



Manual: Guidelines for Applicants

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND DEFINITIONS

Abbreviations	
NWE	North-West Europe
SMEs	Small and medium-sized enterprises
TRL	Technology Readiness Level

Definitions	
ValuSect consortium	The collective applicants and implementers of ValuSect, often referred as project partners or ValuSect.

Introduction

This document provides a complete set of information regarding the ValuSect Open Call for Investment Vouchers for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). SMEs with an innovative idea for developing the edible insects business in Europe can apply for a voucher worth up to €40.000 in services provided by the projects partners, experts in the breeding, transformation and marketing of insects for food. The consortium will select 40 cases over three years.

The vouchers aim to accelerate the development of insect-based food businesses in North-West Europe and transfer knowledge on the subject.

Why ValuSect?

At a time of rising population and decreasing resources, especially in a very densely populated area like North-West Europe (NWE), sustainable alternatives for food resources are needed. Insects could be one of them. As part of Interreg NWE, the ValuSect consortium aims to strengthen the transnational cooperation and exploitation of research on insects as resources for the development of (semi) finished food products.

Driven by demand from migrant communities or by the development of niche markets, the trade in insects as a food in Western countries is limited but could be broadly expanded by the ValuSect consortium. The lead partner organisation is the Thomas More University of Applied Sciences. Together with this leader, 9 full members and 8 associated partners from 7 countries are part of this transnational project.

In the coming years, a new emerging market for insects will be starting in the North-West of Europe, where some insect food products are already commercially available. Despite all the advantages of consuming insects for human, animal and environmental health, the market still faces many challenges. The consumer attitude is the major barrier to the use of insects as food and feed, especially in Western societies

Nowadays, about 30% of the EU consumers are willing to eat insect-based food, a practice also known as entomophagy. The perspective of eating insects is considered to be a new phenomenon for Western consumers. There is a growing business interest around processed insects or insects as food ingredients. The ValuSect consortium aims to enhance the level of perception by improving the quality of the insect production, processing and consumers acceptance, including its environmental impact. Research will be done on the emission of greenhouse gasses, on the impact of the substrate, on food safety, and on the shelf life of the food product. This opens up a new field of research on consumer acceptance of entomophagy that allows the development of appropriate products and communication strategies.

The project will use insect species that are subject of a novel food dossier, (*Tenebrio molitor*, *Acheta domesticus*, *Locusta migratoria*). It will focus on the development of an accelerator program for insect-based food products. Various values of vouchers will be available for SMEs, allowing this program to transfer knowledge to enterprises and participants from the whole supply chain. Such knowledge transfers between stakeholders will be key for the development of this market.

Improving insect production as well as consumers' attitudes are at the heart of the project which aspires to make insects a crucial part of the tomorrow's more sustainable diet of North-West Europe.

Objectives

The aim is to provide access to innovation to SMEs/companies and to develop a strong business strategy to improve consumer attitudes towards entomophagy as well as accelerate market growth for insect-based food products in North-West-Europe.

ValuSect improves the innovation performance of companies by strengthening transnational cooperation and the exploitation of insect research as a source for the development of food products. The focus will be on the development of a sustainable transnational programme involving all partners with expertise in insects, food production, innovation and commercialisation to support companies in co-creation. Knowledge will be transferred to companies through pilot demonstrations and field trials in close collaboration with end-users (insect consumers) through open/thematic calls for proposals (vouchers worth €10k, €20k or €40k for SMEs). This is an accelerator program and ValuSect wants to focus on SMEs with the ambitions and potential to scale-up.

Over the duration of the three year project, 40 cases will be selected to receive the vouchers. The vouchers will help SMEs answer questions on how to improve the quality of the production and processing of insects, e.g. composition of insects, insect nutritional composition and consumer appreciation. Three insect species (e.g. *Tenebrio molitor*¹, *Acheta domesticus*² and *Locusta migratoria*³), that already have a feeding dossier, will be studied in this project. Approximately 15 Insect-based foods which are already available on the market, will be assessed for their food safety and shelf life, and 40 cases will be supported. The accelerator programme will continue after the project.

This overall aim of the voucher scheme is to increase the level of innovation of companies in the insect food industry in the NWE area and accelerate the creation of a long-term consumer market for insect applications.

A further objective of the voucher scheme is to develop a program supporting the transnational knowledge exchange and implement it to accelerate the development of the insect business in Europe. The project aims to help European regions and national governments to face challenges and achieve goals in their support for companies in this early stage of the market. This is by putting into place a collaborative framework across Europe. This way, regions and enterprises can take advantage of the globalisation benefits, and Europe can promote competitiveness and cooperation in an effective and cross-national way.

