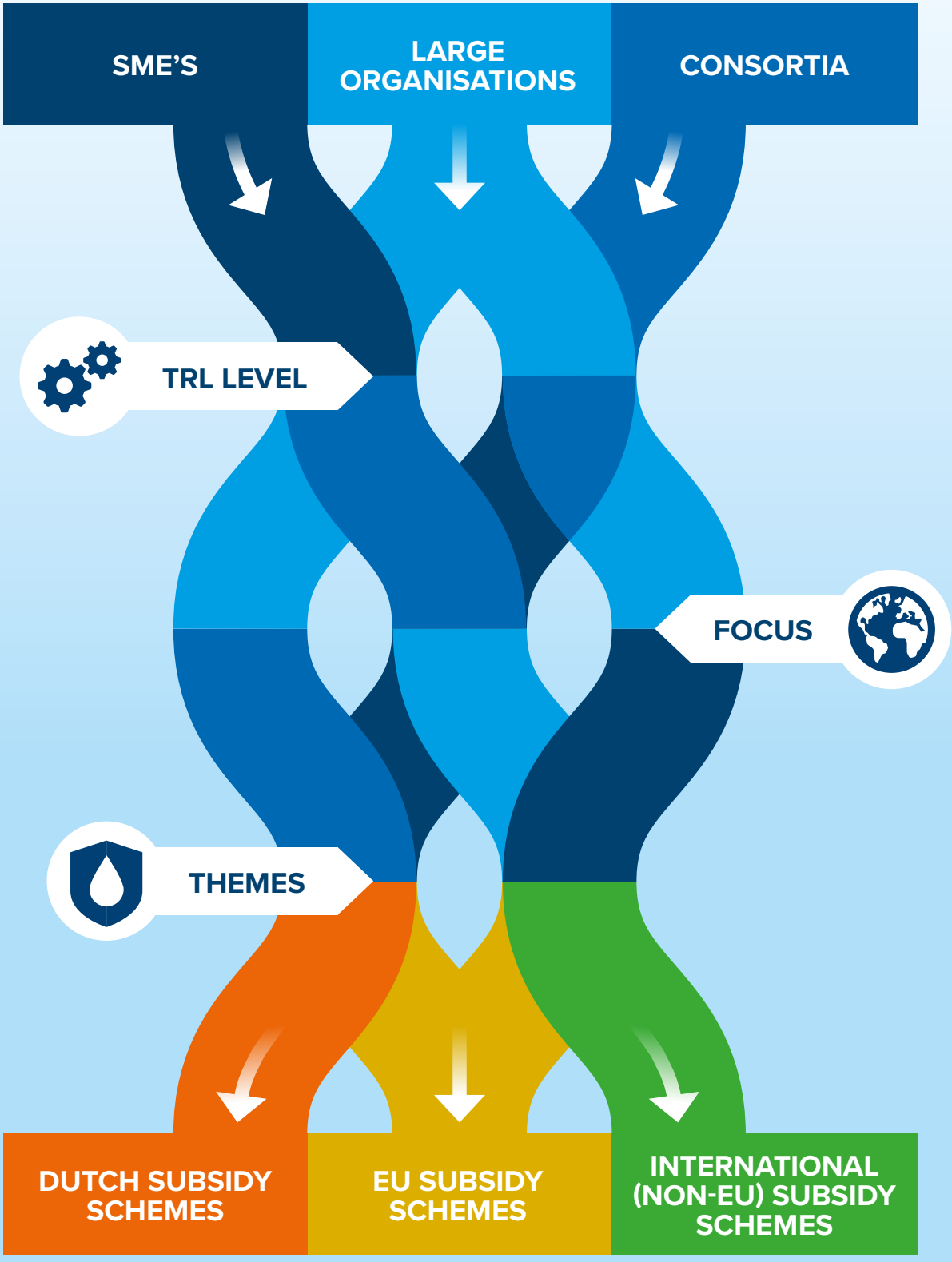
PARTNERS FOR WATER
CO-CREATING IMPACT

SUBSIDIES FOR WATER INNOVATIONS



Introduction

The Dutch government programme Partners for Water (PfW) aims to enhance water security internationally in long-term cooperation with local partners and the Dutch water sector. For the support of the early stages of water innovations, the programme (2022 – 2027) has granted subsidy to 68 water-related innovation projects, executed in 31 countries on 5 continents. By supporting feasibility studies and pilot projects, Partners for Water aims to pave the way for further development: upscaling the water innovations.

