



SMART ERA

SMART ERA

2ND OPEN CALL FOR FOLLOWERS MICRO-PILOTS QUESTIONS ASKED BY APPLICANTS

UPDATED 29.06.2026

A complimentary document that includes a list of common questions asked by Applicants

at: SMARTERA.help@fundingbox.com.

and at [the SMART ERA Community](#).



Co-funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

CONTENT

Questions related to Eligibility (Legal Entities and Geographical Scope)	3
Questions related to TRL	5
Questions related to Open Source	6
Other questions received	7



Questions related to Eligibility (Legal Entities and Geographical Scope)

I have a question about what type of entity is appropriate for a community activator.

In the Smart ERA OC, can the community activator entity also be an SME consultancy that knows the region's ecosystem very well?

Yes, any kind of legally registered entity could be the Community Activator. Therefore, an SME consultancy that knows the region's ecosystem very well could certainly play that role in the Consortium.

I have a question about the eligibility criteria.

Can an SME based in Türkiye join a consortium as the Technology Provider / Pilot Orchestrator, together with a Community Activator based in an eligible rural Follower Region under EUSALP, EUSBSR, EUSAIR or EUSDR?

The project would be implemented in that eligible region.

Yes, this consortium structure is eligible for the 2nd Open Call for Followers Micro-Pilots, as long as the Smart Innovation Package (SIP) is deployed and validated within the eligible follower region together with the local Community Activator.

We are preparing a proposal involving a Turkish SME and a Turkish NGO, with a pilot implementation in rural areas of Çanakkale Province (Türkiye).

Could you please confirm whether these rural communities would be considered eligible pilot areas under the SMART ERA Open Call?

As stated in the [Guide for Applicants](#), section 3, *Applicants must operate in Rural Regions now belonging to one of the four EU Macro-Regional Strategies (MRS)*. You can also find more information about these macro-regions in the Guide for Applicants Glossary.

Only Rural Regions included in those areas can be considered for funding in this Open Call.

Which types of rural regions would you particularly recommend within the EUSALP macro-region?

You should target "Follower Regions" that face structural socio-economic challenges, such as demographic decline, limited access to services, economic restructuring, or low levels of innovation intensity.



SMART ERA 2nd Open Call. Questions asked during the OC.

The ideal region should have an emerging or moderately developed innovation ecosystem (with some presence of SMEs, clusters, and public authorities), rather than one that is already highly advanced or entirely non-existent.

Importantly, priority is given to rural regions that lack previous experience in participating in multi-actor approach projects.

Must applicants identify their own Community Activator before submitting the proposal, or will SMART ERA support selected Technical Providers in finding or appointing one?

You must identify your own Community Activator before submitting the proposal, as SMART ERA will not appoint one for you.

You have two options for applying: you can apply as a Consortium (one Community Activator and one Pilot Orchestrator), or you can apply as an Individual Applicant if your entity is capable of effectively covering both technical and community engagement roles. However, keep in mind that Consortia will be prioritized.

I am writing to ask for clarification regarding the eligibility of a consortium in which two partners are legally connected. The specific case concerns an SME and a non-profit organisation, where the SME owns more than 25% of the equity of the non-profit organisation.

Could you kindly confirm whether such a consortium would be eligible under the call?

Based on the criteria outlined in the Guide for Applicants, yes, this consortium structure is eligible for the 2nd Open Call for Followers Micro-Pilots.

A valid consortium must be composed of two distinct entities: one Community Activator and one Pilot Orchestrator (Technical Provider). As long as the organisations are separate legal entities registered in eligible countries, they meet the structural requirements for a consortium application

SMART ERA 2nd Open Call. Questions asked during the OC.

Questions related to TRL

Technical Solutions, at the moment of applying, must have an Initial Technological Readiness Level (TRL) of at least 4 and achieve a Final TRL of at least 6. Does this mean the technical solution we are to provide should already have a TRL4 or is this the initial level of the pilot projects as such?

The solution that you should adapt to the requirements of the Open Call should have, at the moment of applying, a TRL level of at least 4.

In our project, we refer to Annex B of the https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/wp-call/2021-2022/wp-13-general-annexes_horizon2021-2022_en.pdf#page=10 for a full description of TRLs.

The guide establishes a minimum starting level of TRL 4 and an expected final level of TRL 6. Will proposals starting at TRL 5 or above receive additional points during pre-scoring?

Yes, higher starting and expected final TRLs are rewarded during the pre-scoring phase (check criteria in the GfA).



Questions related to Open Source

What exactly is expected to be “open source”? Is it our complete solution, or only the data obtained from it?

Projects selected through the SMART ERA Open Call are, where applicable, encouraged to use Open-Source AI models and/or apps with free or reusable licenses that are aligned with SMART ERA principles. You should define in your proposal which parts of your Solution are Open Source. Also, where applicable, beneficiaries of the SMART ERA Open Call are encouraged to provide the output data as free of charge, to be published in the open data portals.

What exactly do you mean by “open source”? Do you require data sharing, or are there specific AI models considered non-compliant with SMART ERA principles?

Open source means that the source-code should be published into , for example, GitHub. Data sharing is a must.



Other questions received

If it would be possible to schedule a call with you (and/or other project partners) to better understand the specific needs of the call.

In order to keep the fairness of the process, no meeting will be done with applicants. Once the selection process is over, Beneficiaries will have the support of the Project Partners.

Does the second Open Call prioritise any specific thematic areas or technologies, or are applicants free to propose any solution that responds to the needs of the selected rural region? Same for the challenges, are they completely free?

The thematic areas and challenges are completely free, provided they directly address the specific vulnerabilities of your chosen rural region and align with the goals of the EUSALP Macro-Regional Strategy.

The call supports a wide variety of fields, including social services, health, energy, mobility, climate adaptation, biodiversity, education, and access to culture.

However, regardless of the challenge, your solution must be structured as a Smart Innovation Package (SIP), which means it must integrate at least one technological solution, one non-technological ingredient, one policy ingredient, and one business ingredient.

Is the call looking primarily for groundbreaking technological innovation, or can it also support the digitalisation and substantial improvement of existing rural processes and services?

The call does not strictly require groundbreaking technological innovation built from scratch. It strongly supports upgrading, customizing, and integrating existing solutions into your proposed SIP.

SMART ERA is based on the philosophy that standalone technological solutions often fail in rural areas; therefore, the priority is to demonstrate how your digital tools synergize with governance, business, and social models to achieve a collective impact that substantially improves rural well-being.

