



Circular and Bio-Based Solutions for the Ultimate Prevention of Plastics in Rivers Integrated with Elimination And Monitoring Technologies

Deliverable D.6.4

Preliminary Technology Replication and Transfer to Associated Regions

Deliverable information

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Disclaimer

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Executive Summary

The UPSTREAM project, funded under the Horizon Europe Programme, focuses on developing circular and bio-based solutions for the prevention, monitoring, and elimination of plastics in rivers. This deliverable, D6.4 – Preliminary Technology Replication and Transfer to Associated Regions, outlines the Financial Support to Third Parties (FSTP) Programme, which aims to replicate and transfer these innovative solutions to additional regions beyond the project's initial demonstration sites.

The purpose of this document is to establish the framework for technology replication through financial support to third parties, enabling the scaling up of plastic pollution reduction strategies. The report defines the methodology, eligibility criteria, selection process, and monitoring approach for associated regions receiving funding.

Up to five additional “associated regions” will be selected, prioritizing Romania, Slovenia, and Turkey due to their high plastic leakage rates. Selected regions will implement monitoring, prevention, removal, and recycling initiatives.

Two competitive open calls will be launched to attract innovators, industry players, and local authorities. The total fund available is €350,000, with up to €70,000 per associated region. The focus is on scaling up microplastic, plastic, and litter monitoring, elimination, and valorization technologies. Projects will be assessed based on relevance, impact, scalability, and alignment with EU sustainability goals. The selection process will be transparent, fair, and impartial, ensuring compliance with Horizon Europe funding guidelines.

The FSTP programme supports the EU's Circular Economy Action Plan by promoting sustainable plastic waste management. It enhances cross-border collaboration to combat riverine plastic pollution and advances innovative business models and technological solutions for a plastic-free environment.

This deliverable establishes the foundation for scaling UPSTREAM's innovative approaches to combat plastic pollution in European rivers. By providing structured financial support, fostering cross-sector partnerships, and ensuring transparent selection and monitoring, this initiative aims to create lasting environmental and economic benefits for associated regions and the broader EU sustainability agenda.

Deliverable Keywords: Plastic Pollution, Circular Economy, Financial Support to Third Parties (FSTP), Microplastics, Monitoring, Sustainability.

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Table of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Definition
FSTP	Financial Support to Third Parties
MP	Microplastics
L	Litter
P	Plastics
WWTP	Wastewater Treatment Plant
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
HE	Horizon Europe
GA	Grant Agreement
ToR	Terms of Reference
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
OC	Open Call
TFEU	Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union
TEU	Treaty on the European Union
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
IPR	Intellectual Property Rights
ECA	European Court of Auditors
OLAF	European Anti-Fraud Office

1. Introduction

UPSTREAM – Circular and Bio-Based Solutions for the Ultimate Prevention of Plastics in Rivers Integrated with Elimination and Monitoring Technologies – is a Horizon Innovation Action financed by the European Commission through the Horizon 2020 programme under the call for proposals Horizon-MISS-2022-OCEAN-01-04.

The aim of the project UPSTREAM is to overcome the challenges related to the monitoring, prevention, elimination, and valorisation of litter (L), plastics (P), and microplastics (MP). The project aims to demonstrate a suite of 14 solutions addressing pollution connected to 7 rivers in 5 countries. The co-creation of an extensive database of knowledge and sustainable business models is a key part of the project to make information available as widely as possible. The involvement of wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) owners, industrial partners with existing supply chains, innovative SMEs, and a water cluster association will ensure exploitation of the project solutions. To further the demonstration and exploitation of the project, Financial Support to Third Parties (FSTP) will be provided. Up to 5 countries from “associated regions” that are located in the EU Member States / Associated countries will be eligible to bid for funds from the FSTP programme within this project. This report is a preliminary overview for the FSTP programme and sets out the background and the methodology to be adopted for the UPSTREAM technology replications and open calls. Reference to support information made available on FSTP programmes has been used to draw up the following proposals for the UPSTREAM FSTP programme, for example the guide to good practice¹.