Voucher Scheme

SMEs with an innovative idea for the development of the edible insects business in Europe can apply for a voucher worth up to €40.000 in services.

Two calls will be organised and small (€10k) up to large (€40k) cases will be selected and 100% funded. The ValuSect partners will work closely together with consumers (specific target groups)

¹ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mealworm>

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/House_cricket

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Migratory_locust

to improve the matching of products, services and needs. The selected cases will be at different stages along the insect business value chain. Services that match with the specific demand of the applicant will be selected and can be in an early concept phase, prototype or finished product phase.

Recipients must use their vouchers within a maximum of 12 months from the date of issue and can only redeem their vouchers for the services provided by the ValuSect partners (see extra document “Menu of Services”).

SME’s can submit more than one application. For each voucher call the maximum amount of services granted for an individual company is 40.000 euro.

Menu of Services

The list of available services that can be provided by the partners includes technological services, food development and innovation, consumer acceptance and strategic business services, all related to insect-based food products. You can find this menu of services on our website. Please note that a quick look guide will show you a summary of the services provided.

Application Process

Interested applicants should apply by sending the application form, the de-minimis self declaration and the SME-declaration to valusect@thomasmore.be.

The application includes all necessary information about the Open Call and the application process like:

- Application form,
- Menu of Services,
- ValuSect Quick Look Guide,
- Data Privacy Policy,
- Guidelines for Applicants, (this document).

In the form, applicants will be asked to fill in general information about their company and provide contact information. The participant gives a detail description of the proposal, including goal, application(s), what kind of solutions the proposal is looking. The proposal should fits with the objectives and services of the ValuSect project. For more details, you can check the [Application form](#).

All proposals must be submitted by January 07th 2022. Proposals submitted after the deadline will not be taken into consideration.

Open call 2	
Application	
Open for idea submission	December 6 th 2022
Deadline for idea submission	January 07 th 2022
Evaluation results and contracting	March 2022
Implementation	From April 2021

Language

English is the official language for ValuSect Open Calls. Submissions done in any other language will not be evaluated. English is also the only official language during the whole execution of the ValuSect project. This means any requested submission of deliverable will be done in English in order to be eligible. If necessary, voucher applicants can get in touch with 'local' people from their region for support (for example English support). See chapter Contact information.

Important notice: The opening and closing dates can be subject to change in case of any modifications in the project's schedule.

Documentation Formats

All documents requested during the submission process must be submitted electronically in PDF format without restrictions for printing.

Origin of the Funds

The funds provided through the Open Calls come directly from the funds of the European Project Valusect (Interreg NWE) funded itself by the European Commission under NWE Programme project - NWE 1004.

	Total amount	Number of projects	Number of partners	Budget per partner
Open call 1 & 2	Approx. 800K EUR	10-40	9	€15K - €200K

Definition of eligible countries

Participants, either SMEs or Start-ups, established in the following countries and territories that are residents of the following countries, will be eligible to apply for a Voucher: Ireland, the United Kingdom, Belgium, Luxembourg, Switzerland, and parts of France, Germany and the Netherlands (see: <https://www.nweurope.eu/about-the-programme/the-nwe-area/>)

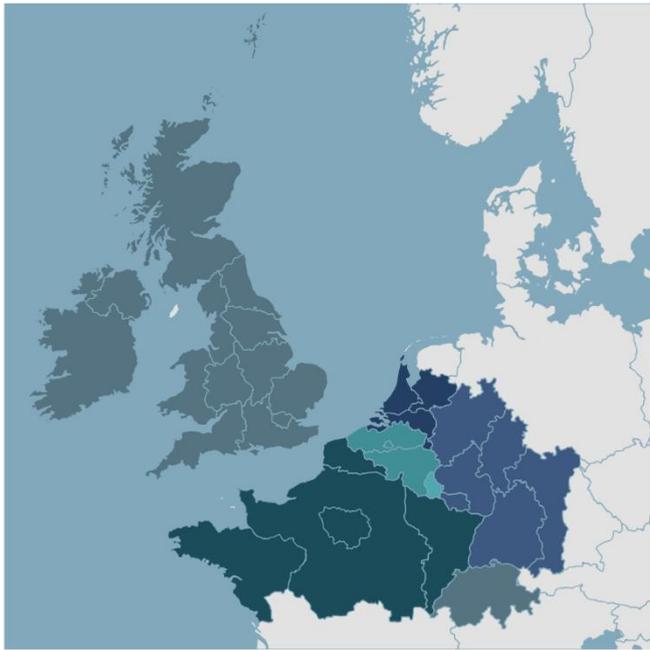


Figure 1 The highlighted countries located in the NWE region of Europe.

