



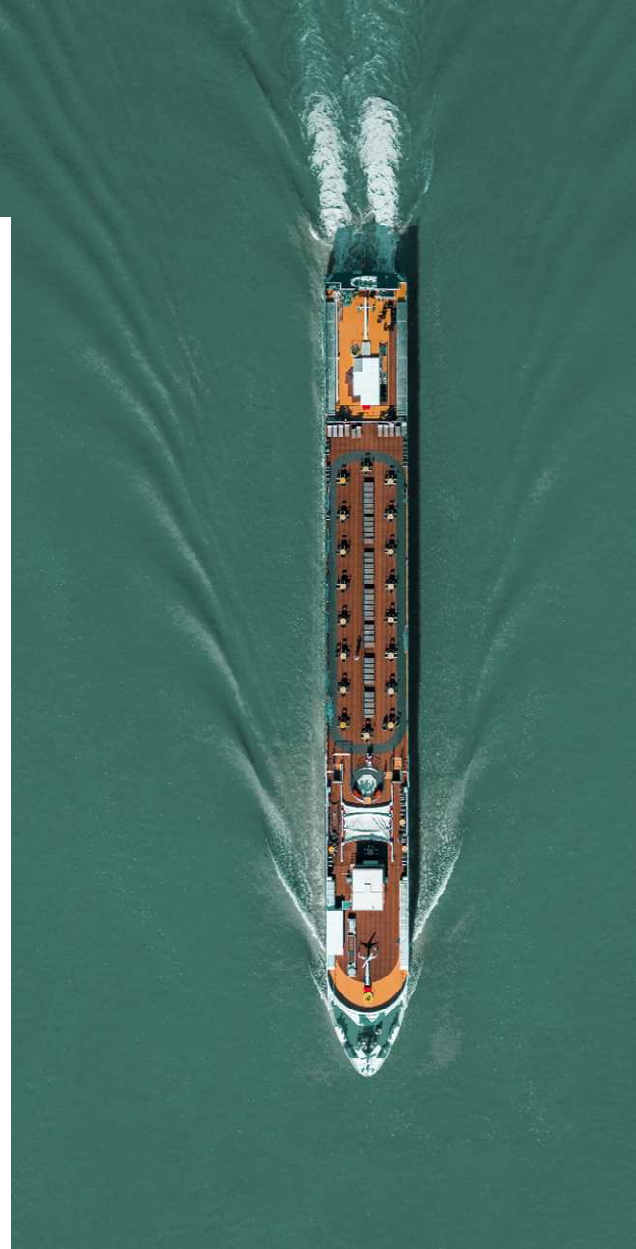
**SAFERSEA**

Smarter and Eco-friendlier Atlantic area

# CALL FOR CHALLENGES

MARCH 2025

GUIDELINES FOR  
APPLICANTS



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# 1. CONTEXT

## 1.1 WHAT IS SAFERSEA

SaferSEA is a European project aimed at enhancing maritime safety and promoting eco-friendly practices for the shipping industry. Co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) through the Interreg Atlantic Area programme, the project started in October 2023 and will end in September 2026, with a total budget of €1.51 million, of which €1.13 million is co-funded by the ERDF.

The primary objective of SaferSEA is to develop a safer, more environmentally conscious maritime sector by providing stakeholders with practical solutions to support their green transition. The project focuses on identifying and supporting the development of innovative technologies for ships and ports, fostering stronger connections amongst shipowners, port authorities, researchers, and innovative startups in the Atlantic Area.

The project is structured around five major actions:

- Capitalizing on existing data and projects related to maritime safety
- Raising awareness of maritime transport challenges for safer and cleaner seas
- Supporting the emergence of projects that address sector needs
- Identifying emerging technologies to meet sector requirements
- Implementing pilot projects to test technologies in real-world conditions

The project consortium includes six partners from four Atlantic countries:

- **Technopôle Brest-Iroise (Plouzané, France):** a Business Support Organisation which fosters regional economic development through innovation.
- **CEEI Bahía de Cádiz (Cadiz, Spain):** a Business Support Organization which provides support, advice and training to startups and existing businesses, with a focus on innovation.
- **UPTEC (Porto, Portugal):** the Science and Technology park of the University of Porto, specialised in technology transfer and innovation.
- **Sines Tecnopolo (Sines, Portugal):** a Business Support Organisation which provides acceleration services for businesses.
- **Cedre (Brest, France):** International experts in accidental water pollution, who provide response support, contingency planning, training, analysis and testing and research.
- **AxisBIC (Cork, Ireland):** a Business Support Organisation which provides provide support and essential business expertise to innovative entrepreneurs.

## 1.2 OBJECTIVE OF THE CALL

This Call for Challenges is launched in the framework of SaferSEA. It aims to gather Challenges and issues (submitted by “Challenge Owners”) faced by maritime stakeholders in the Atlantic Area. A 2<sup>nd</sup> phase, dedicated to the identification of relevant solutions and technologies to meet these Challenges (developed by “Solution Providers”), will be open through an Open Innovation Call (“2<sup>nd</sup> phase”).

This action aims to connect the selected Challenge Owners with Solution Providers for the development of innovative solutions. The team will benefit from business support and valorisation, and the joint solution could qualify for pilot project development support.

Please note that no direct financial support will be provided.