Key points within this document include the following:

<input type="checkbox"/>	FSTP integration	How the FSTP component integrates within the whole action.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Information on beneficiaries	How to gather information on potential beneficiaries and ensure a participatory approach in designing the action.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Capacity and resources	The management capacity and resources of the organisation.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Timeframe	The necessary time for a successful implementation of the FSTP mechanism.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Call(s) and selection process	The design of the FSTP call(s) and selection procedures.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Coaching and mentoring	Coaching and mentoring: capacity development may need to be provided to FSTP beneficiaries on issues such as project development and budget preparation, monitoring and reporting.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Monitoring and reporting	Monitoring and reporting – how to monitor and report on the impact of FSTP beneficiaries.
<input type="checkbox"/>	FSTP management budget	The budget required for managing the FSTP. A significant percentage of the budget (up to 30-40%) may be required for monitoring, supervising and reporting on FSTP.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Knowledge transfer	Knowledge transfer: If applicants are not local organisations, it would be prudent to include a local co-applicant and foresee a strategy to transfer knowledge to build the local partner's capacity in managing FSTP.

Figure 1. FSTP guide to good practices

¹ <https://library.tacso.eu/download/150/brochure/629/eu-fstp-guide-on-good-practices.pdf>.

2. Framework of the FSTP programme

2.1. Target Countries and Activities

UPSTREAM is undertaking demonstration projects in Spain, Italy, Germany, Serbia and the UK. The FSTP programme within the project is open to countries from 'associated regions' that are in EU Member States/Associated Countries other than the ones that are part of the project consortium. The projects proposed are expected to showcase the feasibility, replicability and scale up of the solutions developed within the project. The local and/or regional authorities from Associated regions will need to have EU linked areas, such as cross border river flows, neighbouring or less developed regions and the Mediterranean basin with ecosystems that can mutually benefit from the demonstration activities. The geographical area that will be targeted shall have a clearly identified and recognised need to build capacity to implement the innovative solutions for L, P and MP free rivers in the associated regions.

Primary target areas will include the Balkan countries that are Member States/Associated Countries in the HE List². Romania, Slovenia and Turkey will be highest priority. Turkey has been identified as a country with some of the highest plastic leakage rates mainly because of mismanaged waste and large coastal cities.

The activities that can receive financial support are those consistent with the UPSTREAM project:

- MP, P and L clean up with collection & removal and recovery from rivers and connected waterways - River MP, P and L pollution monitoring and digitalisation,
- Nature based solutions and restoration measures
- Demonstration of preventive measures e.g. bio-based/biodegradable plastic alternatives - Recycling and Valorisation activities
- Citizen involvement in co-creation and living lab initiatives for MP, L and P prevention, collection, removal, recovery and recycling.
- Marine observation, open data and knowledge sharing

2.2. Publication of Calls

The consortium will publish two competitive open calls and publicize them widely, particularly on websites of the Horizon Europe Programme (including the Funding and Tenders Portal), the consortium partners' websites, as well as through accessible web portals and associated networking partners, and through other projects involved in the Mission calls. The consortium will inform the Project Officer of the calls and the content at least 30 days prior to their expected dates of publication.

The calls will be of two types:

1. Boost the deployment of microplastic, plastic and litter monitoring, elimination and valorisation schemes
2. The development of zero-waste supply chains that will enhance the prevention of microplastic, plastic, and litter.

² [list-3rd-country-participation_horizon-euratom_en.pdf](#)

Table 1. Type of Open Calls

	Call type 1 (OC#1)	Call type 2 (OC#2)
Objectives	Attracting and engaging systems actors/ innovators that are developing services that can benefit and speedup the uptake of plastic litter collection.	Captivating and recruiting industry and societal players willing to deploy an experiment demonstrating, populating, and validating zero-waste systems.
Benefits to third parties	Beneficiaries will have early access to (i) infrastructure, tools and resources; (ii) tutorials, mentors, and webinars; (iii) mentorship, experts and key ecosystem stakeholders; and (iv) access use-cases to pilot their solutions	Beneficiaries (individual or team projects) will access to (i) several workshops, webinars and other programme activities; (ii) key experts; (iii) E resources/tools; (iv) other use-cases (sharing knowledge and experience); (v) innovative Tools & Services from the OC#1;
Funding per project	Total: €210,000 Per Associated Region: €70,000 (average)	Total: €140,000 Per Associated Region: €70,000 (average)
Programme phases	Total: 6-months 3x sprints of 2-month each	Total: 8-months Design (2-months) Deployment (4-months) Assessment (2-months)

The open calls will remain open for the submission of proposals by interested parties for a period of at least two months. Should the proposal submission deadline change, this will be immediately announced and registered applicants must be informed of the change.