In order to be eligible for ValuSect Voucher Open Calls, applicants and their proposed ideas / issues /solutions should deal with one or more of the following topics:

- Innovative food products,
- Insect-based products (in development),
- Optimising insect breeding condition,
- Insect composition
- Insect processing (for food)
- Requires services available from the “Menu of services” (see document).

In addition, proposals must fulfil following:

- be submitted by or before the deadline,
- contain all signed documents that are required (SME Declaration and De-minimis self-declaration - Stage 2-)
- be submitted by eligible entities defined earlier in this section.

Evaluation Process

First the proposal will be evaluated by the fulfilment of the general criteria. After that, the proposal will be reviewed by three different experts (according to the nature of your proposal), in the field of – business development, agri-food and technology who will evaluate the quality and the feasibility of the proposal.

Specific criteria referring to the proposal will be evaluated. The maximum number of points is 48. For more information on the criteria see *Evaluation criteria* in the next title. Only the proposals that reach a score 30 will enter the final ranking. The ranking will be used as a basis for selection, but also the availability of the services will be taken into account. The top ranked proposals will be selected. (40 proposals will be selected over 3 years.) The summary and introduction part of the accepted proposals will be published as well as the information about the non-eligible proposals. All applicants will receive their *Evaluation Summary Report* which provides feedback.

Evaluation criteria

The proposals will be evaluated through a scoring system. Each of the sections has a weight and receive a score of 0-3. Any proposal which scores 1 or less on any criteria will be an automatic fail. Proposals have to achieve a minimum score of 2 for Innovation, Relevance, Goal and applicability to be eligible.

criteria	0	1	2	3	Weighting	Score 0 - 3
<p>Introduction</p> <p>What is the problem, challenge, need or opportunity (PCNO) in which you would like to be supported?</p>	PCNO is not mentioned or does not fit the scheme.	PCNO is quite simple/or narrow or not really fitting.	PCNO is clearly addressed to the project demands/goals.	PCNO is clearly addressed it is of high complexity and fits all project demands and goals.	2	
<p>Innovation</p> <p>Describe the current status of your idea, and what impact would your idea have in the future if complete?</p> <p>Describe how your idea is innovative (novel, new, or unique), compare it to existing ideas and how yours stands out</p> <p>Describe how the proposal connects with and/or</p>	<p>Proposal fails to describe the status of the idea and impact</p> <p>Proposal does not describes how the idea is innovative it is not clear how it stands out of other ideas.</p>	<p>Criterion is inadequately addressed or there are serious inherent weaknesses.</p> <p>Proposal inadequately addressed the criterion. It has weaknesses when demonstrating how innovative it is</p>	<p>Proposal addresses the criterion well, describes the current status and impact</p> <p>Proposal describes how the idea is innovative it is not clear how it stands out .</p>	<p>Proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion.</p> <p>Proposal successfully addresses how the idea is innovative. It stands out the relevance</p> <p>Proposal successfully addresses how it connects</p>	3	

<p>builds on existing knowledge and skills.</p>	<p>Proposal fails to describe the criteria</p>	<p>Proposal does not clearly show how it connects with and/or builds on existing knowledge and skills.</p>	<p>Proposal mention how it connects with and/or builds on existing knowledge and skills</p>	<p>with and/or builds on existing knowledge and skills</p>	
<p>Goal</p> <p>Describe the intended project results that would be achieved through the use of the ValuSect service vouchers (e.g. For instance, new research requests, network activities, prototypes, testing, (business) models, methods, working methods, demonstrators, processes, product concepts and/or service concepts</p> <p>For services concepts please refer an specific services from the « Menu of services » wich you think could contribute to reach these results</p>	<p>Proposal fails to describe the goal or cannot be assessed due to missing or incomplete information.</p> <p>The proposal does not refer to a specific services from the «Menu of services»</p>	<p>Proposal inadequately addressed the goal or there are serious inherent weaknesses.</p> <p>The proposal is to clear to refer to a specific services from the «Menu of services» or the service refered is not consistent with the goal</p>	<p>Proposal decrbe the goal well, but a number of shortcomings are present.</p> <p>The proposal refer to a specific services from the «Menu of services»</p>	<p>Proposal successfully decrbe the goal and all the relevant aspects of the criterion.</p> <p>Any shortcomings are minor.</p>	<p>3</p>
<p>Relevance</p> <p>Describe how your proposal is relevant to the insect industry/sector</p>	<p>Relevance not clear.</p>	<p>Relevance is quite small for accelerating the sustainable increase of the sector.</p>	<p>Relevance is clear for a sustainable acceleration of the sector but is restricted to just a section of it.</p>	<p>Relevance is clear for a sustainable acceleration of the whole sector or wide parts of it.</p>	<p>3</p>