The Partners for Water subsidy scheme is currently not available, so we gathered other possibilities to develop your products and services.

Funding opportunities beyond the Partners for Water subsidy

Many innovations start strong with initial support but struggle to maintain momentum or grow further once funding runs out. Creating pathways for scaling and sustaining these initiatives can mean the difference between short-term success and long-term impact.

By expanding the range of financing options and giving our partners the ability to grow beyond the initial stages, Partners for Water empowers Dutch companies and organisations to continue making a difference in water management and sustainability for years to come.

Funding options for projects not selected by Partners for Water

The programme encounters many initiatives with huge potential and impact but often did not meet the specific criteria required to secure PfW funding. By listing a broad spectrum of alternative financing options, we can ensure that project partners have access to the financial resources they need, even if they don't align with PfW's specific eligibility criteria.

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This overview is divided into three sections, each focusing on different sources of funding available for water-related projects, these categories are: Dutch, EU, and other international funding sources.

A living document

At Partners for Water, we are fully aware of the fact that this overview is not complete and that information might be outdated or not fully correct. The majority of the information gathered for this overview will come from desk research, drawing on publicly available sources.

If you see any room for improvements,please contact us with suggestions or updates. Your input will help us keep this document accurate and up to date. We will update this document again in 2027.

We hope that this overview will help you find the way to alternative funding.

Liliane Geerling, programme coordinator
Partners for Water

Version 2.0 - September 2026



DUTCH SUBSIDY SCHEMES

Name of the fund	*Company Size*	*TRL level*	*Geographical boundries*	*Theme*	*% of funding*	*Ticket size (€)*
Dutch Fund for Climate and Development (DFCD)	No Boundries	7 to 9	Mainly low income countries	Climate adaptation- food systems	variable	500k to 10m
DHI	SME	7 to 9	No boundries	No focus	max of 50%	200k
DRIVE fund	No Boundries	7 to 9	Low and middle income countries	Water technology/ supply and sanitation	max of 50%	NA
Dutch Good Growth Fund	SME	6 to 9	Developing countries	Suistanible growth	up to 49%	15m
Dutch Trade and Investment Fund	SME	only 9	Countries not covered by DGGF	No focus	up to 49%	15m
KIA landbouw water voedsel	No Boundries	3 to 8	No boundries	Food systems and watter supply	40 to 70%	250k to 2m
MIT	SME	3 to 7	Netherlands only	No focus	35 to 50%	up to 350k
PIB	Consortium	7 to 9	No boundries	No focus	max of 50%	350k to 450k
PPS fund TKI-Delta Technologie	No Boundries	4 to 7	Mainly Netherlands	Water supply/sanitation and climate adaptation	25 to 40%	up to 500k
SIB	SME	NA	No boundries	No focus	80 to 100%	2500 to 5000 per module
Techleap	SME	7 to 9	No boundries	No focus	no direct subsidy	NA
TKI Watertechnologie	No Boundries	3 to 7	No boundries	Water supply and sanitation	40 to 70%	100k to 1m

EU SUBSIDY SCHEMES

Name of the fund	*Company Size*	*TRL level*	*Geographical boundries*	*Theme*	*% of funding*	*Ticket size (€)*
EIC Accelerator	SME	5 to 6	EU only	Climate adaptation	70%	up to 2.5m
EIB water sector fund	No Boundries	6 to 8	low and middle income countries	Climate adaptation	max of 50%	up to 10m
EU's Neighborhood, Development, and International Cooperation Instrument	No Boundries	7 to 9	No boundries	Climate adaptation and water supply	NA	1 to 50m
European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development	No Boundries	4 to 7	EU only	Food systems and water supply	40 to 75%	up to 1m
European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)	No Boundries	4 to 7	EU only	No focus	40 to 80%	100k to 5m
Global Gateway	No Boundries	7 to 9	No boundries	Climate adaptation and water supply	NA	5m to 500m
Horizon Europe	No Boundries	3 to 9	EU only	Climate adaptation	70 to 100%	2m to 20m
Just Transition Fund	No Boundries	4 to 8	EU only	Climate adaptation	50% to 85%	500k to 10m
LIFE programme	No Boundries	6 to 9	Rarly outside EU	Climate adaptation and water supply/sanitation	55 to 70%	500k to 10m