The consortium will evaluate the received proposals based on well-defined criteria, and with the assistance of at least two independent experts appointed by the consortium on the basis of the criteria to be given in the open call. The assessment will be undertaken based on the following criteria, inter alia:

- Relevance: how much the proposal fit with the UPSTREAM project?
- Fit for principles: how well does the proposal reflect the approach and principles of UPSTREAM?
- Impact: what is the expected impact of the project?
- European dimension: does the proposal have potential to create synergies with ongoing projects in Europe?

The consortium will keep the Project Officer informed about the open calls and their progress. At the same time, it will inform the Project Officer of the means by which the competitive call was published and of the names and affiliation of the experts involved in the evaluation.

It is the responsibility of the consortium to publish the call for proposals, evaluate and select proposals according to the rules given in this document.

2.3. Proposal Eligibility and Selection

UPSTREAM proposes to set up an Open Call fund up to €350,000 with maximum €70,000 financial support to each of the 5 regions that will benefit selected associated regions. The funds will be granted on principles of transparency, objectivity and fairness and administered by carefully vetting Third Parties Organisations acting as champions and leaders who will proactively establish an outreach reach programmes within the associated regions to enable them to follow closely the project and its demonstration activities.

The selection procedure will be carried out in alignment with the same basic principles which govern Commission calls:

- I. **Quality:** The proposal(s) selected for funding must demonstrate a high quality in the context of the topics and criteria set out in the call
- II. **Transparency:** Funding decisions are based on clearly described rules and procedures, and all applicants should receive adequate feedback on the outcome of the evaluation of their proposals
- III. **Fairness and impartiality:** All proposals submitted to a call are treated equally. They are evaluated impartially on their merits, irrespective of their origin or the identity of the applicants
- IV. **Confidentiality:** All proposals and related data, knowledge and documents are treated in confidence.

The calls will target specific activities that correspond to the competencies and the platform features and capabilities available in the project while demonstrating a clear European dimension. This will be made clear to the proposers in the call information.

The members of the consortium shall not respond directly to the call – their participation in supporting and assisting industrial experiments is already included in their grant specified in this document.

The evaluation, award and grant preparation will be as rapid as possible, commensurate with maintaining the quality of the evaluation, and respecting the legal framework. Successful proposals will be notified within one week of the evaluation final selection and the process for the contract definition and execution will begin immediately after that. The consortium will communicate to the other (unsuccessful) proposers that their proposal was not successful in the call and will enclose to each an *unsigned* version of the Consensus report of the evaluation of their proposal. The outcome of the calls will further be published without delay, including a description of the third-party projects, the date of the award, the duration, and the legal name and country of the beneficiaries.

The funds will only be awarded to local and/or regional authorities from an ‘associated region’. The associated regions are located in Member States/Associated countries other than those that are part of the project consortium. Each associated region shall benefit from the Financial Support to Third Parties provided under the topic call [HORIZON-MISS-2022-OCEAN-01-04](#) within the duration of the project only once. Additionally, the same regional and local authorities from Associated regions awarded in the sister project INSPIRE cannot be awarded in USPTREAM. This will be crossed checked with other project(s) awarded by the same topic call. A member of the other projects in this topic will be invited to the UPSTREAM FSTP award committee.

Entities that are subject to EU restrictive measures under Article 29 of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU) and Article 215 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU) are not eligible to participate as recipients of FSTP.

The financial support will be provided in the form of a lump sum based on the costs detailed and requested in the proposal, with maximum ceilings to be defined per scheme and per grant category. Criteria for calculating the exact amount of financial support need to satisfy the minimum conditions of Art. 6.2.D.a (ii) of the GA. The financial support to be granted as a lump sum is defined up-front. After the evaluation of the call for FSTP, a lump sum share is fixed for each call and each beneficiary. This amount is paid when the activities defined in the call are completed. Thus, they will not be calculated on the basis of the costs actually incurred.

