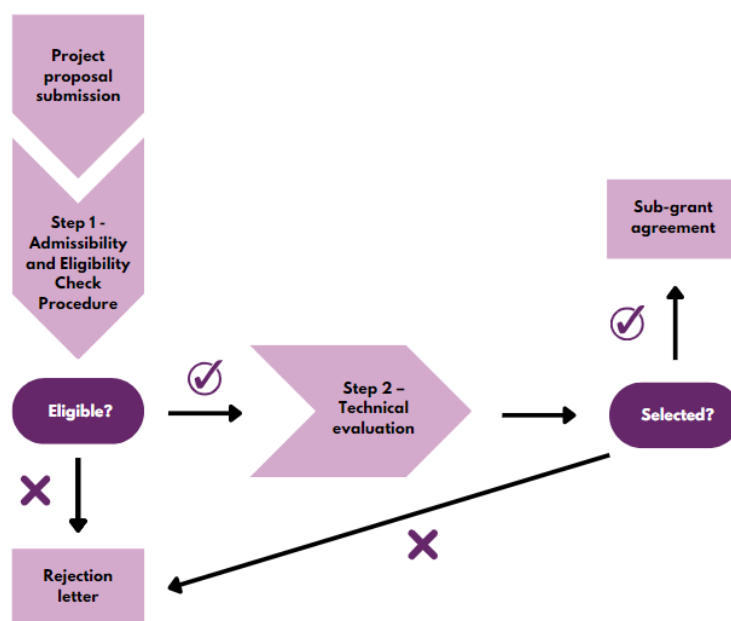


Figure 2: GEMSTONE Evaluation steps

3.8.1. Step 1 - Admissibility and Eligibility Check Procedure



Cut-off limit

For each cut-off, a total of 30 applications maximum will be evaluated according to the principle « first submitted, first evaluated ». From the 31st application at the same cut-off, an invitation to submit the application during the next cut-off will be sent.

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

- **Quality conditions**

1 - Applicants must meet criteria defined in section 3.5.

- A SME self-assessment tool is available via [this link](#). The applicants must provide the proof of their compliance with the SME definition of the EU in their application as annex.

2 - Applications must fit with the scope of the call (section 3.1) and the supported activities (section 3.3).

- **Technical conditions**

1 - Applications must be submitted via the [GEMSTONE submission platform](#) by 5.00PM CET of the deadline defined in the cut-off. No application will be taken into account beyond this deadline and/or arriving via any channel other than the dedicated platform.

2 - Applications must be written in English (applications partially written in another language are not eligible) and must not exceed maximum number of characters stated in each text box of the submission template.

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

3.8.2. Step 2 – Technical evaluation

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

3.8.2.1. Criteria

The evaluation and ranking of applications will be based on a set of criteria in addition to the above-mentioned main eligibility requirements.

The following table explains the different aspects which will be considered for each evaluation criterion.

Evaluation criteria		Scoring	Weighing
1 - Relevance (15 points)	Does the application fit with the framework and objectives defined by the GEMSTONE project and the GEMSTONE EXPLORE Call?	0-5	1
	What are the specificities of the international travel that justify the company’s choice?	0-5	2
Threshold: 8 points			
2 – Quality (15 points)	Is the international travel relevant and qualitative?	0-5	1
	To what extent are the expected results linked to the internationalisation needs and strategy of the applicant organisation?	0-5	2
Threshold: 8 points			



3 – Impact (15 points)	What are the main expected impacts (short, mid and long term) on the organisation’s development and how are they addressing Green Manufacturing challenges?	0-5	3
Threshold: 8 points			
Bonus criteria	3 extra points will be given to the applications that are resulting from a Resilience Plan*.	0 or 3	1
	2 extra points will be given to the applications that are linked with targeted areas (North America, Japan and ASEAN countries).	0 or 2	1

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

The meaning of the marks is as follows:

- 0: Fail - The proposal fails to address the criterion under examination or cannot be judged due to missing or incomplete information.
- 1: Very Poor - The criterion is addressed in an inadequate manner, or there are serious inherent weaknesses.
- 2: Poor - While the proposal broadly addresses the criterion, there are significant weaknesses that would hinder the project implementation.
- 3: Acceptable - The proposal addresses the criterion well, although significant improvements are possible, and various details are missing on implementation.
- 4: Good - The proposal addresses the criterion very well, although certain improvements are still possible, and some particular details are still missing.
- 5: Very Good - The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion in question. Any shortcomings are minor.

