

New Energy Solutions Optimised for Islands



EUROPEAN ISLANDS FACILITY

D3.1: Definition of the Eligibility Pre-Requisites



WP3, T3.1

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List of Acronyms

DSO	Distribution System Operator
EC	European Commission
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EIB	European Investment Bank
EPC	Engineering, Procurement and Construction
EU	European Union
GHG	GreenHouse Gas
H&C	Heating and Cooling
H2020	Horizon 2020
JRC	Joint Research Center
RES	Renewable Energy Sources



1 Introduction

The EU Island Facility NESOI (New Energy Solutions Optimised for Islands) is a four-year Horizon 2020 project funded under call topic LC-SC3-ES8-2019 (European Islands Facility -Unlock financing for energy transitions and supporting islands to develop investment concepts). It began on 1 October 2019 and will finish on 30 September 2023 and is made up of a multi-disciplinary consortium consisting of 10 partners from seven EU member states. It has a total budget of €10 million of which approximately €3 million is dedicated to a cascade funding mechanism to provide direct financial support to EU Islands

Coupled to consortium capacity building activities, the facility aims to mobilise more than €100 million of investment in sustainable energy projects to an audience of 2,400 inhabited EU islands by 2023, giving the opportunity to test innovative energy technologies and approaches in a cost-competitive way and leading to an expected 440 GWh/year in energy savings.

T3.1 of NESOI project aims at defining the eligibility criteria upon which a project could apply to NESOI platform for technical and financial assistance.

NESOI aims to promote island development and decarbonisation at different stages of their energy transition. According to pre-defined requisites they will have the opportunity to search for different type of support and expert assistance provided by the NESOI platform and consortium.

In T3.1 the possible paths to receive support from the NESOI project are defined through the settings of different eligibility pre-requisites (financial, technical, environmental, social, etc.) according to the development stage and the corresponding support required.

This task is preliminary and complementary to T3.3 and T3.4 where the selection criteria will be defined, and the calls actually organised.

1.1 Executive Summary

The aim of NESOI D3.1 - “Definition of the Eligibility Pre-Requisites” is to describe pre-requisites that projects and their promoters must meet to be eligible for NESOI support.

The intention of NESOI Consortium in the elaboration of this Deliverable was to define objective and transparent eligibility criteria, keeping their number at the minimum that ensures quality of the proposals and compliance with objectives of EU targets for islands’ decarbonization.

The eligibility requisites presented in the document have been identified through a discussion among NESOI Consortium members and thanks to a constant dialogue with the European Commission, and cover the following aspects:

- Support Thresholds;
- Location;
- Beneficiaries;
- Type of Projects;
- Timing of Projects;
- Impact;
- Compliance with EU Norms;



- Legitimacy/Honourability;
- Language;
- Submission System;
- Absence of Conflict of Interest.

In addition to the requisites for eligibility to NESOI Platform for Technical and Financial Assistance, the last section of the Deliverable, the eligibility criteria for the NESOI Erasmus Programme, whose aim is to stimulate staff exchange between islands' staff members, are also presented.



2 Methodology

The aim of the present document is to describe the pre-requisites that submitted projects and their promoters must meet in order to be eligible for NESOI support.

These eligibility criteria have been identified through a discussion among NESOI Consortium members and thanks to a constant dialogue with the European Commission.

The overall aim of NESOI Consortium in the definition of objective and transparent eligibility criteria is to keep the number of pre-requisites at the minimum that ensures quality of the proposals and compliance with objectives of EU targets regarding decarbonization of islands.

Although this approach is expected to increase the workload for the projects' selection committee, its adoption is aimed at encouraging the application by many projects, thus enhancing the opportunity of selecting very high-quality projects in the subsequent evaluation and selection phase.

It is highlighted that all the eligibility criteria are designed in a way that allows the use of a yes/no checklist for the eligibility check, and in any case all the quantitative evaluations except for the comparison with a given threshold are left to the evaluation/selection phase.