### 1.3 SUPPORT PROVIDED

The partners will rely on the extensive knowledge of their local ecosystem and on the tools previously developed through SaferSEA in order to:

- Connect Challenge Owners with relevant Solution Providers in the Atlantic Area
- Identify national or EU fundings for the development of the solution, and provide support for the application process
- Identify a potential site for experimentation or demonstration in the Atlantic Area
- Valorise the selected projects within European networks

### 1.4 IMPORTANT DATES

These guidelines apply to the Call for Challenges.

- **March 10, 2025:** launch of the Call for Challenges
- ~~April 24, 2025, 12.00 CET: deadline for submission~~ / **May 2, 2025, 23.59 CET: new deadline**
- **May 21 – 23, 2025:** presentation of selected challenges during the European Maritime Day in Cork, IE
- **May 21, 2025:** launch of the Open Innovation Call (“2<sup>nd</sup> phase”)
- **July 31, 2025:** deadline for submission
- **October 2025:** beginning of business support activities
- **September 2026:** end of business support activities

Please note that an extension of the above-mentioned periods may occur if the expected number of applications is not reached.

## 2. APPLICATION PROCESS

All applications will be considered for evaluation, as long as they meet the criteria stated below.

### 2.1 TOPICS

This call will focus on the 3 following areas:

- **Decarbonisation:** issues related to the transition to new fuels and energies for ships
- **Pollution:** problems involving marine pollution, such as oil spills, plastic waste, ballast water management, bilge water treatment, loss of containers at sea...
- **Safety at sea:** challenges related to maritime traffic management (incl. seafarer safety), reduction of collisions, rescue of person in distress...

## 2.2 WHO CAN APPLY

This call is open to entities related to the shipping industry, including: Startups, SMEs<sup>1</sup>, Corporates, Port authorities, Terminal operators, Shipbuilders, Maintenance companies, Digital service providers, Not-profit organisations, Technological and Research Centres...

## 2.3 ELIGIBILITY

The application must be submitted in English.

The applicant organisation must be registered in one of the eligible regions of the Interreg Atlantic Area programme (reference period: 2021 – 2027)<sup>2</sup>:



<sup>1</sup> European definition of an SME: [https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/smes/sme-fundamentals/sme-definition\\_en](https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/smes/sme-fundamentals/sme-definition_en)

<sup>2</sup> Programme area : <https://www.atlanticarea.eu/about-us/interreg-atlantic-area-2021-2027>

## 2.3 ENGAGEMENT

The applicant organisation commits to take part in all stages of the call, including in the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase. If their Challenge is selected and matches with a Solution Provider, the Challenge Owner commits to consider ways to collaborate with the Solution Provider.

The applicant organisation must be aware that this call is being launched in the framework of a European project, due to end on September 30, 2026. The business support provided by the project partners cannot exceed this date.

## 2.4 SUBMISSION REQUIREMENT

The applications must be submitted through the dedicated online Application Form.

# 3. CHALLENGE DESCRIPTION

Applicants are required to describe the Challenge they are facing:

- Clearly outline a specific issue or obstacle relevant to one of the three topics mentioned above. If applicable, explain the potential impact on other stakeholders.
- Highlight current barriers in addressing this Challenge (regulatory, financial, technological...)
- Explain how further innovation, collaboration or investment could help address this Challenge: clearly describe your needs and the type of technology you are looking for.

# 4. EVALUATION CRITERIA

The submitted Challenge will be assessed based on the following criteria:

- Expected impact (30%): the Challenge and the expected solution could contribute to improving practices and supporting the green and technological transitions of the Shipping Industry
- Relevance to the Shipping Industry (25%): the Challenge refers to common digital/technological needs within the maritime sector, which could be also faced by other stakeholders in the Atlantic Area
- Sustainability and transferability (20%): the Challenge pursues a long-term goal for the Shipping Industry. It could also be transferred to other businesses and/or replicated in sea basins beyond the Atlantic Area
- Technical feasibility (20%): the Challenge has potential for innovation and collaboration, and can be addressed technically within the constraints of the project timeframe and partners' resources
- Clarity of the proposal (5%): the Challenge is well articulated and supported with evidence

The applications will be evaluated by a European jury, composed of representatives from SaferSEA partners.

## 5. SELECTION OF CHALLENGES

The jury aims to select a minimum of 6 Challenges in the Atlantic Area.

The selected Challenges should be announced in the framework of the European Maritime Day, which will take place in Cork, Ireland, from May 21 to 23, 2025<sup>3</sup>.

In case of delays due to an extension of the call period or to practical issues, the Challenges will be announced through the SaferSEA communication channels:

- SaferSEA LinkedIn Page: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/safersea/>
- SaferSEA website: [www.safersea.eu](http://www.safersea.eu)

## 6. CONTACT

For any questions about the call or the project, please contact us via email: [info@safersea.eu](mailto:info@safersea.eu)

## 7. DISCLAIMER

The reference to the Interreg Atlantic Area programme and the display of European symbols in this document is for information purposes only. The inclusion of their names and logos does not imply that they endorse this Call for Challenges, or that this activity has been developed, supervised, or approved by them.

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<sup>3</sup> European Maritime Day 2025 in Cork : [https://maritime-forum.ec.europa.eu/theme/governance/european-maritime-day\\_en](https://maritime-forum.ec.europa.eu/theme/governance/european-maritime-day_en)