<p>Network (if any)</p> <p>If any, describe other parties involved in this application (for example, other SMEs, end consumers, knowledge institutes). Name them and briefly describe the part they will or can take in this application.</p>	<p>No mention of any networks</p>	<p>One or several mentioned but not suitable.</p>	<p>One or several mentioned which are suitable.</p>	<p>Several mentioned which collaborate in a well-established network.</p>	<p>1</p>
<p>Services</p> <p>Which service(s) apply from the "Menu of Services" to fulfil the voucher-request for development.</p>	<p>No services are available for the applicant.</p>	<p>Services available do only fit the request partly.</p>	<p>Services available are suitable to support the applicant's request.</p>	<p>Services available are fully available and can support the applicant in reaching the required goals.</p>	<p>2</p>
<p>Applicability:</p> <p>Show how you will apply the results obtained to the insect business in North-West Europe.</p>	<p>No application mentioned.</p>	<p>Application of the results is not clear.or not feasible</p>	<p>Application of the results is clearly described and feasible.</p>	<p>Application of results is convincingly described with time schedule and measurements to report success.</p>	<p>3</p>

Voucher Application

Once the selection is finished, successful applicants will receive a service contract. This contract is made describing the services, the deliverables and the agreements about timing, collaboration and the follow-up of the progress. The successful SMEs can start implementing their vouchers in cooperation with the respective services from ValuSect project.

The vouchers will consist of one or a combination of services, and the implementation will be done under the guidance of a voucher leader assigned by ValuSect. The implementation timeline will be depending on the character of the voucher application and compilation of the services, but not more than 12 months.

Reporting/Monitoring

ValuSect as a network is still being established and we want to learn and improve; we also have a requirement to demonstrate impact for the funding received for this project. Each voucher and service funded through this call provides information to help to build the network. Therefore, it is a condition of the voucher award, that each recipient is required to report about the progress by participating in surveys and writing feedback/progress reports. Project progress must be reported on a monthly basis using report templates provided by ValuSect. Information on network interactions and services required is to be reported every six months.

The collected data will be generalised and used to describing 'best practice'-cases. They will be published to inspire, share, learn – for the benefit of the network.

Responsibilities of ValuSect partners

The ValuSect partners who redeem the vouchers (services) receive indirect funds from the European Commission. As such, they are responsible for the correct use of the funds and ensuring that the beneficiaries meet the obligations under the specific requirements of Interreg NWE as described in the Interreg NWE Program Manual (2014-2020, version 7).

Intellectual Property Rights

The following Intellectual Property Rights conditions should be followed:

- The proposals submitted should be solely based on original works by the applicants and their foreseen developments are free from third party rights, or they are clearly stated.
- All products (material and intellectual) that derive from the project will be the property of the partnership in their entirety. The outcome and results of the projects have to be made available to the general public free of charge.
Unless otherwise agreed
 - Each of the joint owners shall be entitled to use their jointly owned results for non-commercial research and educational activities on a royalty-free basis, and without requiring the prior consent of the other joint owner(s).
- The managing authority reserves the right to use them for information and communication actions in respect of the programme. In case that there are pre-existing intellectual and industrial properties rights which are made available to the project, these are fully respected. Any communication or publication by the funded Vouchers shall clearly indicate

that the project has received funding from the European Union, and ValuSect project displaying the ValuSect logo on all printed and digital material, including websites and press releases.

- Parts of the projects selected for funding (including the publishable summary of the proposal) will be used for ValuSect dissemination purposes.
- Selected applicants shall, throughout the duration of the Project, take appropriate measures to engage with the public and the media about the project and to highlight the Voucher support of the European Commission. Moreover, all outcomes of the Vouchers and services should be published as open data (unless an exception it is fully justified), respecting ValuSect Data Management Plan and any Ethical issues defined by the European Commission and National Regulations. Any publicity made by the Voucher consortium in respect of the project, in whatever form and on or by whatever medium, must specify a) that it is funded by the European Commission via the ValuSect project and b) that it reflects only the author's views and that the European Commission and ValuSect is not liable for any use that may be made of the information contained therein. Moreover, the European Commission and the ValuSect consortium shall be authorised to publish, in whatever form and on or by whatever medium, information related to the project.