The eligibility criteria are presented in the following sections, and specifically in Section 3 for NESOI platform for technical and financial assistance and Section 4 for the NESOI Erasmus Programme that will finance staff exchanges between islands' local authorities.



3 Eligibility Criteria for NESOI Platform for Technical and Financial Assistance

The following paragraphs focus on the presentation of the eligibility criteria, grouped into the following categories:

- Support Thresholds;
- Location;
- Beneficiaries;
- Type of Projects;
- Timing of Projects;
- Impact;
- Compliance with EU Norms;
- Legitimacy/Honourability;
- Language
- Submission System;
- Absence of Conflict of Interest.

3.1 Support Thresholds

As a general rule, each project can receive NESOI support up to a maximum threshold of 60,000 € in form of grant and 60,000 € in form of technical and financial assistance from NESOI partners (hereafter referred as *NESOI Support*)¹.

Each beneficiary can receive NESOI support up to a maximum threshold of 60,000 € in form of grant and 60,000 € in form of technical and financial assistance from NESOI partners².

This means that there is no limit to the number of projects promoted by the same legal entity that can apply for NESOI support, both in the same call and in different calls, but independently from the number of promoted projects, the maximum support that can be provided by NESOI to a beneficiary is fixed.

For projects promoted by a consortium of legal entities, the same threshold applies at project level, i.e. no project can receive NESOI support with a total value higher than the above-mentioned threshold, independently from the number of partners involved.

The objective of NESOI is to support a wide number of projects and islands and provide critical support to them, while it is out of the scope of the project to fully finance projects with the available resources. Therefore, such limit has been defined to balance among the number of projects that can be supported by NESOI and the possibility to provide effective support. In order to meet the project objectives and avoid jeopardizing the support provided, NESOI expects that projects requiring a minimum

¹ The eligibility criteria outlined in the present Deliverable are proposed to be applied both to the first and the second round of NESOI calls; however, a potential revision of the Deliverable may be carried out between the two rounds of calls and specific criteria may therefore undergo changes in the second round based on the outcomes of the first one.

² In line with Art. 15.1 of the NESOI Grant Agreement: “The maximum amount may not exceed EUR 60 000 for each third party, unless it is necessary to achieve the objectives of the action as described in Annex 1”.



support of 50,000 € (as a combination of cascade funding and technical assistance) and being characterized by an indicative leverage¹ of 20x (calculated as per EIB definition in ELENA Facility³) would allow addressing appropriately project objectives⁴. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of proposals foreseeing a different requested contribution or characterized by a different leverage. For eligibility check purposes, the mobilized investment considered for leverage calculation purposes is as indicated and justified by the project promoter in the application submitted. NESOI by its nature is open to support a wide range of projects.

With this respect, three general categories of projects are preliminarily identified:

1. Entry level

No previous significant exhaustive planning carried out by beneficiary neither on the overall energy transition strategy of the island nor on single or aggregated projects. Examples of support requested might include transition plans, mobility plans, load balancing plans, pre-feasibility studies, etc.

2. Conceptual design level

Beneficiary has identified single or aggregated projects of interest for the island, but no previous significant activities have been carried out in terms of project information gathering, project concept definition, verification of sustainability profiles and identification of optimal implementation options.

Examples of support requested might include energy audits, grid audits, feasibility studies (e.g.: technical, financial, governance and procedural options), etc.

3. Deployment level

Beneficiary has identified single or aggregated actionable projects, verified their feasibility and intends to implement it/them.

Examples of support requested might include detailed engineering specification or design, tendering procedures, fund raising/matching, etc.

Given the different nature and maturity level of these three categories of projects, this entails a need to differentiate the definition of the “mobilized investment”, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Definition of Mobilized Investment Depending on Project Development Stage

Project development stage	Definition of “mobilized”
Entry level	Economic and impact value of the investments foreseen by the project promoter and defined in the analysis and studies delivered.
Conceptual design level	Economic and impact value of the project foreseen by the project promoter and defined in the analysis and studies delivered.
Deployment level	Economic and impact value of the project as reported in the tender documents or contracts signed.