INTERNATIONAL (NON-EU) SUBSIDY SCHEMES

Name of the fund	*Company Size*	*TRL level*	*Geographical boundries*	*Theme*	*% of funding*	*Ticket size (€)*
Global Environment Facility (GEF)	No boundries	6 to 9	No boundries	Climate adaptation and water supply/sanitation	NA	500k to 5m
Imagen H2o	SME	6 to 9	No boundries	Water supply and sanitation	NA	25k to 100k
Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Initiative	No boundries	7 to 9	Africa only	Water supply and sanitation	NA	1m to 50m
The Water financing Partnership Initiative	No boundries	7 to 9	Asia only	Water supply and sanitation	NA	5m to 200m
The Water Research Foundation	No boundries	3 to 7	Mostly USA	Water supply and sanitation	50 to 100%	50k to 500k
United Nations Envirement Programme	No boundries	6 to 9	No boundries	Climate adaptation and water supply/sanitation	NA	1m to 10m

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PARTNERS FOR WATER
CO-CREATING IMPACT

Dutch Subsidies

Dutch Fund for Climate and Development

The Dutch Fund for Climate and Development (DFCD) is a €160 million initiative financed by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Launched in 2019, its goal is to support climate adaptation and mitigation efforts in some of the world's most vulnerable regions. It focuses particularly on strengthening the climate resilience of communities, ecosystems, and economies in low- and middle-income countries, especially those most affected by climate change. The fund is managed by a consortium made up of FMO (the Dutch Development Bank), SNV Netherlands Development Organisation, WWF Netherlands (WWF-NL), and Climate Fund Managers (CFM), each playing a role in different stages of the project.

DFCD operates through three interconnected facilities. The Origination Facility, co-managed by WWF-NL and SNV, works at the front end of identifying and shaping promising project ideas into investable propositions. Once a project has matured, it can move on to either the Land Use Facility (managed by FMO) or the Water Facility (managed by CFM), depending on its focus. The Land Use Facility targets projects in sustainable agriculture, forestry, and land management, while the Water Facility focuses on water, sanitation, and ocean-based infrastructure. Together, the three facilities form a pipeline that helps projects grow from early-stage ideas into fully financed operations that deliver real impact on climate and development.

To be eligible for funding, projects must align with DFCD's key themes: climate-resilient water systems, ecosystem protection, climate-smart agriculture, and sustainable forestry. Applicants are generally private-sector organisations with an existing presence or strong local partnerships in the target countries. More specifically, organisations should have a minimum of €5 million in turnover or total assets, and they must be seeking at least €5 million in long-term financing. Importantly, applicants are also expected to co-invest in the project and demonstrate solid governance and financial capacity (DFCD, N.d).

ℹ For more information on the Dutch Fund for Climate and Development check: www.thedfcd.com/origination/

DHI

The **DHI** subsidy is a Dutch government subsidy program designed to support small and medium-sized enterprises (MKB) in expanding their business activities to promising foreign markets, particularly in emerging and developing countries. The scheme is administered by the Dutch Enterprise Agency (RVO) on behalf of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It plays a strategic role in helping companies reduce the commercial risk of international expansion and prepare for successful market entry by providing co-financing for essential preparatory activities.

The DHI exists to strengthen the international competitiveness of Dutch SMEs by enabling them to explore, validate, and demonstrate the feasibility and added value of their products, services, or technologies in foreign markets. The focus is on creating tangible economic impact, such as increasing exports, building international partnerships, and promoting sustainable business development, while also contributing to the broader policy goals of trade, aid, and development cooperation.

To be eligible, companies must be registered in the Netherlands as SMEs and demonstrate clear international growth ambitions. Projects must focus on new or significantly expanded markets and show potential for commercial success, such as future exports or foreign partnerships. The scheme typically covers up to 50% of eligible project costs, with a maximum of €100,000 for feasibility and investment preparation projects and up to €200,000 for demonstration projects. Target countries must fall within the scope of developing or emerging markets, as defined by the OECD DAC list and a few selected non-DAC countries. Companies must also have the organizational and financial capacity to carry out the proposed activities and ensure that their projects

align with international standards for responsible business conduct. Rather than funding research, the DHI focuses on practical, business-driven projects that generate real-world economic impact, without causing unfair competition or harm to local markets (RVO, N.d).

