



Level 1 Accelerator for Defence Sector (LEVIATAD)

Call for proposals (short version)

*Supporting the innovation and internationalisation of European small
and medium-sized enterprises in the defence sector*



Funded by the
European Union

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About LEVIATAD project

The project “Level 1 Accelerator for Defence Sector” (hereinafter LEVIATAD) aims at creating the 1st Eurocluster of excellence on naval defence. The plan to achieve such an ambitious result consists of three steps.

- 1) Obtain a mapping of the naval and aero-naval defence sector’s value chain post COVID-19 crisis to better understand the European ecosystem’s structure as well as potential transnational synergies and complementarities. This will allow the project’s consortium to draw the lesson concerning disruptions and dependencies and manage a more efficient industrial strategy (including green and digital transition) to increase the resilience and boost the competitiveness of a long-term European strategic approach.
- 2) Put in place actions to support SMEs in their up-skilling towards strategic technological innovation that will provide the basis for their path towards resilience and autonomy, ultimately boosting European sovereignty in the defence sector.
- 3) Go-to-international, the third and final step, consists of further supporting measures that will help SMEs to acquire skills in third countries’ markets as well as to achieve internationalisation to foster synergies and create new business lines in non-EU countries.

The activities carried out within LEVIATAD will enhance the European position in the value chain of naval and aero-naval defence sector. The same activities will support resilience by fostering innovation processes, and will help SMEs in joining forces and better cooperate with both major public and private groups in European and international markets. For these reasons all the activities will have a strong focus on resilience and synergy.

Basic information about the call

Following the activities carried out during the implementation phase of the project, such as the mapping of the ecosystems, reporting on SMEs needs and opportunities, LEVIATAD has identified specific investment priorities:

- (i) autonomous ships and drones
- (ii) communication, cybersecurity and electronic warfare
- (iii) on-board equipment: development, performance improvement
- (iv) predictive maintenance
- (v) weapon systems improvement
- (vi) decarbonization of ships

The general objective of the call for proposals is to financially support small projects involving SMEs and start-ups who can contribute to the abovementioned key areas.

LEVIATAD’s open call will select up to 50 projects (at least 40 project applications coming from LEVIATAD countries). The total available budget is €1.013.071,52, with a maximum grant amounting to €20.000 per project.





[LEVIATAD Consortium](#)



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Target companies

The call is dedicated to European small and medium-sized enterprises as defined in art. 2 of Commission Recommendation of 6 May 2003 – [C\(2003\) 1422](#), including start-ups operating as an enterprise for five years or less (registered before 01/05/2023).

Eligible enterprises must be an existing member of an international or national organization (cluster, platform, chamber, guild or similar) that promotes naval and aero-naval defence industry as well as its value chains, and must be registered in one of the following groups of countries:

LEVIATAD's partner countries	Belgium	Croatia
	France	Italy
EU-13 countries (except Croatia)	Bulgaria	Cyprus
	Czech Republic	Estonia
	Hungary	Latvia
	Lithuania	Malta
	Poland	Romania
	Slovakia	Slovenia

Main requirements for applicants

Other than the abovementioned requirements, applicants shall fulfil the following conditions:

- being not considered an undertaking in difficulty
- having a turnover from economic activity equal to the requested grant or higher
- having at least one person employed
- compiling the application in English
- submitting the application using the official documents and channels only
- completing the application in its entirety and with all requested annexes
- submitting only one project per enterprise
- including a mention to the Digital and sustainable innovation and digitalization plan
- respecting the call's priorities
- requesting a grant above €10.000 and not exceeding €20.000
- developing a proposal which includes at least two project activities

Further requirements and details concerning the abovementioned conditions are laid down in the extended text of the call.

Objectives, investment priorities, eligible activities and financial support

The present call is intended to support innovation and internationalization activities as well as twin transition (green and digital transition) of SMEs. This call will finance projects that contribute to the following objectives:

1. fostering innovation as well as green and digital transition of SMEs





2. increasing presence of European SMEs in the international value chains (internationalization)

Project applications and their outputs must fall into one (or more) of the priorities of the naval, aero-naval and defense sector listed below. To better understand the nature of the activities concerning each priority, please refer to the extended text of the call.