2.4. Project Implementation

The beneficiaries of the open calls must ensure that their contractual obligations are met under the following Articles of the Grant Agreement:

- 12 (conflict of interest),
- 13 (confidentiality and security),
- 14 (ethics),
- 17.2 (visibility),
- 18 (specific rules for carrying out action),
- 19 (information) and
- 20 (recordkeeping)

The beneficiaries must also ensure that the bodies mentioned in Article 25 (e.g. granting authority, OLAF, Court of Auditors (ECA), etc.) can exercise their rights also towards the recipients.

UPSTREAM consortium will continuously share their outcomes and knowledge with those selected 'associated regions' and provide them with technical assistance to build capacity and to implement in their territory that contribute to achieving the Mission objectives. Technical assistance provides technical advisory services necessary to the prepare roadmaps, plans and projects for L, P and MP free rivers in the associated regions addressing possible barriers and showing the feasibility of implementing innovative solutions.

Personal data that will be collected, processed and published in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2016/679, also known as GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation).

The open call for financial support to third parties might be subject to small adjustments, provided that it respects the conditions already set out. The table 2. below shows the conditions of compliance for FSTP as set out in the annexes of the grant agreement.

Compliance with conditions for Financial Support to Third Parties (Annex B HE General) Annexes, Articles 6.2 & 9.4 of the Grant Agreement and topic HORIZON-MISS-2021-OCEAN-01-04	
<i>A clear description of the objectives and the expected results from providing financial support to third parties.</i> Topic HORIZON-MISS-2021-OCEAN-01-04	The objectives and expected results are indicated in Section 2.2.4 of Annex 1, Part B.
<i>A fixed and exhaustive list of the different types of activities for which a third party may receive financial support.</i> Topic 2022-OCEAN-01-04 foresees that the financial support will be given “to showcase the feasibility, replicability and scale up of the solutions developed within the project in the “associated region”.	This is indicated in the text in Section 2.1 above this table.
<i>The definition of recipients of financial support to third parties (persons or categories of persons that may receive financial support)</i> Topic 2022-OCEAN-01-04 foresees that FSTP may only be awarded to local and/or regional authorities from an ‘associated region’	This is indicated in the text in Section 2.3 above this table.
EU restrictive measures also applicable for financial support to third parties EU Sanctions Map	This is indicated in the text in Section 2.3 above this table.
<i>Form and maximum amount of financial support for each third party</i> Topic 2022-OCEAN-01-04 foresees that FSTP can only be provided in the form of grants and the maximum amount to be granted to each ‘associated region’ is EUR 100,000	This is indicated in the text in Section 2.3 above this table.
Criteria for calculating the exact amount of the financial support	This is indicated in the text in Section 2.3 above this table.
<i>The procedure and criteria for giving financial support</i> Topic 2022-OCEAN-01-04 foresees that: - Each “associated region” shall benefit from the Financial Support to Third Parties provided under this topic within the duration of the project only once. - Work with and engage with at least 5 ‘associated regions’. - The associated regions are located in Member States/Associated countries other than those that are part of the project consortium	This is indicated in the text in Section 2.2 and 2.3 above this table.
<i>The procedure should reflect all the following requirements from the HE General Annexes:</i>	This is indicated in the text in Section 2.2 and 2.3 above this table.

<p>1) projects must publish their open calls widely and adhere to EU standards of transparency, equal treatment, conflict of interest and confidentiality.</p> <p>2) all calls for third parties and all calls that are implemented by third parties must be published on the Funding & Tenders Portal, and on the beneficiaries' websites.</p> <p>3) the calls must remain open for at least 2 months.</p> <p>4) if submission deadlines are changed, this must immediately be announced and registered applicants must be informed of the change.</p> <p>5) projects must publish the outcome of the calls without delay, including a description of third-party projects, the date of the award, the duration, and the legal name and country.</p> <p>6) the calls must have a clear European dimension</p>	
<p><i>The beneficiaries must ensure that their contractual obligations comply with the appropriate Articles</i></p> <p>12 (conflict of interest), 13 (confidentiality and security), 14 (ethics), 17.2 (visibility), 18 (specific rules for carrying out action), 19 (information) and 20 (recordkeeping) of the grant agreement also apply to the third parties receiving the support (recipients).</p> <p>The beneficiaries must also ensure that the bodies mentioned in Article 25 (e.g. granting authority, OLAF, Court of Auditors (ECA), etc.) can exercise their rights also towards the recipients</p>	<p>This is indicated in the text in Section 2.4 above this table</p>

3. Stages of Implementation

The framework for implementation has been set out in section 2 and was provided for in the project proposal. The stages required to set up and deliver the FSTP programme are now discussed.