³ “expected leverage factor: cost of the Investment divided by the amount of [NESOI] contribution)” from https://www.eib.org/attachments/documents/elena_faq_en.pdf

⁴ i.e. finalizing investments and fostering energy transition and decarbonization of islands. Such aspects will be specifically addressed in the evaluation phase while the choice here has been to avoid strict eligibility requirements that may prevent the application of high-quality and relevant projects.



3.2 Location

In order to be eligible for NESOI support, projects must be located:

- on an island belonging to one of the Member States (MS) of the European Union (EU) and United Kingdom (UK), including their outermost regions⁵ but excluding Overseas Countries and Territories (OCT) which belong to a Member State but do not form part of the EU territory⁶;
- on an island with maximum area of 30,000 km², in order to have as eligible all islands except for large nation-scale ones (i.e.: Ireland and Great Britain); it is highlighted that islands belonging to these nation-scale islands are, on the other hand, eligible.

This criterion applies to the actual location where the project will be realized; this means that the project promoter, i.e. the beneficiary (see paragraph 3.3) of the support, may also be based elsewhere (on the mainland or on another island) but the project should be deployed on an island, which have to be clearly identified in the proposal by the promoter.

Offshore facilities are eligible provided that their onshore connection (e.g.: connection to the electricity grid) is located on an eligible island.

Projects related to ferries are eligible provided that the boat operates among eligible islands or between an eligible island and the mainland.

There is no limit to the number of projects per island that can apply for NESOI support. However, it is highlighted that each project can receive NESOI support only up to the defined limit amount, as defined in paragraph 3.1. In parallel, each project will be evaluated independently: therefore, it is not advisable to apply to NESOI with many small projects being part of a bigger one.

3.3 Beneficiaries

All the public and private legal entities established in the Member States of the European Union, including their Outermost Regions, are eligible.

All kinds of legal entity established in Overseas Countries and Territories linked to the Member States, as well as out of the EU are excluded.

According to this criterion, all the public and private entities established in the MS and in the Outermost Regions can apply to the Facility. In addition, also public companies, controlled or participated by public entities, are eligible.

It is especially highlighted that to be eligible, private companies must have a support letter from a relevant public authority and must be:

- operating own assets on an eligible EU island;
- operating assets of public interest on an eligible EU island with concession from the relevant public authority for the realization of the intervention;
- promoting a project whose impacts are achieved on an eligible EU island.

⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/themes/outermost-regions/

⁶ <https://trade.ec.europa.eu/tradehelp/overseas-countries-and-territories>



Energy communities and cooperatives are eligible, provided that:

- in case they are requesting support, their legal status should be already defined before the signature of the sub-grant;
- in case NESOI support is requested to establish an energy community, the project promoter (i.e.: the beneficiary) should be the relevant local authority and not citizens.

Projects could be promoted either by single entities or by consortia of legal entities; in the latter case, one of the partners must be indicated as coordinator of the consortium and will receive funding also on behalf of other partners.

As anticipated in the previous paragraph, each project and beneficiary can receive NESOI support only up to the defined limit amount, as defined in paragraph 3.1, independently from the number of partners of the consortium.

Public entities, private companies, citizens, PPPs, etc. have been identified as key actors in the energy transition, therefore NESOI aims at providing support regardless the legal status of the beneficiary, provided that it has the capability to operate on the assets identified in its proposals. The necessity of providing a support letter in case of private entities promoting a project not along with the relevant public authority has been identified to ensure the endorsement of the local authority for the identified project.

3.4 Type of Projects

All kinds of energy transition-related projects are eligible for NESOI support.

This criterion includes, but it is not limited to, the following:

- Production of energy from renewable sources;
- Energy efficiency interventions on assets (buildings, lighting systems, etc.);
- Realization/Improvement of energy storage systems;
- Improvement of the existing electricity grid;
- Realization/improvement of District Heating and Cooling networks;
- Energy-related waste and water management actions;
- Implementation of sustainable mobility solutions;
- Improvement of energy monitoring and management;
- Energy auditing and analysis, energy planning.