3.8.2.2. Scoring mechanism

Evaluation scores will be awarded based on the criteria mentioned in the section above. The maximum score for *Relevance* will be 15 points, for *Quality* 15 points and for *Impact* 15 points. The threshold for each individual criterion will be 8.

An application will be ranked for funding if and only if it reaches the 3 individual thresholds + 1 point, i.e. a minimum of 25 points.

E.g.: an application with a final score of 35 points but with only 5 points for *Relevance* will not be part of the final list.

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

1. Have received the 3 extra points (see Bonus criteria);
2. Have received the 2 extra points linked to the targeted areas (see Bonus criteria)
3. Are submitted from a country or a region not covered by the project partners;
4. Have received the highest score in the Impact criterion;
5. Have received the highest score in the Quality criterion;
6. Have received the highest score in the Relevance criterion;
7. Are submitted first (according to the day and then the hour of the submission).

3.8.2.3. Evaluation procedure

Each application will be assessed by 2 shortlisted project partners. The shortlist will be prepared by the project coordinator (CIMES) and the WP5 leader (EMC2). In the event that the applicant is located in a



territory (country or region) covered by one or more of the project partners, the latter will be excluded from the evaluation of the application.

The assessment period shall take max. 10 days starting from the closing date of the cut-off.

3.8.3. Information to the applicants

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

- Either a rejection letter in the event of the failure of the application with the detailed explanation. The complaint procedure will be reminded (see section 3.9.4).
- Or a notification letter in the event of the success of the application. The instructions for the next steps will be described, in particular those related to the contractualization process with the GEMSTONE coordinator.

3.8.4. Complaint procedure

If after receiving the results of one of the evaluation steps, an applicant disagrees with the evaluation result, a complaint can be sent (in English) to the project coordinator's e-mail within 3 days following the official receipt of the evaluation result (weekend days are not counted).

The following information must be included:

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

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

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

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

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

3.8.5. Publication of the results

Once the contracting procedure achieved with all the winning applications (see section 3.10.1), GEMSTONE will announce the winners on the [project webpage](#), the [ECCP profile](#) and social media accounts [LinkedIn](#) and [Twitter](#).



3.9. GEMSTONE EXPLORE - Contract and payments

3.9.1. Contracting procedure and requirements

The winning SMEs will start the contracting procedure which cannot be longer than 20 days from the day the notification letters are sent.

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

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

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

3.9.2. Implementation

The awarded EXPLORE applications will be implemented in the proposed timeframe at the application stage, i.e. before defined date at the SGA signature and not later than March 2025. A Project Guardian (chosen among the project partners) will be designated for each project, whose mission is to ensure the smooth running of the project in accordance with the application's share information and the SGA and be the privileged contact between the SME and the project consortium.

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

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

3.9.3. Payment procedure

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

- The signature of the SGA with CIMES as GEMSTONE coordinator: the agreement will detail all rights and duties of the selected organisation and binding conditions for the organisation to receive the financial support.
- No later than 15 days after the event the presentation to CIMES of the following documents:
 - Invoice and proof of payment for the participation to the event.
 - Documents justifying actual presence during the event (photos, agenda, event book...)
 - Final survey completed.

After verification of the documents, the payment will be proceeded by CIMES no later than 15 days after the validated verification. The €1.500 lump sum will be sent via the bank account details provided by each SME.

GEMSTONE Contract and Payment timeline		
Action	Period	Deadline
Reception of the notification letter	1 day	/
Period to provide necessary documents for the SGA	20 days	DAY 1 – DAY 20
Period of the project implementation	2 months	DAY 21 – DAY 81
Final reporting period	15 days	DAY 82 – DAY 97
Payment period	15 days	DAY 98 – DAY 113



IPR and Data Protection

3.10. Intellectual Property Rights

The results and IPR developed during the project implementation will be the exclusive property of the corresponding SME.

For dissemination and use of results generated through the financial support from GEMSTONE, the SMEs must credit the GEMSTONE project through proper citation and appearance of the GEMSTONE logo and EU Logo, including the proper citation "This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 101074549".

3.11. Confidentiality and GDPR Data Protection

The list of applicants in all cut-offs will be prepared containing their basic information for statistical purposes and clarity, which will be also shared with EC for transparency. The applicants' list will not be public but will serve as statistics in project communication materials.

To process and evaluate proposals, GEMSTONE will need to collect personal and industrial data, in particular through the submission platform. The GEMSTONE consortium ensures that data are managed in compliance with The General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (GDPR).

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

3.12. Gender equality

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