

Unlocking The Full Potential Of Copernicus Data And Infrastructure To Improve Meltwater Monitoring In The Andes

Work Package WP12

Market Opportunities

Cascade Founding: Open Call for Small Pilot Projects

Funding Instrument:	Research and Innovation Actions
Call:	HORIZON-EUSPA-2023-SPACE
Call Topic:	HORIZON-EUSPA-2023-SPACE-01-46
Project Start:	24 October 2024
Project Duration:	36 months

Dissemination Level		
PU	Public, fully open	✓
SEN	Sensitive, limited under the conditions of the Grant Agreement	



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Research and Innovation Actions programme under Grant Agreement 101180133 and from the Swiss State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI).

Call Summary

Call element	Requirement
Call identifier	SNOWCOP CF
Call status	Draft (not open for applications)
Opening date	xx November
Submission deadline	1) 21 December 2026 (17:00 Brussels time) 2) 18 January 2027 (17:00 Brussels time) 3) 15 February 2027 (17:00 Brussels time)
Total call budget	EUR 39 000
Number of grants	Four pilot projects
Geographical allocation	EU Member States and Chile or Argentina
Funding per pilot	Fixed lump sum of EUR 9 750
Maximum pilot duration	8 months and no later than 31 August 2027
Eligible applicants	SMEs, public authorities and associations of water managers
Contracting entity	Eurac Research will sign the sub-grant agreements and make payments.
Submission route	email to earth.observation@eurac.edu
Contact	earth.observation@eurac.edu
Website	www.snowcop.eu/open-call

1 Introduction

SNOWCOP is a Horizon Europe research and innovation action funded under Grant Agreement 101180133. The project develops high-resolution information on Snow Water Equivalent (SWE) and ice melt in the extra-tropical Andes by integrating Copernicus observations with physically based and/or conceptual models. It also promotes the use of the Copernicus Data Space Ecosystem as processing infrastructure and EGNSS technology for snow stations able to measure SWE and liquid water content.

This open call provides Financial Support to Third Parties for four pilot projects that build upon and exploit SNOWCOP findings and outputs. The pilots are intended to turn project results into practical applications, services or decision-support solutions for public authorities, companies and water-management organisations. They should also strengthen dialogue among regional and local actors concerned with meltwater management in Europe and South America.

2 Objectives of the call

A funded pilot must make direct and identifiable use of one or more SNOWCOP results. It should pursue one or more of the following objectives.

- Demonstrate how SNOWCOP data, methods or services can support an operational decision or user need.
- Integrate SNOWCOP outputs into an existing or new downstream application.
- Test the usefulness of SNOWCOP results with public agencies, water managers, companies or other end users.
- Develop a credible pathway for continued use, replication, investment or market uptake after the pilot.
- Improve regional and local understanding of meltwater conditions and management options.

3 Scope and eligible activities

Proposals must describe the SNOWCOP result or resource to be used, the intended users and the practical output to be delivered. Eligible pilots may address the following activity types.

- **Hydrology:** Use of SNOWCOP results to improve basin-scale assessments of water storage and availability by integrating snow and ice information with data on precipitation, evapotranspiration, streamflow and groundwater.
- **Hydrology and hydropower** Use of SNOWCOP results to improve river-discharge estimation, water-availability assessment, reservoir operation or hydropower planning.
- **Agriculture and water allocation** Integration of SNOWCOP data into precision-agriculture, irrigation or water-allocation systems to improve resource management.
- **Climate and meteorological analysis** Incorporation of SNOWCOP findings into climate or meteorological analyses that improve understanding of regional snow, ice, meltwater

or drought dynamics.

- **Visualisation and decision support** Development of a tailored web interface or decision-support component through which a public agency or another eligible user can examine SNOWCOP results and derived indicators such as snow-drought indices or historical analyses.
- **Other operational applications** Development, adaptation or demonstration of another application that directly exploits identifiable SNOWCOP outputs and contributes to meltwater or water-resource management.

3.1 Activities outside the scope

The following activities cannot receive funding.

- Activities that do not make direct use of an identifiable SNOWCOP result or output.
- Work that corresponds to an existing SNOWCOP consortium task or constitutes procurement for the consortium.
- General research, communication or routine operating activities without a defined pilot output and user pathway.
- Activities that have already been completed before the sub-grant agreement enters into force.
- Activities receiving other European Union funding for the same work or costs.
- Financial support passed onward to another recipient.
- Activities that breach applicable law, ethical principles, sanctions or European Union restrictive measures.