- AUTONOMOUS SHIPS and DRONES
- COMMUNICATION and CYBER SECURITY
- ON-BOARD EQUIPMENT DEVELOPMENT and PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT
- PREDICTIVE MAINTENANCE
- WEAPON SYSTEMS IMPROVEMENT
- DECARBONIZATION OF SHIPS

Project applications must be in line with the objectives of LEVIATAD’s call as well as its investment priorities.

The project must clearly describe the objectives and the defined investment priority of the call to which it contributes, and fill the Application form with relevant information. Each project can address one or both objectives. In the latter case, applicants must undertake activities that will enable the submitted project to remain within the indicated funding limits.

The Application form shall indicate the project activities and must deliver a clear costs breakdown. The applicant can design its project with as many activities it needs up to the maximum amount of €20.000, taking into consideration the financial thresholds and project activity timespan listed in the table below. The details concerning each project activity can be read in the extended document of the call.

Note: Each project application must have at least two project activities.

Objective 1: Fostering innovation, green and digital transition		
<i>Project activity</i>	<i>Lump sum (EUR)</i>	<i>Duration (Months)</i>
Innovation activities leading to new products and/or services	9.000	8
Green and digital activities	6.000	8
Promoting innovation by integrating mature technologies	5.000	8
Objective 2: Internationalization		
<i>Project activity</i>	<i>Lump sum (EUR)</i>	<i>Duration (Months)</i>
Market analysis	5.000	8
Access to finance and partnerships, consultancy, building consortium agreements; IPR protection, etc.	5.000	8
Visit to targeted market outside EU (MENA and North America)	10.000	8



Project's activities not included in the table above will not be considered eligible for financing.

The sums granted by the call for proposals cannot be combined, for the same investment expenses and costs, with measures deriving from other Euroclusters projects. More generally, expenses and costs foreseen in the project cannot be subject to double financing.

The duration of a project shall be maximum 8 months and not exceeding August 1st, 2024.

[How to apply to LEVIATAD's call for proposals](#)

To apply to LEVIATAD's call, visit the project's official webpage at <https://www.navigotoscana.it/leviatad/> and download the necessary documentation.

The call is furtherly published in the [Funding and Tenders Portal](#) (SEDIA), and it is also available through the [European Cluster Collaboration Platform](#) (ECCP), the [Enterprise Europe Network](#) (EEN), and LEVIATAD project's members own websites.

Only proposals submitted to the official email address leviatad@dlm.it, containing all the mandatory documents and filed within the deadline will be accepted.

Mandatory documents are:

1. Application form
2. Annex II (Costs breakdown)
3. Annex III (Declaration of Honour)

Upon receipt of each proposal, the applicant will receive a confirmation of submission to the email address communicated in the application form, indicating the date and time of the submission.

LEVIATAD's call will be **open from July 3rd, 2023, until September 4th, 2023, @ 17.00 CET.**

The results of the LEVIATAD call, including a description of SMEs actions, the date of the award, project's duration, and final recipient's legal names and countries will be published on LEVIATAD's official web page <https://www.navigotoscana.it/leviatad/> as well as on Euroclusters websites.

[Evaluation of the proposals](#)

Project applications will be assessed by the Evaluation Review Panel (ERP), composed of two independent reviewers/evaluators per application.

A three-step evaluation procedure will be followed, safeguarding the principles of transparency, conflict of interest and equal treatment as described below:

1. *eligibility check* of the Application form and annexes;
2. *individual evaluation* of project proposals;
3. *evaluator consensus* on the general outcomes of individual evaluation.

The assessment period shall take a maximum of 30 days starting from the closing date of the call. The applicant will receive an email attesting the outcome of the assessment once the evaluation procedure is finalized, together with the instructions for the next steps in case the



applicant is awarded. Top ranked proposals will be granted until the budget for the respective support is exhausted.