The anticipated stages are:

1. Overview of objectives and framework, which is completed with this deliverable
2. Preparation of the documentation
 - a. Preparation of the call text
 - b. Preparation of the terms of reference
 - c. Preparation of the contract documents
 - d. Preparation of the application form
3. Internal review of documentation
4. External review and approval of documentation by PO
5. Finalization of texts and launch
 - a. Marketing and promotion of the call
 - b. Call opens
 - c. Queries accepted
 - d. End of first call
6. Shortlist and evaluation of proposals
 - a. Evaluation criteria
 - b. Assessment of proposals
 - c. Assessment meeting
 - d. Selection of proposals for funding
 - e. Inform successful applicants
7. Contract negotiations
 - a. Confirmation of acceptance to comply with contract
 - b. Confirmation of intention to participate and dissemination requirements
8. Award announcements
9. Mentoring and monitoring projects

The stages above are required for both calls. In formulating the calls and selection procedures, the guidance provided will be considered. This following is taken from the EU-FSTP-guide-on-good-practices document.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Targeted beneficiaries	>	The type of beneficiaries to be targeted through FSTP (which should always be in line with the initial Guidelines for Applicants, the Description of the Action agreed with the EU or any other relevant framework agreed with other donors).
<input type="checkbox"/>	Procedure to be used	>	Consider the objective of the FSTP, the targeted beneficiaries and the procedure to be used (open call, closed call, direct awards or a mix of approaches). Implementing partners should have a strong justification for their proposed approach and its compliance with the FSTP guiding principles.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Application forms and required documentation	>	The application forms and required documentation, taking into account FSTP beneficiaries' capacities and any donor requirements that may need to be passed on to their beneficiaries.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Communication approach	>	The communication approach to be used, which will reflect the chosen type of procedure. Different approaches will be required for an open call aiming to reach out to as many organisations as possible versus a restricted call dedicated to supporting organisations in sensitive political contexts or the members of a network.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Language of the calls	>	The language of the calls. Language barriers can reduce the outreach of FSTP calls and making calls and application documents/procedures available in local languages may increase the outreach to local organisations.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Channels to submit proposals	>	Channels to submit proposals: Online submissions are generally easier to manage. In more restrictive and difficult environments they can be supplemented by offline submissions (including by phone).
<input type="checkbox"/>	Calls may constitute capacity development tools	>	Calls may constitute capacity development tools: As a minimum, feedback to non-selected applicants can help those organisations or individuals improve their future proposals.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Selection processes and criteria	>	Selection processes and criteria constitute a starting point for building trust in communities

Figure 2. Formulating the call and selection process guide

3.1. Preparation of documentation

The following sections outline the preliminary concepts for the documentation. However, these are all subject to detailed development and the internal review process to be conducted by the partners as described in the sequence given above. In addition to the documentation, it may be appropriate to set up a frequently asked question (FAQ) area on the project website. Example questions may be:

1. What is UPSTREAM
2. Why should I apply?
3. Who can apply?
4. Should the applicant belong to any specific sector?
5. What kind of resources should I commit in order to participate in the call?
6. Do I need to cooperate with UPSTREAM?
7. Do I need to have a team with specific skills to be selected?
8. What happens if I do not submit my application within the deadline?
9. How long does it take to fill in the application?
10. Will I be able to modify my proposal after submission?

11. Can my organization submit two ideas within the same application?
12. Can my organization submit two different applications?
13. Can multiple beneficiaries apply?
14. Can we be a partner organization if we are not a local authority?
15. Can Higher Education Institutions apply?
16. Can we use subcontractors?
17. What happens after applications are submitted?
18. What are the different evaluation phases and the expected schedule?
19. How much funding might is available?
20. What cost categories can I claim against and are indirect costs eligible?
21. Do selected beneficiaries get any money in advance?
22. What is the payment schedule and payment conditions?
23. When will the subgrant/award agreement be signed?
24. What services does UPSTREAM offer for beneficiaries/subgrantees in the supported programme?
25. Is any accountability required on the way the funds have been used, e. g. invoices and other financial documents?