For more information on DHI check: DHI Subsidy Scheme | RVO.nl (Dutch)

DRIVE fund

The **DRIVE Fund** (Development Related Infrastructure Investment Vehicle), managed by Invest International on behalf of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, supports the development of sustainable public infrastructure in low- and middle-income countries. Its primary goal is to stimulate inclusive economic growth through investments in sectors like water, climate resilience, food security, and public health. DRIVE does this by providing a mix of grants, loans, and guarantees to de-risk infrastructure projects that have strong local relevance and align with Dutch development policy. Depending on the income level of the recipient country, the subsidy can cover between 20% and 50% of the total project financing (RVO, 2023).

While DRIVE does not finance operational or maintenance costs, it requires that all projects include a viable long-term sustainability and ownership plan. The fund is particularly designed to make projects bankable by encouraging public-private partnerships and increasing the attractiveness of investments that might otherwise not reach financial close (Atradius, 2024).

To qualify for DRIVE support, a project must have significant development relevance, strengthen local entrepreneurship or the business climate, and be aligned with the priorities of the recipient country's government and population. Applicants must demonstrate technical and financial competence and comply with international standards on corporate social responsibility and environmental sustainability. Projects should also contribute to climate mitigation or adaptation goals under the Paris Agreement (RVO, 2025).

For more information on The DRIVE fund check: english.rvo.nl/subsidies-financing/drive

Dutch Good Growth Fund

Launched by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2014 and now managed by Invest International, the **Dutch Good Growth Fund (DGGF)** pools several revolving facilities aimed at helping Dutch SMEs do business in 70-plus emerging and developing economies. 2024 budget tables show an outstanding fund capital of €435 million (Invest window €150 million; Fund-of-Funds window €285 million) with an authorised ceiling of €690 million as additional capital is paid in over time (Rijksoverheid, 2024).

For water-sector ventures the DGGF offers three financing tracks:

- Invest window – debt, equity or guarantees covering up to 49% of a project and capped at €15 million; borrower must bring at least 20% own capital and secure co-financing from a commercial bank.
- Export window – export-credit insurance or supplier finance for capital-goods sales, provided the aggregate transaction risk stays below €30 million and the deal has clear development impact.
- Fund-of-Funds window – indirect support via local investment funds that target SMEs, especially those led by youth or women. Key eligibility tests are: the project must be located on the DGGF country list, contribute to at least two SDGs (with water related SDG 6 often decisive), avoid activities on the FMO exclusion list, and demonstrate that commercial finance alone is unavailable (Atradius, 2025).

For more information on Dutch Good Growth Fund check: investinternational.nl/what-we-do/financing/dggf

Dutch Trade and Investment Fund

The **Dutch Trade and Investment Fund (DTIF)** is a revolving financing facility established in 2016 by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and managed by Invest International. It provides loans, guarantees, and export financing (including credit insurance and supplier credit) to Dutch-registered companies primarily SMEs seeking to invest, import, or export in countries not covered by the DGGF, such as middle- to high-income and emerging markets. DTIF is structured into three pillars Investment, Imports, and Exports and is designed to address critical market

failures, stepping in when commercial banks will not provide financing. The fund has a total budget of approximately €170 million, with a guarantee ceiling of €140 million, and individual projects can receive up to €15 million in financing, with export-related support reaching as much as €5 million per transaction (RVO, 2023).

For more information on DHI check: investinternational.nl/what-we-do/financing/dutch-trade-and-investment-fund-dtif/

KIA landbouw water voedsel

The Knowledge and Innovation Agenda for Agriculture, Water and Food (KIA-LWV) is a Dutch government initiative aimed at encouraging collaboration between businesses, research institutes, and public organisations. Its goal is to support innovative solutions for pressing challenges related to sustainable agriculture, climate-resilient water systems, and food security.

Through this programme, consortia of public and private partners can apply for funding to carry out joint research and innovation projects. For the 2025 call, which funds projects starting in 2026, around €10.2 million in public funding is available. Projects must contribute to one or more of the KIA-LWV's missions, such as improving nature resilience, enabling sustainable agricultural systems, or ensuring food availability. The programme also emphasises the development of key enabling technologies, including smart agri-food tech, accelerated breeding techniques, and bioconversion and fermentation technologies.

To be eligible, a proposal must involve at least one public and one private partner and must focus on genuine collaboration. This means jointly developing new knowledge and innovation, not just outsourcing work to a research party. Contract research alone does not qualify for funding (KIA, 2025).

