

Call for Solutions– Open Call Details Portugal

Blue Shuttle Contextualization

The Blue Shuttle is an European Project (Ref. EAPA_0028/2022), co-financed by the Interreg Atlantic Area 2021-2027 Program, that emerges as a strategic initiative to accelerate the digitalization of the Blue Bioeconomy in the Atlantic Area. The project follows a Quadruple Helix (QH) approach, fostering collaboration between academia, industry, government, and society. Blue Shuttle is composed by a consortium with seven partner organizations from across the Atlantic Area: CEEI Bahia de Cádiz - Fundacion Bahía de Cádiz para el Desarrollo Economico (Spain); MTU - Munster Technological University (Ireland); CTAQUA - Fundación Centro Tecnológico de Acuicultura de Andalucía (Spain); UPTEC - Science and Tecnology Park of University of Porto (Portugal); PMBA - Pôle Mer Bretagne Atlantique (France); WestBIC - EU Business and Innovation Centre (Ireland); and CIIMAR - Interdisciplinary Centre of Marine and Environmental Research (Portugal).

Call for Solutions

Under the frame of the Blue Shuttle project, **UPTEC** is seeking a pioneering digital and technological solution to tackle the previously selected Portuguese challenge identified by [Aquaponics Iberia](#) regarding **Smart Solid Waste Integrated Management System (SWIMS): Driving the digital and green transformation in aquaponics waste and resource management**. This challenge was selected after a fair and transparent evaluation in the previous [open Call for Challenges](#), following an eligibility and evaluation requirements defined by the Blue Shuttle consortium.

A. What is the Challenge?

SWIMS is an innovative tecnologia designed to address critical challenges in aquaponics, particularly solid waste management, nutrient cycling, and water quality. Aquaponics systems, which combine fish farming and plant cultivation in a closed-loop environment, face inefficiencies in waste handling, impacting the productivity and health of both fish and plants. SWIMS solves these issues by automating waste management and nutrient recycling, utilizing digital technologies to create a sustainable, data-driven system that enhances the efficiency of aquaponics operations.

The present challenge focuses on implementing and demonstrating an automated version of SWIMS in aquaponics systems, integrating smart technologies such as digital sensors, automation, and AI-driven waste management. This initiative aims to improve resource efficiency, water quality, and productivity, while enhancing sustainability and scalability in the Blue Bioeconomy sector. The pilot project will showcase how technology can evolve aquaponics, making it more resilient and competitive, contributing to a circular economy in marine and freshwater environments.

B. What are we looking for?

UPTEC calls on **Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs)¹, Startups², and Technology and Innovation Centres** across the [European Atlantic Area regions](#) of Ireland, France, Spain and Portugal to present cutting-edge solutions that address this challenge.

Selected participants will engage in **12-month pilot projects**, with a **budget limited to 15 000 € (excluding VAT)**, collaborating with challenge owners and benefiting from mentorship provided by Blue Shuttle partners and experts in the field. The deadline for applications submission is until **23:59 CET of 30th of April 2025**.

Eligibility Criteria

- Applications are open exclusively to SMEs, Startups and/or Technology and Innovation centres registered in the [Atlantic Area](#) of Ireland, France, Spain and Portugal³.
- Applications must be submitted before 23:59 CET on 30th April 2025. Late submissions will not be considered.
- Applications must be submitted via the specified method outlined in the application procedure. Submissions made by other means will not be accepted.
- The solution proposal must include an action plan of no more than 12 months and a budget breakdown not exceeding €15 000 (excluding VAT). Proposals that exceed these limits will be excluded.
- Applications must fully comply with the application procedure.

¹ Please check if your company complies with the [European Commission Recommendation 2003/361/EC](#).

² Pre-established company, younger than ten years, with an innovative product and/or service and/or business model, that aims to scale up, i.e., grow the number of employees and/or turnover and/or markets in which they operate.

³ The Blue Shuttle project aims to develop projects that should lead to a solution to territorial challenge in the regions involved, according to the Interreg Atlantic Area Programme 2021-2027. The Interreg Atlantic Area Programme 2021-2017 Manual, page 33 on the section "Non-eligible expenditure according to Programme rules" clearly states that "Expenditure related to travel or activities outside the Programme cooperation area and outside the EU16 which have not been expressly included in the AF and accepted by the JS".