3.1.1. Open call template and text

The call text will be formed around the following headings

- Title of the call
- Background to UPSTREAM
- Key features of the Call process within the project
- Description of the type of organization sought (including experience, competence, and resources)
- Description of the contract (nature of the contract, key activities, main scope, the requirements needed to achieve the expected goals, the expected results and main outcomes, handing of any developed IPR)
- Description of the technological developments sought, or the technologies to be implemented
- Interaction of the project partners with the proposal applicants
- List of the territories for the implementation of the proposed project
- List of keywords / tags so that a search can be facilitated
- Submission and guide for applicants (details of where the applicants can apply and reference to other relevant documentation)

- Criteria for awarding the support (reference will be made to the location of the criteria which will be made available for public view).
- Details of the level of funding

3.1.2. Terms of Reference

This document will supplement the call documentation and will be made available publicly. The Terms of Reference (ToR) is for the operation of the sub-group of project partners that will oversee the operation of the FSTP. Items will include:

- Purpose of the committee overseeing the FSTP
- Frequency of meeting
- Format for the meetings (including method of meeting, agenda)
- Organisation and responsibilities (naming of Chair, officers of the committee, committee membership)
- Definition of quora
- Minutes of meetings (and if these should be public or private)
- Responsibility for reporting to project partners
- Establishment of issues on conflict of interest
- Issues surrounding confidentiality
- Committee membership
- Requirement for any external support (for example for assessment of applications)

3.1.3. Preparation of contract documents

The contract will be prepared in accordance with cascade funding as described under “Financial Support to Third Parties”. Key points include:

- Recovery of amounts due
- Clear definitions of organisations permitted to receive funding
- Recipients of the financial support permit relevant auditing authorities, such as the Commission, to exercise their powers of control over documents
- Reporting responsibilities between the organization receiving financial support and the UPSTREAM partners and, specifically, the project coordinator organization.

3.1.4. Application form and scoring system

Potential sections within the application form may include the following (and this will be developed with the complete set of documentation). Details will be subject to internal review and ratification.

- Presentation of the applicant
 - This will break into two sections –
 - Eligibility criteria, which will include the legal status of the submitting organization, the project is to take place in an eligible region, if there is clear uniqueness to the application (and is not already being undertaken under another project call), the project will start and last within the required dates (a pass or fail);
 - Background information on suitability of the applicant (a scored section for the appraisal process)
- Main features of the applicant and consortium members to deliver the project (a scored section for the appraisal process)

- Main body of the application (all sections are scored for the appraisal process)
 - Technical competencies and details of the project being proposed
 - Opportunities that will be generated as during the project
 - Opportunities that will be generated post the successful outcome of the project
 - Strategic importance of the project, how the project complements with existing programs
 - Timing of the project – expected start date and duration of the project (this will not be scored but will be used for contract negotiations and monitoring purposes. However, the start date and duration must comply with the call requirements as an eligibility check)
- Financial arrangements
 - Details of the receiving body and how the project finances will be managed (this is an eligibility criterion and is a pass/fail)
 - Value for money – how the funding will lever other funds either during or after the project (a scored section for the appraisal process).
- Ethical considerations (eligibility criterion)
 - This will be cascaded from the original call documentation used for the UPSTREAM proposal.

In addition to the application form itself, the scoring system will be made available. No private scoring system will be used at the evaluation stage.

3.2. Internal Review of documentation

The documents described above will be drafted within the project (work package 6) and circulated to all project partners for review. Where necessary, external assistance will be sought, and specifically legal advice will be taken to ensure that the proposed contract documents are both compliant with the grant agreement and do not expose any project partner to financial issues due to the non-performance and compliance of the grant recipient organisations.

3.3. External review and approval of documentation by PO

Before public submission of the UPSTREAM open call the documents will be submitted to the PO for here approval. This will be done at least one month before the planed launch of the UPSTREAM OC.

3.4. Finalization of texts and launch of the programme

On completion of the internal review, the set of documents will be finalized and promoted. Consideration will be given to the range of languages used to ensure the reach of the call, particularly to the target areas that are to be promoted.