For more information on KIA landbouw, water en voedsel check: www.kia-landbouwwatervoedsel.nl

MIT

The **MIT** (MKB-Innovatiestimulering Regio en Topsectoren) subsidy is a Dutch government programme designed to support innovation in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Its goal is to encourage SMEs to develop new products, processes, or services that align with one of the Netherlands' national Top Sectors, such as agri-food, energy, high-tech, life sciences, and water. The scheme is co-financed by both the national government and regional authorities and helps bridge the early, high-risk stages of innovation.

MIT funding is not for general business development but specifically targets innovation projects. Companies can apply for support for feasibility studies, which assess whether a proposed innovation is technically and economically viable, or for collaborative R&D projects involving two or more SMEs working together. Individual SMEs can typically receive up to €20,000 for feasibility studies, while collaborative R&D projects can receive up to €350,000 in total, with a cap of €175,000 per participant.

To apply, companies must submit a proposal during the annual application window, typically opening around spring. Applications are evaluated competitively based on innovation potential, alignment with a Top Sector agenda, and feasibility. Proposals can be submitted via the RVO or through regional implementation partners, depending on the type of support and business location (RVO, 2025).

For more information on MIT check: MIT: Mkb-innovatiestimulering Regio en Topsectoren | RVO.nl (Dutch)

PIB

The **Partners for International Business (PIB)** subsidy scheme is a Dutch government programme designed to help Dutch companies and knowledge institutions enter and grow in promising foreign markets. The core idea behind PIB is that international success often requires a joint strategic approach, especially in sectors where the Netherlands has specific expertise or technological strengths. Rather than providing funding for individual exports or investments, PIB supports joint activities that enhance the international position of an entire sector or cluster of Dutch businesses.

The programme helps consortia that comprise of at least three Dutch companies, and optionally knowledge institutions or sector organisations to form public-private partnerships focused on a specific target country or region. Together with the Dutch government, they develop and implement a three-year action plan aimed at strategic market development. This plan may include joint branding and positioning, trade missions, matchmaking events, seminars, participation in international fairs, knowledge exchange, pilot projects, and lobbying efforts. The goal is to increase visibility, credibility, and long-term market access for the participating Dutch companies.

Each PIB project can receive up to €350,000 in co-financed support from the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO), which manages the programme on behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The participating consortium must cover at least 50% of the total project costs, either financially or through in-kind contributions such as personnel time or use of facilities. Funding is not for individual company expenses like exports, investments, or product development, but strictly for collective internationalisation efforts (RVO, 2025).

For more information on PIB check: Partners for International Business (PIB) | RVO.nl (Dutch)

PPS fund TKI-Delta Technology

The **PPS fund (Public-Private Partnership allowance)** is a Dutch government initiative designed to stimulate collaboration between private companies and public research organisations. Within the context of TKI Delta technology (Top Consortium for Knowledge and Innovation in Delta Technology), this allowance aims to foster joint research and innovation projects that address challenges in water management, climate adaptation, and delta technology.

Under this scheme, for every euro that a private company invests in research and development with a public research organisation, the government provides an additional €0.30. This supplementary funding is intended to enhance the scope and impact of collaborative projects, encouraging more robust partnerships between industry and academia. To be eligible for the PPS fund, a project must involve at least one private company and one public research organisation. The collaboration should be genuine, with all parties contributing to the project's objectives, sharing risks, and disseminating results. It's important to note that contract research, where a company simply outsources work to a research organisation without active collaboration, does not qualify.

For more information on PPS fund TKI-Delta Technology check: PPS-toeslag Onderzoek en Innovatie | RVO.nl (Dutch)

SIB

The **Starters International Business (SIB)** subsidy is a Dutch government program designed to support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that are taking their first steps toward internationalization or entering new foreign markets. It is specifically aimed at entrepreneurs who are either new to exporting or looking to expand their existing export activities into unfamiliar countries. Managed by the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO), the SIB program offers practical guidance and financial support to help companies develop a strong, focused international strategy.

Rather than simply providing funding, SIB emphasizes capacity-building through expert coaching and tailor-made advice. The program offers several forms of support. First, there is SIB Coaching, in which a certified export coach helps companies identify suitable markets, assess internal capabilities, and develop a step-by-step export plan. Then there is SIB Market Entry, which provides financial support for activities such as market research, participation in international trade fairs, or the hiring of a local representative abroad. Lastly, the SIB Collective Activities component allows companies to join trade missions or collective promotion efforts organised by sector or region, increasing their visibility and access to international networks.