- Solution proposals that entail negative environmental risks will be discarded.
- In case of any conflict of interest arise as a result of economic interests, political or national affinities, family or emotional ties or any other relevant connection or shared interest with any of the Blue Shuttle partners or the organization promoting the challenge, the application will be excluded.

Application Criteria

Applicants must prepare a **Solution Proposal** containing the following information (mandatory):

- **Applicant Information**
 - Organisation legal name
 - Type of organisation: SME/Startup/ Technology and Innovation Centres
 - Registered Country and Region⁴
 - Website (if applicable)
 - Tax Number/Fiscal ID
- **Representative Information**
 - Name
 - Function
 - Email address
 - Phone contact
- **Team members:** Description of the team involved in the development of the solution.
- **State-of-the-art:** Explanation of the state-of-the-art digital technologies/methodologies to be used, the potential impact on the identified challenge in the environment and for the Blue Bioeconomy, evidence of effectiveness, and how the solution is transferable to other businesses in the sector.
- **Action Plan:** Detailed action plan, including:
 1. Milestones; and
 2. Precise timeline for the implementation of the proof of concept of their proposed solution (it should not exceed the duration of 12 months). This timeline should include the submission of the technical progress reports at M6 and M12.

⁴Please check the eligible European Atlantic Area regions of the Interreg Atlantic Area Program 2021-2027 here: <https://www.atlanticarea.eu/about-us/interreg-atlantic-area-2021-2027>.

Please be aware that the pilot projects must be concluded in August 2026 (at the latest).

- **Budget Breakdown:** Detailed description of the budget breakdown, covering all necessary costs (e.g., equipment, staff, travels) for the development of the solution, not exceeding €15 000 (excluding VAT).
- **Consent form:** Applicants must sign a Consent form, following the template in Annex I.

Applications must be submitted in Portuguese.

The deadline for applications submission is until **23:59 CET on 30th of April 2025**. An extension of the period may take place, in the event of the required number of applications and/or the desired profiles not being achieved. Any such extension will be publicly promoted in a timely manner.

All applications (including the solution proposal and signed consent form) must be sent in a single email and in PDF format to the following email address: projectos@uptec.up.pt. Submissions sent in multiple emails or by any other means will not be considered.

A. Evaluation Criteria

Once the eligibility requirements are met, the evaluation of the applications will be based on the following criteria, each carrying equal weight:

- **Team Composition and Expertise (25%):** Evaluation will focus on the qualifications, experience, and skills of the team members involved in the project, ensuring they have the necessary expertise to successfully develop and implement the proposed solution.
- **Technological Innovation and Impact (25%):** The solution should demonstrate the use of cutting-edge digital technologies, with a clear potential impact on the identified challenge and the Blue Bioeconomy. The solution should also be scalable and transferable to other businesses in the sector.
- **Action Plan and Implementation Feasibility (25%):** The action plan should be clear, realistic, and achievable within the 12-month timeframe. It should include defined milestones and deliverables at M6 and M12, ensuring proper project management and progress tracking.

- **Financial Feasibility and Budget Allocation (25%):** The budget breakdown must be clear and realistic, covering all necessary costs (e.g., equipment, staff, travel), while remaining within the €15 000 limit (excluding VAT). The budget should be appropriate for the successful execution of the solution.

In case of a tie, the subsequent rules apply:

- Tiebreaker 1: Where two or more applications have the same final score, priority will be given to the application with the highest score on criteria “Technological Innovation and Impact”.
- Tiebreaker 2: Where two or more applications have the same final score, and the same score for criteria “Technological Innovation and Impact”, priority will be given to the application with the highest score for on criteria “Action Plan and Implementation Feasibility”.

Evaluation of the proposal will be undertaken by the Portuguese partners of the Blue Shuttle Consortium (UPTEC and CIIMAR), as well as an external expert in the field.

Each application will be evaluated fairly and transparently. Any information marked as confidential at the time of submission will be kept private, and the evaluation process will follow the highest ethical standards.