The calls will be published widely (including EC Funding & Tenders Portal, Mission Ocean and Waters service portal, the project website, and communication routes available via the project partners). The calls will be open for at least two months, and any modifications to conditions and opening dates will be notified to all routes for dissemination. To this end, a formal list of dissemination routes will be maintained. However, it is recognized that the calls may be reposted, and not all marketing routes may be known to the project partners.

3.5. Shortlist and Evaluation of Proposals

Before advancing to a full review, the proposals will be checked against the eligibility criteria (outlined in section 3.1.4). The initial eligibility check will be conducted within a fixed number of days.

Independent of the eligibility check, all proposals will be assessed (in case of a successful appeal against being found to be ineligible). A board of assessors will be set up amongst the project partners. If necessary, external advice may be sought, but this is not currently anticipated. Good practice guidelines will be followed to set up the panel of assessors to ensure a wide range of expertise.

Depending on the number of applications, an initial shortlisting may take place, and the final list will be issued on the project website. Applicants will be contacted prior to the publication of the list to ensure that they still wish to be considered for funding. If deemed necessary, on-line interviews will be conducted with all short-listed participants.

Following all assessments and interviews, a ranked list will be produced at a convened “consensus” meeting of the UPSTREAM project partners. The successful applicants will be contacted in turn to again confirm their agreement to proceed with the signing of contracts.

3.6. Signing contract

It is anticipated that the contract developed as discussed in section 3.1.3 will not be subject to negotiation. This will be set out in the documentation made available to potential applicants.

Discussions will be held to ensure that the eligibility criteria continue to be met.

3.7. Award announcements

Announcements will be made on the project website, and the relevant EC sites.

3.8. Monitoring of projects

Once a proposal has been selected it will enter into the delivery and monitoring stage of the programme of work. Items to consider here include the following:

- Ensure that the eligibility rules are transposed in agreements signed with recipients of support and that financial control and audit mechanisms are in place
- Ensure that the final recipients comply with the IPR rules and the communication, dissemination and visibility rules
- Ensure effective and reliable monitoring and reporting of the supported projects (including information on key performance indicators, impact framework, progress towards financial sustainability, partnership, eligibility and regularity of the expenditure claimed, etc), in the format and timing specified by the call management team
- Ensure provisions for re-orienting or stopping underperforming projects (with regular ‘go’/‘no go’ decision points, including a payment system linked to milestone achievements)

4. Conclusions

This deliverable report outlines the Financial Support to Third Parties (FSTP) Programme within the UPSTREAM project. It aims to provide a framework for delivering replication and the transfer of innovative circular and bio-based solutions for plastic pollution prevention in rivers. The focus is on integrating monitoring, prevention, elimination, and valorization technologies for plastics, microplastics (MP), and litter (L).

As the demonstration projects are conducted in Spain, Italy, Germany, Serbia, and the UK. FSTP will support up to five additional "associated regions" from outside the UPSTREAM partner countries, from the EU & Associated Countries, prioritizing Romania, Slovenia, and Turkey. These areas face particularly high plastic leakage rates due to mismanaged waste and large coastal cities.

The Open Call Process & Funding will have two competitive open calls that will be launched to attract innovators and industry players. The total funding is €350,000, with up to €70,000 per region. Calls focus will be on:

- Deploying microplastic, plastic, and litter monitoring, elimination, and valorization schemes.
- Developing zero-waste supply chains to prevent plastics and microplastics.

The selection criteria and evaluation process for FSTP projects will be assessed based on relevance, impact, European dimension, and alignment with UPSTREAM principles. Transparency, fairness, and confidentiality will be upheld in the selection process. The contract process is standardized, ensuring compliance with the Horizon Europe Grant Agreement.

Selected projects must meet key EU compliance requirements, including ethics, security, and transparency. The UPSTREAM consortium will provide technical assistance and knowledge-sharing. Monitoring mechanisms will ensure projects stay aligned with expected results and performance goals.

The Key Expected Outcomes are:

- Scalable solutions to plastic pollution in European rivers.
- Creation of sustainable business models for waste valorisation.
- Stronger public-private partnerships and community engagement.