Main evaluation criteria

The evaluation process is based on a set of criteria as indicated in the table below, and it is subsequent to the verification of applicants' eligibility criteria and projects. For a full comprehension and details concerning evaluation criteria please see the extended text of the call.

Evaluation criteria	Max. score
1. Innovativeness of the project	15
2. Green transition	10
3. Digital transition and digitalization	10
4. Internationalization	15
5. Impact on LEVIATAD objectives and value chain formation in Europe	20
6. Relevance to naval, aero-naval and Defense sector	10
Maximum points to be awarded	80

Evaluation scores will be awarded based on the criteria mentioned above. The maximum scores for each evaluation criterium is presented in the last column of the table. The overall threshold, applying to the sum of the individual scores will be 60% or 48 points. Proposals with a score below 48 points will not be funded. Proposals that receive 0 points score on criteria 5 or 6 will not be funded regardless of the points awarded on other criteria. The same evaluation criteria and scorings apply to all project applications.

The meaning of the scores with respect to the sub-criteria are as follows:

- 0 (*not admissible*) – the project proposal does not comply with the objectives of the call nor is relevant to the criteria (only on evaluation criteria 5 and 6).
- 1 (*poor*) - the sub-criterion is addressed in an inadequate manner, or there are serious inherent weaknesses.
- 2 (*fair*) - while the proposal broadly addresses the sub-criterion, there are significant weaknesses.
- 3 (*good*) - the proposal addresses the sub-criterion well, but with at least one moderate weakness.
- 4 (*very good*) - the proposal addresses the sub-criterion very well, although with minor weaknesses.
- 5 (*excellent*) - the proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the sub-criterion in question. Any shortcomings are minor.

Funding scheme and beneficiary obligations

Under the support scheme of the present call, payment will be done in two different phases. The first 40% of the grant will be given within 30 days after the signature of the Grant





agreement. The other 60% of the grant will be given to SMEs after the approval of the final report. The final report template will be timely provided to all grant recipients.

- All amounts will be paid in euros.
- Payments will be carried out separately to each beneficiary.
- Only costs that occur during the project period are eligible for funding.
- Expenditures incurred before the signature of the Grant agreement, or after the project duration period are ineligible for remuneration.
- Costs incurred for the implementation of the project must be used for the sole purpose of achieving the objectives of the project and its expected results, in a transparent manner consistent with the principles of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

LEVIATAD support schemes rely on the lump sum mechanism for its grants. This simplified method of setting expenses in projects means that no accounting documents are required to prove the costs during the project. However, the applicant still have obligation to demonstrate through the final report that the implementation of the activities described in a project are in line with the listed activities and specified outcomes as indicated in chapter 4.1.

- The SME has to, for a period of five years after the payment of the balance, keep record and any documents proving that the action has been properly implemented.
- The beneficiaries of the project must ensure that the European Commission, the Anti-Fraud Office and the Court of Auditors will be able to exercise their power of control by accessing documents.
- Any documents proving the correct implementation of the project will have to be made available in case of audits or investigations.

[Digital and sustainable innovation and internationalization plan \(DSIIP\)](#)

Applicants are required to present some key information concerning their enterprise' strategy, achievements and activities. To explain to LEVIATAD's Consortium the main features of their DSIIP, applicants will only need to answer the inherent questions in the Application form.

[Disclaimer](#)

This guide serves solely for informational purposes, providing a quicker explanation of the LEVIATAD's call for proposals. For more detailed information consult the extended version of the call for proposals or get in contact with leviatd@dltm.it. No rights can be derived from this document. This document does not reflect the views of the European Commission.

The LEVIATAD Consortium is not responsible for any mistakes or misinterpretations that this text may cause. In the case of inconsistencies, the Consortium will determine the steps to be taken, in cooperation with the applicant concerned.

The current and extended Call for proposals is provided on the official LEVIATAD's webpage at <https://www.navigotoscana.it/leviatad/> as well as on the project's partners websites, and European web portals always mentioning the version number. The most recent version of the terms and conditions of the LEVIATAD financial support scheme applies and prevails.