To qualify for the SIB subsidy, a company must be a Dutch SME with limited prior export experience in the target market. The business must demonstrate serious ambition and readiness to grow internationally, but it should not already have significant turnover from the specific foreign market being targeted. Applicants are expected to have a clear motivation for exporting and enough organisational capacity to follow through on their international

plans. While the SIB scheme does not fund direct investments or product development, it does help companies build the knowledge, confidence, and connections they need to enter and succeed in new markets (RVO, N.d).

For more information on SIB check:
Support International Business - SIB | RVO.nl

Techleap

Techleap is a publicly funded initiative by the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Policy. Its mission is to help Dutch tech startups and scaleups grow faster and more effectively, both nationally and internationally. Unlike traditional subsidy schemes, Techleap does not provide direct financial grants. Instead, it offers non-financial support through expert-led growth programmes, strategic advice, and access to a high-level network of investors, policymakers, and business leaders (Techleap, 2023).

The support offered by Techleap is delivered through a number of selective programmes. One of these is Rise, which brings together founders of promising early-stage scaleups for a series of intensive sessions focused on solving growth challenges related to team building, international expansion, and leadership. Another is Shine, which is designed for later-stage scaleups preparing for major transitions like IPOs or international launches. For deeptech (state of the art technology) founders, Pole Position offers an environment to explore how to scale complex technologies globally with support from seasoned entrepreneurs and mentors. All of these programmes are free to selected participants, thanks to public funding, but access is highly competitive and only available to startups with proven traction and strong growth potential (Techleap, 2023).

Applications for Techleap programmes are accepted during specific calls for participation. Interested startups must demonstrate clear product-market fit, international ambitions, and a scalable business model. While no funding is awarded, the value of the network, mentorship, visibility, and policy support offered through Techleap is often greater than that of traditional subsidies. In addition to supporting startups directly, Techleap plays an important ecosystem role by producing research, advising the Dutch government on startup policy, and helping shape reforms in areas like talent acquisition, startup visas, and access to capital. Techleap is particularly relevant for ambitious tech entrepreneurs in the Netherlands who are aiming to scale quickly and sustainably (Techleap,2023).

For more information on Techleap check:
Home Techleap » Techleap 2025

TKI Water technology

The **TKI Water Technology** programme is part of the Dutch government's strategy to drive sustainable innovation in the water sector through public-private partnerships. It supports joint research and innovation projects that aim to develop technologies and solutions for pressing water-related challenges. The initiative is funded through the PPS fund (Public-Private Partnership allowance), a national scheme that financially rewards companies who invest in collaborative R&D with public knowledge institutions (NWP, 2025).

The fund exists to strengthen the Dutch innovation ecosystem in the field of water technology and to accelerate the transition towards circular water use, energy efficiency, and climate resilience. It addresses urgent societal and environmental goals, such as improving drinking water quality, reducing industrial water consumption, dealing with drought and flooding, and recovering valuable resources from wastewater. The Netherlands, being highly dependent on water management due to its geography, has positioned itself as a global leader in this field, and this scheme is designed to maintain and expand that leadership.

Funding is available for collaborative projects between private companies and public research institutions, such as universities, applied research centers, or knowledge institutes. The focus is on co-creation of new knowledge, meaning the private and public partners must actively contribute to both the design and implementation of the research. Typical projects might involve the development of membrane filtration systems, decentralised water purification, smart monitoring and sensing technologies, water reuse systems for agriculture, or energy-efficient industrial wastewater treatment. Only projects that align with the national innovation agenda and demonstrate clear potential for societal or commercial impact will be considered.

The government provides a financial top-up of €0.30 for every euro a company invests in such a partnership. This funding is not paid directly to the companies but is allocated to the research institutions involved in the project, increasing the total research capacity and scope. Projects must be pre-approved by the relevant Top Consortium for Knowledge and Innovation (TKI), in this case TKI Water technology, which ensures that the proposal aligns with strategic priorities (Top Sector Energie, 2024).