4 Available budget

The total budget available under this call is EUR 39 000. No more than four pilot projects will be financed across all three cut-offs combined; these limits do not apply separately to each cut-off.

Funding is allocated on a **first-come, first-served basis across successive cut-off rounds**: proposals meeting the eligibility and quality requirements in an earlier round have priority over proposals submitted for a later round. No budget or pilot places are reserved for later cut-offs. Within each round, proposals are ranked by quality in accordance with section 9.5.

The call will close early if all four pilot places have been allocated or the available budget has been fully committed. Any remaining cut-offs will then not take place. The closure will be announced on the call webpage and through the same channels used to publish the call, and applicants whose submissions have not yet been assessed will be informed that no further evaluation round will take place. Further applications will not be accepted after the announced closure.

5 Funding form and payment

The recommended funding amount is a fixed lump sum of EUR 9 750 for each selected pilot. Applicants are not required to submit a detailed budget, but they must explain why the requested support is proportionate to the proposed activities, duration and outputs.

Subject to the sub-grant agreement, payment will be made in two installments.

- An advance payment of 50 percent, corresponding to EUR 4 875 for a full grant, after both parties sign the sub-grant agreement.
- A balance payment of 50 percent, corresponding to EUR 4 875 for a full grant, after SNOWCOP accepts the final report and verifies satisfactory completion of the agreed activities and outputs.

The final payment is linked to completion of the agreed work, not to reimbursement of individual invoices. The recipient remains responsible for complying with applicable accounting, tax and legal obligations. Payments will be made in euros to the bank account stated in the sub-grant agreement.

6 Pilot duration

A pilot may last no more than 10 months. The exact starting and ending dates will be stated in the sub-grant agreement. All funded activities must take place during the eligible period stated in that agreement and must finish no later than 31 August 2027, unless EUSPA approves a different timetable. Selection at a later cut-off does not extend this completion date; applicants must plan a pilot that fits within the remaining eligible period.

7 Eligible applicants

An applicant is eligible only if it satisfies all of the following conditions.

- It is a legal entity established in an EU Member State, Chile or Argentina.
- It is an SME, a public authority at local, regional or national level, or a legally established association of water managers.
- It submits the proposal as a single applicant. Consortia and joint applications are not eligible.
- It submits no more than two distinct pilot proposals across all three cut-offs combined. Revised versions of the same pilot proposal do not count as additional distinct proposals.
- It is not a beneficiary of the SNOWCOP Grant Agreement.
- It is not subject to an exclusion situation, European Union restrictive measure or conflict that prevents award of the grant.
- It has the operational and financial capacity needed to complete the pilot.

For this call, an SME must meet the staff and financial thresholds set out in European Commission Recommendation 2003/361/EC and must provide the requested self-declaration. Public

authorities and associations of water managers may be asked to provide evidence of their legal status and place of establishment.

8 Submission

Applications must be submitted in English using the official application form available on the call webpage at https://snowcop.eu/open-call. The completed application must be sent as a PDF attachment to earth.observation@eurac.edu.

Use the email subject `SNOWCOP Open Call - Application - [Organisation name]` and identify the organisation, pilot title, contact person and version in the message. The receipt time recorded by the receiving institutional email system determines whether a submission meets a cut-off. Sending a message before the cut-off is not sufficient if it is received afterwards. Applicants should retain their sent message and any receipt confirmation. A receipt confirmation does not establish eligibility or selection for funding.

8.1 Submission deadlines: multiple cut-offs

The multiple-cut-off mechanism gives applicants an opportunity to improve and resubmit an unsuccessful proposal following evaluation feedback, while also allowing new applications at a later cut-off. Later cut-offs are available only while pilot places and funding remain. Applicants are therefore encouraged to submit at the earliest cut-off for which they can prepare a complete proposal meeting the call requirements.

The call has three scheduled submission cut-offs, each at **17:00 Brussels time**:

1. **21 December 2026** at 17:00 Brussels time.
2. **18 January 2027** at 17:00 Brussels time.
3. **15 February 2027** at 17:00 Brussels time.

Applications received by a cut-off will be assessed in the corresponding evaluation round. Applications received after one cut-off will be considered at the next scheduled cut-off, provided that the call remains open and pilot places and funding are still available. The first-come, first-served mechanism gives priority to earlier cut-off rounds; the time of receipt within a round does not change the quality ranking. Applications received after the final cut-off of 15 February 2027 at 17:00 Brussels time, or after an announced early closure, will be rejected. Incomplete or improperly submitted applications will also be rejected.