Although projects belonging to any of the above-listed categories, or more in general to the energy transition field, are eligible for NESOI support, it is highlighted that NESOI will give priority to the support of projects characterized by:

- large impact in terms of energy savings, GHG emissions, etc.;
- high potential for replicability in other islands;
- high leverage in terms of investment mobilized with the received support.

The approach adopted by NESOI to prioritize such projects and more in general to select projects to be supported will be presented in D3.3, titled “Grid of selection criteria for the evaluation of projects”.



3.5 Timing of Projects

As concerns timing, investments for projects receiving NESOI support must be mobilized by the end of NESOI project, i.e. September 2023.

NESOI eligibility criteria are different according to the complexity of the project and to its development status at the application stage:

- for projects requiring a permitting/authorization, this should already be obtained at the moment of application;
- for any kind of project, the launch of the tender (where needed) or the signature of the EPC contract or equivalent shall take place after the award of NESOI grant;
- for actionable projects promoted by public authorities, the launch of the tender shall take place after 6 months after the end of the support provided by NESOI, and in any case by the end of NESOI project;
- for actionable projects promoted by private entities, the signature of the EPC contract or equivalent shall take place after 6 months after the end of the support provided by NESOI, and in any case by the end of NESOI project;
- for high-level planning activities, the public promoter shall officially commit to the identified actions through an official deliberation and/or the identification/obtainment of financial resources for their implementation in the period 2021-2030.

The aim of these criteria is to support projects that can be effectively implemented in a reasonable time-span, can achieve the expected impacts and showcase replication potential and best practices to encourage energy transition on additional EU islands.

3.6 Impact

As a general rule, in order to be eligible for NESOI support, projects must have a minimum “size” to have an impact on the energy systems of the island or island clusters on which they are located.

In order to be eligible for NESOI support, projects need to achieve a positive impact in at least two of fields relevant to the areas of Energy Transition (primary energy savings, reduction of GHG emissions, improvement of local environmental conditions, mitigation of energy poverty). A quantitative estimation of the impacts must be presented in the application stage.

The impact fields of interest are listed below:

- Reduction of Primary Energy Consumption determined according to calculation methods acceptable for compliance with art. 7 of the Energy Efficiency Directive⁷ or other equivalent suitable EU or international standard;
- Reduction of GHG Emissions determined according to GHG Protocol calculation methods⁸ or other equivalent suitable EU or international standard;

⁷

<https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/bitstream/JRC99698/report%20on%20eed%20art%207%20-%20publishable.pdf>

⁸ <https://ghgprotocol.org/sites/default/files/standards/ghg-protocol-revised.pdf>



- Improvement of Local Environmental Conditions determined according to methodologies accepted for Environmental Impact Assessments⁹ or other equivalent suitable EU or international standard;
- Mitigation of Energy Poverty determined according to a suitable indicator among those proposed at EU level¹⁰.

Project promoters are requested to declare the presence of benefits in the above-listed fields and to provide a quantitative estimation of those impacts. However, it is highlighted that quantitative aspects are not evaluated in the eligibility check phase but only in the subsequent evaluation phase.

Similarly, the presence of socio-economic benefits, either direct or indirect, is a plus and will be considered among the evaluation criteria but not in the eligibility check.

Exceptions to this general rule apply for infrastructural projects (and more in general to “enabling technologies” according to the EC definition¹¹) and for analyses and studies, i.e. support in energy planning, for which impact exists but is not directly correlated to the technical assistance.

For eligibility check purposes, the project impact is as indicated and justified by the project promoter in the application submitted.

3.7 Compliance with EU Norms

In order to be eligible for NESOI support, project promoters are requested to attach a Declaration of Honour about the compliance with EU Norms and Regulations.