For more information on TKI Water Technology fund check: Joining a TKI | RVO.nl (Dutch)



European Subsidies

EIB Water Sector Fund

The **EIB Water Sector Fund (WSF)** is a trust fund the European Investment Bank runs on behalf of the Netherlands. Set up in 2017, it channels Dutch ODA into water, sanitation and hygiene projects in low- and lower-middle-income countries (EIB, 2024). In April 2025 the Dutch government added €31 million, doubling the Fund to roughly €62 million. The WSF finances project preparation, technical assistance and blended-finance investment grants that make high-impact schemes bankable for the EIB or private lenders.

Typical ticket sizes range from single-digit millions for TA up to €10 million for equity or grant components illustrated by the Fund's €10 million anchor investment in the Water Access Acceleration Fund (W2AF), a €70 million private-equity vehicle for drinking-water enterprises in Africa and Asia. Larger grants are possible when blended with EIB sovereign loans, as shown by the WSF's contribution to Jordan's €2.5 billion Aqaba-Amman desalination pipeline, where the Fund covers part of the viability-gap financing (EIB, 2025).

To qualify, a project must:

- be located in a low- or lower-middle-income country;
- improve access to water, sanitation or hygiene and align with SDG 6;
- show climate-resilience benefits and inclusive development impact;
- demonstrate financing additionality i.e., that the grant or equity catalyses other lenders and lowers overall project risk (EIB,2024).

For more information on EIB Water Sector Fund fund check: www.eib.org/en/products/mandates-partnerships/donor-partnerships/trust-funds/water-sector-fund

EIC Accelerator

The EIC Accelerator is the flagship funding program of the European Innovation Council (EIC) under Horizon Europe. It is specifically designed for high-tech startups and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) with deep-tech innovations that carry a high-risk profile while offering significant market and impact potential.

The program operates on the basis of blended finance:

- Grant Component: Up to €2.5 million (with a funding rate of 70%) to finance further innovation and development activities from TRL 5/6 (prototype demonstrated in a relevant environment) to TRL 8 (system complete and qualified).
- Equity Component: From €0.5 million to €15 million via the EIC Fund to support commercial scaling, market entry, and international deployment from TRL 9 onward.

Innovations can be submitted through two main pathways: the EIC Open Call (bottom-up, open to any deep-tech topic) and the EIC Challenges (top-down priorities addressing specific European societal challenges).

Key water-related topics within the program include:

1. Climate Resilience and Water Security
2. Advanced Water Purification and Reuse
3. Digitalization and Monitoring (Smart Water Systems)
4. Circular Economy and Resource Recovery

EU's Neighbourhood, Development, and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI)

The **EU's Neighbourhood, Development, and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI)**, also known as Global Europe, is the EU's primary financial tool for supporting its external action, focusing on foreign policy, development cooperation, and humanitarian assistance. With a budget of approximately €79.5 billion for the 2021-2027 period, the NDICI brings together several previous EU financial

instruments and supports a broad range of activities across the world. Its primary aim is to promote sustainable development, strengthen global partnerships, and address global challenges such as climate change, migration, conflict, and human rights. The NDICI covers regions in the EU's immediate neighbourhood, developing countries, and conflict-affected regions, making it a key component of the EU's external relations.

NDICI funding is directed towards projects in several key areas: neighbouring regions, such as Eastern Europe, the Mediterranean, and the Western Balkans; development cooperation, focusing on poverty reduction and sustainable growth in sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean, and global public goods and challenges, including climate action, health, democracy, and human rights. The fund also supports humanitarian aid and peacebuilding efforts in fragile regions. EU Member States and partner countries jointly define the priorities for funding, ensuring that the resources meet the unique needs of each region. Additionally, NDICI encourages cross-border and regional cooperation to tackle global challenges effectively.

Eligibility for funding under the NDICI is open to a wide range of entities, including public authorities, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), international organisations, private companies, and research institutions. Projects must align with the overarching goals of sustainable development, poverty reduction, climate resilience, or addressing humanitarian crises. The application process typically involves responding to calls for proposals published through the EU Funding and Tenders Portal. Applicants are expected to demonstrate their capacity to implement large-scale, impactful projects that meet EU priorities. The NDICI funds are provided through various regional and thematic programs, with co-financing requirements and funding rates depending on the project type and region (European Commission, 2021).

For more detailed information on NDICI Check Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe (NDICI – Global Europe) - European Commission

European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development

The **European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)** is a key financial instrument of the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), designed to support rural development across the EU. With a budget of approximately €95.5 billion for the 2021-2027 programming period, the fund aims to improve the competitiveness of agriculture, ensure sustainable rural development, and enhance the quality of life in rural areas. The EAFRD supports a wide range of projects that focus on the modernization of agricultural practices, environmental sustainability, climate change mitigation, and social and economic development in rural communities.