B. Terms and Conditions

Only one solution provider per challenge will proceed to pilot projects, and their execution must be feasible for implementation within a maximum **timeframe of 12 months** and with a **budget limited to 15 000 € (excluding VAT)**. The pilot projects should be completed by **August 2026, at the latest**.

The solution provider will retain sole ownership of the intellectual property developed during the pilot project. However, the organization presenting the challenge may benefit from the proof of concept in the future.

i. Technical Progress reports:

During the execution of the pilot project, the selected solution provider must deliver two technical progress reports during the pilot project:

1. Intermediate report at the end of month 6 (M6);

2. Final report at the end month 12 (M12) of the pilot projects.

These technical progress reports must describe in detail the execution of the pilot project action plan, including progress made against the defined milestones and timeline, an analysis of pending tasks, any modifications to the team or planning, and other relevant updates.

ii. Payment:

The budget requested for the execution of the pilot project will be given in three payment periods, by bank transfer:

1. 40% after signing all legally required documents
2. 30% after delivery and successful acceptance of the intermediate report
3. 30% at the end of the project with the submission of the final report and after presenting evidence of the implementation of the pilot

Failure to provide the required information on time, submission of incomplete documentation, or submission of complete but non-compliant documentation that does not meet the specifications set in the action plan initially defined in the application form may result in payment suspension and project termination, regardless of the project's development stage. The selected participant will not be entitled to request further budget than the one initially established.

iii. Other supports and requirements:

- Applicants must agree in processing their personal and entity data in accordance with UPTEC's Data Protection Policy (GDPR)⁵, and to share their data with the Blue Shuttle consortium and Interreg Atlantic Area Programme Authorities, if necessary.
- During the execution of the Pilot Project, the selected solution provider must cooperate with the organization promoting the challenge - [Aquaponics Iberia](#) (selected in the previous Call for Challenges), and to comply to all terms and conditions stipulated in this call. Legal action may be taken in cases of non-compliance or bad faith during the pilot project in accordance with the Portuguese Law.
- The solution providers must supply any information requested to assist the Blue Shuttle consortium in verifying the proper management of the agreed pilot project plan. This information may be shared with the Interreg Atlantic Area Programme Authorities.

⁵ <https://uptec.up.pt/politica-de-privacidade-de-dados/>

- The selected solution provider must commit to participate in the Blue Shuttle Final Event/Demo Day, scheduled for the 2nd semester of 2026 in Cádiz (Spain), to present a pitch about the solution implemented in the Pilot Project.
- The selected solution provider must commit to participate in the mentoring sessions to prepare for this pitch presentation.

C. Communication of Results

The applicants should be notified with the application results until 30th of May 2025 by email or phone contact on behalf of UPTEC.

D. Important dates

- Opening date for submission of solution proposals: 28th February 2025
- Deadline for submission of solution proposals: 30th April 2025
- Notification of the selected solutions: 30th May 2025
- Conclusion of the Pilot Projects: August 2026 (the latest)

Annexes

Annex I – Consent Form

I, [Name of Representative], acting as the representative of [Name of the Organization], hereby acknowledge that I have read and fully understand the terms and conditions of the Blue Shuttle Call for Solutions. I agree to comply with these terms to the best of my ability.

I consent to the processing of my personal and organizational data in accordance with UPTEC's Data Protection Policy (GDPR) and grant permission for my data to be shared, as necessary, with the Blue Shuttle consortium and the Interreg Atlantic Area Programme Authorities.

In the event of selection, I agree to fully participate in the Portuguese Pilot Project in collaboration with Aquaponics Iberia, the designated challenge owner. I commit to collaborate with UPTEC in all necessary legal procedures and providing any required information to assist the Blue Shuttle consortium in ensuring the proper management and execution of the pilot project as outlined in the agreed plan.

Furthermore, I commit to attending the Blue Shuttle Final Event/Demo Day, scheduled for 2026 in Cadiz, Spain, to present a pitch on the solution implemented during the Pilot Project. Additionally, I agree to actively participate in mentoring sessions to prepare for this pitch presentation.

I understand that failure to submit required technical progress report on time, submission of incomplete documentation, or provision of non-compliant documentation that does not meet the specifications outlined in the action plan, may result in the suspension of payments and termination of the project, regardless of its current stage.

Signature: _____

Date: _____