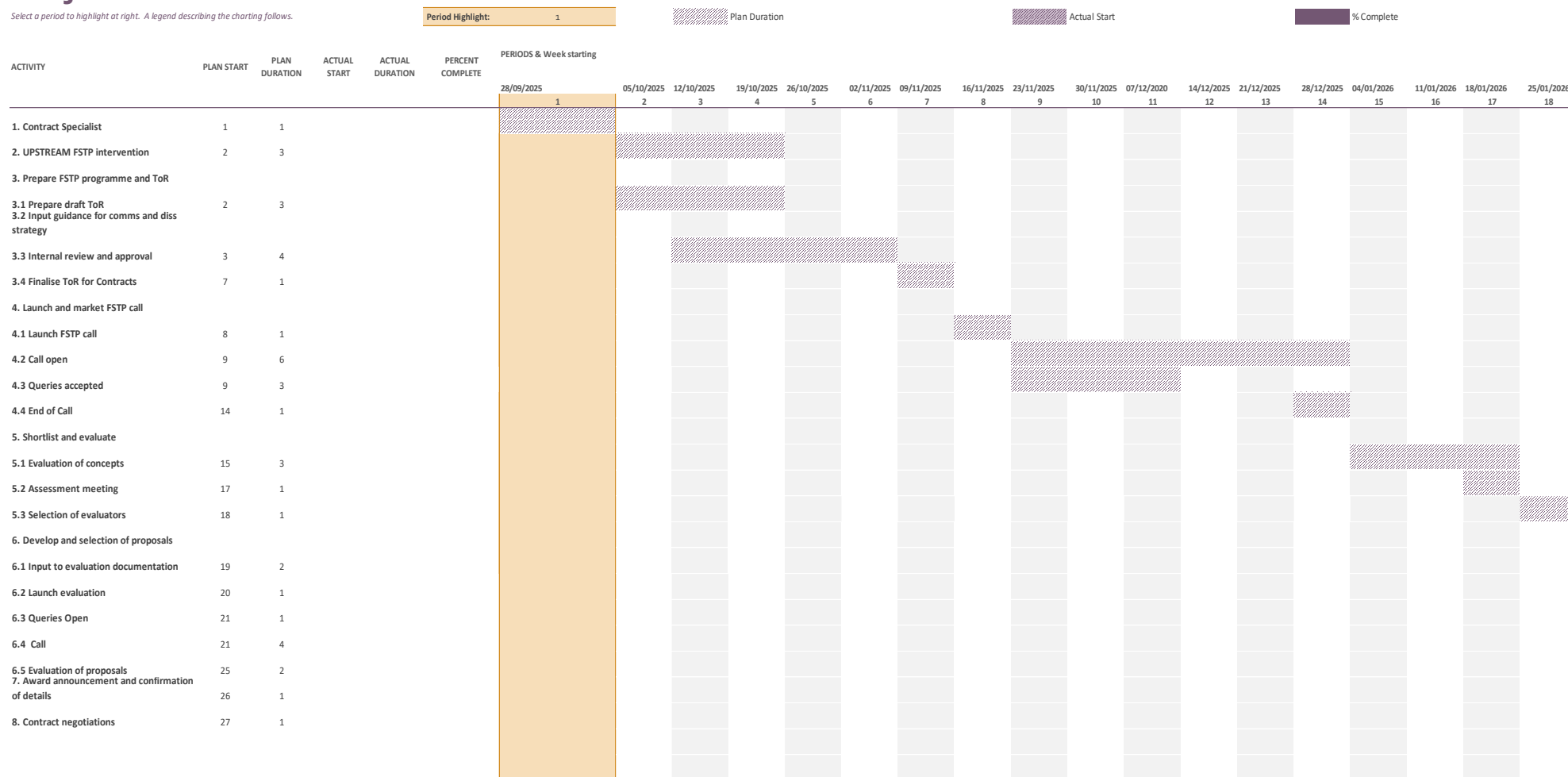
The UPSTREAM initiative provides a structured financial and technical framework to scale up innovative solutions for plastic-free rivers. Through the FSTP programme, eligible regions will receive support to implement and test these solutions, contributing to EU environmental sustainability goals.

5. Annexes

Table 3 – Estimated timeline of the FSTP competition

Project Planner

Select a period to highlight at right. A legend describing the charting follows.



Project Planner

Select a period to highlight at right. A legend describes the colors.