Conflict of Interest

The Voucher applicant must take all measures to prevent any situation where the impartial and objective implementation of the Vouchers and services is compromised for reasons involving economic interest, political or national affinity, family or emotional ties or any other shared interest ('conflict of interests').

They must formally notify to the Commission (via the ValuSect Voucher leader) without delay any situation constituting or likely to lead to a conflict of interests and immediately take all the necessary steps to rectify this situation. The ValuSect coordinator may verify that the measures taken are appropriate and may require additional measures to be taken by a specified deadline.

If the Voucher applicant breaches any of its obligations, the ValuSect partners reserve the right to terminate the Voucher.

Data Protection & Confidentiality

During implementation of the voucher and for five (5) years after the end of the voucher, the parties must keep confidential any data, documents or other material (in any form) that is identified as confidential at Voucher contract signing time ('confidential information'). If a beneficiary SME requests, the ValuSect consortium may agree to keep such information confidential for an additional period beyond the initial five years. This will be explicitly stated at the Voucher offer.

If information has been identified as confidential during the Voucher execution or only orally, it will be considered to be confidential only if this is accepted by the ValuSect Lead partner and confirmed in writing within 30 days of the oral disclosure. Unless otherwise agreed between the parties, they may use confidential information only to implement the Agreement. For more information see [Privacy policy document](#).

The Voucher consortium may disclose confidential information to the ValuSect consortium, who will be bounded by a specific Non-Disclosure Agreement.

Promoting the Action and Giving Visibility to the EU Funding

The consortium of SME and ValuSect Partners must promote the approved Vouchers and services, ValuSect project and its results, by providing targeted information to multiple audiences (including the media and the public) in a strategic and effective manner and to highlight the financial support of the EC.

Unless the EC or the ValuSect Voucher leader requests or agrees otherwise or unless it is impossible, any communication activity related to the action (including in electronic form, via social media, etc.), any publicity, including at a conference or seminar or any type of information or promotional material (brochure, leaflet, poster, presentation etc.), and any infrastructure, equipment and major results funded by the grant must include the ValuSect logo.

For communication activities: "This project has indirectly received funding from the European Union's Interreg NWE program (2014-2020), via an Open Call issued and executed under project Valusect (NWE Programme project - NWE 1004)".

For infrastructure, equipment and major results: "This is part of the Vouchers that has indirectly received funding from the European Union's Interreg NWE program (2014-2020), via an Open Call issued and executed under project ValuSect (NWE Programme project - NWE 1004)".

When displayed in association with a logo, the European emblem should be given appropriate prominence. This obligation to use the European emblem in respect of projects to which the EC contributes implies no right of exclusive use.

Any publicity made by the beneficiary in respect of the project, in whatever form and on or by whatever medium, must specify that it reflects only the author's views and that the EC or ValuSect project is not liable for any use that may be made of the information contained therein.

The EC and the ValuSect partners shall be authorised to publish, in whatever form and on or by whatever medium, the following information:

- the name of the Voucher and all consortium members
- contact address of the Voucher and all consortium members
- the general purpose of the project
- the amount of the financial contribution foreseen for the project; after the financial transaction, the amount of the financial contribution actually received by the Voucher
- the geographic location of the activities carried out;
- the list of dissemination activities and/or of patent (applications) relating to foreground;
- the details/references and the abstracts of scientific publications relating to foreground and, if funded within the Voucher, the published version or the final manuscript accepted for publication;
- the publishable reports submitted to ValuSect;
- any picture or any audio-visual or web material provided to the EC and ValuSect in the framework of the project / Voucher.

The Voucher leader shall ensure that all necessary authorisations for such publication have been obtained and that the publication of the information by the EC and ValuSect does not infringe any rights of third parties.

Upon a duly substantiated request by the Voucher applicant on behalf of the Voucher consortium members, the Valusect consortium, if such permission is provided by the EC, may agree to forego such publicity if disclosure of the information indicated above would risk compromising the beneficiary's security, academic or commercial interests.

By applying to the ValuSect Open Call, the applicant automatically accepts all the rules and conditions set in the **Guideline for Applicants**.

Contact information

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Aliénor	Elise Regairaz	elise.regairaz@alienor.eu	Belgium
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