

Interreg EUROPEAN UNION

North-West Europe

OPIN

European Regional Development Fund



Scottish Enterprise



OCEAN POWER INNOVATION NETWORK

Innovation Support Scheme General Guidelines for Applicants

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1 Introduction

These guidelines explain how SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises) from ocean energy and related sectors, located in an OPIN region, can apply for OPIN Innovation Support. Potential applicants should also consult the detailed guidance for each element of the support, as outlined below.

2 About OPIN

The Ocean Power Innovation Network (OPIN) is a 3-year initiative, running from 2019 to 2021. The project has a total project budget of €2.6M, with €1.5M in financial support contributed by Interreg North West Europe from the European Research and Development Fund (ERDF).

OPIN is a cross-sectoral collaborative network that aims to accelerate the growth of the ocean energy sector and its supply chains across the partner regions of Ireland, the UK, Belgium, France, the Netherlands and Germany.

The scope of the OPIN project includes:

- wave, tidal stream, floating offshore wind and hybrid offshore renewable energy systems;
- subsystems, components, materials, enabling technologies, installation, operations and maintenance, decommissioning, related processes and services; and
- energy systems and storage solutions, to enable integration of ocean energy.

The basic premise of OPIN is to encourage both cross-sectoral and cross-regional collaboration for Offshore Renewable Energy SMEs. Cross-sectoral collaboration will bring already proven expertise, capabilities and products from other sectors into the ocean energy sector. This will help to reduce costs and accelerate technology development.

The Innovation Support scheme is targeted on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) within the ocean energy sector and the current or potential value chain.

3 Innovation Support Scheme

There are three types of support available:

- [Technology Assessment Process \(TAP\) Support](#), valued at up to 2,000 Euro
- [Collaborative Innovation Group \(CIG\) Support](#), maximum of 20,000 Euro per CIG
- [Travel Support](#), to a maximum of €500 per trip (including VAT) and an overall maximum of €2,000 per SME (Scotland and Ireland only)

4 Applications and Timescale

OPIN support can be applied for **at any time**. Decisions on applications will be made at OPIN Steering Group meetings. On the OPIN website we will publish dates for Steering Group meetings and cut-off dates for submission of applications to be considered at these meetings. TAP and Travel support will normally be approved within 2 weeks, CIG support within 4 weeks.

Applications must be submitted by email, using the application forms provided, to "OPIN@seai.ie" using the subject heading "Innovation Support Application".

5 General Eligibility Criteria

To apply for any OPIN support, the applicant company must comply with the following criteria:

- It is an SME, complying with the European SME definition
 - The basic criteria are less than 250 employees and either an annual turnover of less than 50 million Euro or an annual balance of less than 43 million Euro
 - Applicants should be aware that, if they are part of a group of companies, the criteria are likely to apply at group level
 - The full definition is available here:
https://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/business-friendly-environment/sme-definition_en
 - The European Commission website has a [SME self-assessment tool](#)
- It is located in one of the OPIN regions, listed in the table below
- It has not received State aid above the "*de minimis*" ceiling over a rolling 3-year period – see the State Aid below Guidance for further information.
- It is not in receivership or under liquidation at the time of receiving the offer of support.

For the Collaborative Innovation Group support, the lead applicant must be an SME, but other companies and research organisations are able to participate in the work of the group.

The regions directly supported by the OPIN partners are Ireland; Scotland; Other UK; Netherlands; Flanders; and Pays de la Loire. These are the regions in which support for CIGs is available. Partners from Germany and other regions of Belgium and France may be involved in the CIGs, as long as the eligibility criteria above are satisfied by members from within the eligible OPIN regions.

Further information is provided in the Collaborative Innovation Group Guidance to Applicants available on the [OPIN website](#).

6 OPIN Partners and Regions

| Partner | Region | Country | Contact Person |
|---|------------------|-------------|--|
| Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland | Ireland | Ireland | solene.goy@seai.ie |
| Scottish Enterprise Offshore Renewable Energy Catapult | Scotland | UK | Karen.Fraser@scotent.co.uk |
| Sirris | Flanders | Belgium | Bart.Teerlinck@sirris.be |
| West Atlantic Marine Energy Community | Pays de la Loire | France | laura-mae.macadre@weamec.fr |
| Dutch Marine Energy Centre | Netherlands | Netherlands | justin@dutchmarineenergy.com |
| Fraunhofer | Germany | Germany | Jochen.Bard@iee.fraunhofer.de |

Table 6.1: OPIN Partner Details

7 State Aid

For European State Aid purposes, OPIN support for travel, TAPs and CIGs will be treated as **de minimis** aid, under the *de minimis* exemption detailed in [EC Regulation 1407/2013](#). Under this exemption, an undertaking (company) can receive up to €200,000 of State aid in a rolling three-year period (the current financial year and previous two financial years). This only includes State aid specifically awarded as *de minimis* and does not include aid awarded under other exemptions or State aid schemes, such as Aid for Research and Development.

Companies will only be eligible for support if they have not received State aid above the "*de minimis*" ceiling over a rolling 3-year period. Each company applying for support must provide a [de minimis self-declaration form](#), using the template provided. This declaration must be manually signed by a duly authorised person from the company and sent by email to OPIN@SEAI.ie.

OPIN will provide each company supported with a **de minimis award letter** specifying the amount of *de minimis* aid awarded.

Unless otherwise agreed, the *de minimis aid* for CIGs will be divided equally between the undertakings (companies) involved in a CIG. OPIN will provide each company being provided with support a **de minimis award letter** specifying the amount of *de minimis* aid awarded, based on the agreed Action Plan. At the end of the CIG activity, OPIN will provide a **de minimis statement**, confirming the actual amount of *de minimis* aid provided.

8 Personal Data

In submitting applications to the OPIN for Innovation Support, applicants are required to comply with their obligations under all applicable data protection and privacy law in force from time to time in Ireland ("Applicable Data Protection Law"), including:

- the General Data Protection Regulation (Regulation (EU) 2016/679 ("GDPR"));
- the Data Protection Acts 1988 to 2018;

- the Privacy and Electronic Communications Directive 2002/58/EC (as amended) and the European Communities (Electronic Communications Networks and Services) (Privacy and Electronic Communications) Regulations 2011;
- any other European Union legislation relating to personal data;
- all other legislation and regulatory requirements in force from time to time which apply to a party relating to the use of Personal Data (including, without limitation, the privacy of electronic communications); and
- the guidance and codes of practice issued by the relevant data protection or supervisory authority and applicable to a party.

SEAI, as the Lead Partner on behalf of the OPIN Project, fully respects your right to privacy and is committed to the protection of personal data, in accordance with the European Union's General Data Protection Rules.

Any personal data that an Applicant provides to SEAI ("Shared Personal Data") will be processed by SEAI in accordance with the provisions of Applicable Data Protection Law and the [OPIN Project Privacy Notice](#).

Applicants shall, in respect of Shared Personal Data, ensure that they provide clear and sufficient information to the data subjects, in accordance with Applicable Data Protection Law, of the purposes for which it will process their Personal Data, the legal basis for such processing and such other information as is required by Article 13 of the GDPR including the fact that the Shared Personal Data will be transferred to SEAI and sufficient information about such transfer and the purpose of such transfer to enable the data subject to understand the purpose and risks of such transfer.

Should you have any queries about the processing of personal data, please contact dataprotection@seai.ie

9 Intellectual Property

All results, outputs and Intellectual Property arising from participation in OPIN support activities will remain within the ownership of the companies / research organisations that develop them. The OPIN partners and Interreg NWE Europe Programme will not seek any ownership / stake in the Intellectual Property developed.