8.2 Application content and page limit

A complete submission consists of the completed application form, including the technical proposal and a concise cost justification, together with any administrative declarations required by the official form. A detailed itemised budget is not required.

The technical proposal must contain the following five clearly identified sections:

1. **Understanding of SNOWCOP.** Identify the relevant SNOWCOP objectives, datasets, methods or services and explain how the pilot will use them to address a specific user need. State any required access to SNOWCOP resources.

2. **Excellence.** Describe the proposed solution, its objectives, technical approach and added value. Explain why the approach is appropriate, what it improves compared with current practice, and how the results will be demonstrated or validated.
3. **Contribution to SNOWCOP impact.** Identify the intended users and benefits, explain how users will be involved, and describe the potential for uptake, continued use or replication after the pilot. Include concise, verifiable indicators of success.
4. **Implementation capacity.** Present a proportionate work plan, timetable, responsibilities, milestones, outputs, resources and main risks. Explain how the pilot can finish within the eligible period and justify why the requested support is proportionate to the planned work and outputs.
5. **Team description.** Briefly describe the key people, their roles, relevant expertise and how their combined experience enables delivery of the pilot.

The technical proposal must not exceed five A4 pages in total. This limit includes all five sections, the cost justification, figures, tables and references. Administrative identification fields and required signed declarations are excluded, provided that they contain no additional technical content. Separate CVs or technical annexes are not required and will not be evaluated. Pages beyond the five-page limit will not be evaluated.

Use a font size of at least 11 points and margins of at least 2 cm. The following allocation is indicative only; applicants may redistribute space within the five-page limit:

Section	Indicative pages
Understanding of SNOWCOP	0.5
Excellence	1.5
Contribution to SNOWCOP impact	1.0
Implementation capacity, including cost justification	1.5
Team description	0.5
Total	**5.0**

The team description supports the assessment of Implementation capacity. It is not a separate fifth scoring criterion; the quality assessment retains the four criteria and maximum score of 20 points specified below.

8.3 Replacements and later submissions

An applicant may replace a version before the applicable cut-off by clearly withdrawing the earlier version in the replacement email and identifying the pilot concerned. Only the latest complete replacement received by that cut-off will be assessed. Different versions of the same pilot are not separate proposals. An applicant may submit up to two distinct pilot proposals across the call, as specified in section 7.

Applicants whose proposals are unsuccessful may use the evaluation feedback to improve their proposals and resubmit at a later scheduled cut-off, provided that the call remains open and pilot places and funding remain. This opportunity for revision and resubmission is a principal purpose of the multiple-cut-off mechanism.

Applications are not automatically carried forward. A revised proposal must be submitted again in full, clearly identified as a resubmission, and will be assessed afresh against the same eli-

gibility and quality requirements. It is considered in the round in which the revised proposal is received and does not retain priority from its earlier submission. A proposal still under evaluation may not be submitted again, and a pilot already selected for funding may not be resubmitted.

9 Evaluation and selection

Evaluation is organised after each scheduled cut-off stated in section 8.1, provided that the call remains open and pilot places and funding remain. The rounds are processed in chronological order, giving priority for funding to eligible proposals meeting the quality requirements in earlier rounds. Each round consists of an eligibility check followed by a quality assessment. Only eligible applications proceed to the quality assessment. The same criteria, thresholds and procedures apply to every round. Applications within a round are assessed together and ranked by quality.

9.1 Eligibility check

The eligibility check will verify compliance with the conditions in section 7, receipt by the applicable cut-off, use of the official form, completeness of the application and compliance with the proposal-number and version rules. Only the first five technical-proposal pages will be passed to the quality assessment. SNOWCOP may request clarification of an obvious clerical error or missing administrative evidence. A clarification cannot change the proposal or improve its technical content after the applicable cut-off.

9.2 Quality assessment

Criterion	Assessment focus	Score	Minimum
Understanding of SNOWCOP	The proposal identifies relevant SNOWCOP objectives and outputs and explains convincingly how they will be used in the pilot.	0 to 5	3
Excellence	The proposed solution is technically sound, relevant to the user need, appropriately innovative and feasible within the available time and resources.	0 to 5	3
Contribution to SNOWCOP impact	The pilot can generate useful uptake, stakeholder benefit, replication, continued use, investment or market potential and can strengthen dialogue on meltwater management.	0 to 5	3
Implementation capacity	The applicant has suitable expertise, resources, responsibilities, timetable and risk management to deliver the proposed outputs. The team description is assessed under this criterion.	0 to 5	3

The final score is the sum of the four criterion scores and has a maximum of 20 points. A proposal must receive at least 3 points for every criterion and at least 15 points overall. A proposal that fails any individual threshold or the overall threshold cannot receive funding.