These Norms and Regulations include:

- EU Environmental principles (e.g.: Art. 191-193 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union¹²);
- EU Procurement norms (e.g.: Directive 2014/25/EU or 2004/17/EC coordinating the procurement procedures of entities operating in the water, energy, transport and postal services sectors¹³ and Directive 2014/24/EU or 2004/18/EC on the coordination of procedures for the award of public works contracts, public supply contracts and public service contracts¹⁴);
- EU State Aid legislation (e.g.: Art. 107 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union¹⁵);
- Directive 2011/92/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment (the 'EIA Directive');
- Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (Habitats Directive); assessment of effects on Natura 2000 sites;

⁹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:32011L0092>

¹⁰ <https://ec.europa.eu/energy/sites/ener/files/documents/Selecting%20Indicators%20to%20Measure%20Energy%20Poverty.pdf>

¹¹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2009:0512:FIN:EN:PDF>

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¹³ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A32004L0017>

¹⁴ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A32004L0018>

¹⁵ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A12012E%2FTXT>



- Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy (Water Framework Directive);
- principles and standards of the EIB Environmental and Social Standards¹⁶;
- all applicable national and EU-level legislation on environmental, social and health & safety aspects.

By participating to the NESOI call, the applicant accepts - if awarded of NESOI support - to be potentially subject of audits and control activities by the European Commission.

3.8 Legitimacy/Honourability

In order to be eligible for NESOI support, project promoters are requested to attach a Declaration of Honour about the absence of situations of exclusion as listed in Article 136(1) of the EU Financial Regulation¹⁷.

A non-exhaustive list of such situations includes:

- Bankruptcy;
- Criminal offences;
- Subject to insolvency or winding up procedures;
- Breach of obligations relating to the payment of taxes or social security contributions;
- Violating intellectual property rights;
- Subject of a final judgement as guilty of fraud, corruption, etc.

3.9 Language

English is the official language for NESOI open calls.

Submissions written in any other language will not be evaluated.

The board evaluating the applications for NESOI support will be composed by evaluators from different EU countries, therefore the proposal needs to be understandable by all of them.

3.10 Submission System

Only proposals submitted through the NESOI Facilitating Platform within the Call duration limits will be accepted. Proposals submitted by any other means will not be evaluated.

Only the documentation included in the application will be considered by evaluators. The information provided should be actual, true and complete and should allow the assessment of the proposal.

¹⁶ https://www.eib.org/attachments/strategies/environmental_and_social_practices_handbook_en.pdf

¹⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/budget/library/biblio/publications/2018/financialregulation_en.pdf



3.11 Absence of Conflict of Interest

Applicants shall not have any actual or/and potential conflict of interest with the NESOI selection process and during the whole duration of the project.

They will therefore be asked to sign a further Declaration of Honour for “absence of conflict of interest”. If the absence cannot be met and a conflict of interest is present, this must be declared so that NESOI consortium can try to adjust the composition of the proposals’ evaluation committee accordingly.



4 Eligibility Criteria for NESOI Erasmus Programme

The present Section focuses on the eligibility criteria for the participants to the NESOI Erasmus Programme, whose aim is to stimulate staff exchange between islands' staff members. Both "guests" and "hosts" have to apply to the Programme.

The following eligibility conditions apply:

- only technical personnel of the public sector (or freelancers having an ongoing contract for technical support to a public authority) is eligible as "guest" and only public entities are eligible as "host"; technical staff from publicly-owned power plants and DSOs are considered as eligible, too;
- both the "guest" and the "host" must be based on an EU island (same criteria as for location of projects apply, as outlined in Section 3.1); the "guest" and the "host" may come from islands of the same Member State;
- the "guest" must:
 - be a staff member of the office working on energy-related topics,
 - be able to speak English,
 - have the rights and possibility to travel;
- the "host" must:
 - have an office or at least a person working on energy transition topic,
 - identify a representative person being a technician working on energy-related topics, able to speak English, who acts as main contact person for the "guest" and for NESOI.



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