9.3 Scoring scale

Score	Meaning	Interpretation
0	Non existent	The proposal does not address the criterion or cannot be assessed because essential information is missing.
1	Very poor	The criterion is addressed inadequately and the proposal has fundamental weaknesses.
2	Limited	The criterion is partly addressed, but the proposal has significant weaknesses.
3	Fair	The proposal addresses the criterion sufficiently, although some weaknesses remain.
4	Good	The proposal addresses the criterion well, with only limited shortcomings.
5	Excellent	The proposal fully and convincingly addresses the criterion. Any shortcomings are minor.

9.4 Evaluation group

The quality assessment will be conducted by a panel composed of six persons selected by the SNOWCOP partners, one for each institution. The group will be chaired by the SNOWCOP project coordinator. Each evaluator will sign a declaration on confidentiality and conflicts of interest before receiving applications. An evaluator with a conflict of interest will not assess or discuss the affected proposal and will be replaced, where possible, by another qualified representative of the same institution.

Evaluators will first record individual assessments. The group will then agree one consensus score from 0 to 5 for each criterion and document the reasons for the final score. The four consensus scores will be added to obtain the final score out of 20. The chair has no additional or casting score.

9.5 Ranking and tie breaking

Funding is allocated chronologically across cut-off rounds on the first-come, first-served basis described in section 4. At each cut-off, eligible proposals that meet all thresholds will be ranked by total score within that evaluation round. The highest-ranked proposals in that round will be proposed for funding, subject to the remaining pilot places and budget and completion of the required legal checks. This procedure continues at subsequent cut-offs only if places and funding remain. No more than four pilots and EUR 39 000 will be funded across the entire call.

A successful proposal from an earlier round is not re-ranked against proposals submitted at a later cut-off. An unsuccessful applicant may improve and resubmit its proposal in accordance with section 8.3; a resubmission competes in the later round without retaining the original submission priority.

If two proposals have the same total score at the funding boundary, priority will be given in the following order.

1.Higher score for Contribution to SNOWCOP impact.

2.Higher score for Excellence.

3.Higher score for Implementation capacity.

4.Higher score for Understanding of SNOWCOP.

5.If the scores remain identical, a documented random draw conducted by the chair and witnessed by the evaluation group.

9.6 Notification and procedural review

After each evaluation round, all applicants assessed in that round will receive written notification of the result. Contract signature will follow evaluation and completion of the required legal checks. The notification will include the consensus scores and a concise assessment to help unsuccessful applicants improve their proposals. It will also state whether a later cut-off is still available for a revised submission, subject to the remaining pilot places and budget. An applicant may request a procedural review within 10 calendar days of notification if it believes that a documented eligibility or evaluation procedure was not followed. A procedural review does not permit resubmission of the proposal or reconsideration based only on disagreement with expert judgement.

10 Timetable

Step	Date
First submission cut-off	21 December 2026, 17:00 Brussels time
Second submission cut-off	18 January 2027, 17:00 Brussels time
Third and final submission cut-off	15 February 2027, 17:00 Brussels time
Evaluation and applicant notification	After each cut-off that takes place, while pilot places and funding remain
Early closure of the call	When all four pilot places are allocated or the budget is fully committed; remaining cut-offs will not take place
Sub-grant signature	Following selection and completion of the required legal checks
Pilot implementation	Maximum 10 months within the dates stated in the agreement
Latest completion of pilot activities	31 August 2027 (subject to EUSPA confirmation)
Final report	Within 15 calendar days after the pilot ends and no later than 15 September 2027

Any change to a scheduled cut-off will be announced before the affected cut-off through the same channels as the call, and registered applicants will be informed. A change will apply equally to all applicants in the affected round and will not retrospectively alter a closed round. Later cut-offs provide an opportunity for new applications and revised submissions only while pilot places and funding remain. If the call closes early under section 4, the remaining scheduled cut-offs will not take place.

11 Further information

Questions must be sent to earth.observation@eurac.edu or carlo.marin@eurac.edu. Questions and answers of general relevance will be published in an anonymised and regularly updated document so that all applicants receive the same information. Advice given to one applicant will not confer an advantage or modify the published call conditions.



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