EAFRD funding is directed towards initiatives that address specific rural development priorities, including boosting farm productivity, promoting environmentally-friendly farming practices, enhancing biodiversity, and fostering local economies. The fund also supports projects that increase rural tourism, improve rural infrastructure, and promote the digital transition in agriculture. Member States and regions are responsible for creating rural development programmes (RDPs) that define their own priorities and actions for the use of EAFRD funds, which ensures that projects are tailored to local needs.

Eligibility for EAFRD funding typically extends to public and private entities, including farmers, cooperatives, non-governmental organizations, local authorities, and businesses, all of whom must demonstrate a clear commitment to rural development and sustainability. The fund is designed to be flexible, with each Member State setting its own rules within the broader EU framework, including co-financing rates which can vary from 50% to 85%. The application process is managed through national or regional authorities, which publish calls for projects and assist applicants in navigating the funding process (FIcompass, N.d).

For more information on the European Agricultural Fund for Regional Development Check: The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development

European Regional Development Fund

The **European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)** is one of the European Union's primary financial instruments for strengthening economic and social cohesion across the EU. Established in 1975, the fund is designed to reduce disparities between regions by supporting investment in infrastructure, innovation, the green and digital transition, and social inclusion. For the 2021–2027 programming period, the ERDF has been allocated approximately €226 billion, making it one of the largest EU funding mechanisms. This substantial investment reflects the EU's commitment to fostering balanced regional development and addressing inequalities across its member states. The fund plays a central role in implementing EU cohesion policy and is closely aligned with broader priorities such as the European Green Deal and digital transformation (European Commission, N.d).

The ERDF provides co-financing for a wide range of public and private sector-led projects that contribute to smarter, greener, and more connected regions. Funding priorities include enhancing research and innovation, supporting SMEs, promoting energy efficiency and renewable energy, improving access to digital technologies, and encouraging sustainable urban development. Each EU Member State, in collaboration with its regions, develops an operational programme that sets out how ERDF funds will be used, meaning that the exact focus and procedures vary by country and region. In addition to regional programmes, the ERDF also supports cross-border cooperation through the Interreg programme.

Eligibility for ERDF funding depends on the specific regional or national programme under which the project falls. Generally, public authorities, research institutions, non-profits, and private enterprises can apply. Projects must demonstrate clear relevance to the priorities set out in the regional operational programme and provide co-financing, with EU contributions typically ranging from 50% to 85% depending on the region's level of development (European Commission, N.d).

For more information on the European Regional Development Fund check: European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) - European Commission

Global Gateway

The **Global Gateway** is a strategic investment initiative launched by the European Union in 2021 to foster sustainable and high-quality infrastructure worldwide. With a total planned investment of up to €300 billion by 2027, the programme aims to strengthen global partnerships while promoting democratic values, environmental sustainability, and economic resilience. It is designed to serve as a values-driven alternative to other global infrastructure initiatives, most notably China's Belt and Road Initiative. Global Gateway focuses on partnerships with low- and middle-income countries, seeking to bridge global investment gaps in areas such as climate, energy, health, digitalisation, transport, and education (European Commission, 2023).

The initiative operates through a combination of EU public funding and mobilised private investments. It uses instruments such as the European Fund for Sustainable Development Plus (EFSD+), which provides guarantees to mitigate risks and encourage private-sector engagement. The fund also includes grants, loans, and equity financing, often channelled through institutions like the European Investment Bank (EIB). Possible areas of investment include climate and energy (renewables and energy access), digital infrastructure, sustainable transport, health systems, and education and research partnerships. Projects are expected to align with EU development and climate goals, and partnerships with the private sector are encouraged to ensure scalable and resilient outcomes.

Participation in Global Gateway projects is open to a wide range of actors, including EU institutions, Member States, partner governments, development finance institutions, and private companies. Projects typically take shape through strategic partnerships and dialogues facilitated by EU Delegations in partner countries (European Commission, 2023). While there is no centralised open-call process like in other EU programmes, opportunities are published via the Global Gateway Business Opportunities Portal.

For more information on the Global Gateway programme check: European Commission's official Global Gateway page.

Horizon Europe

Horizon Europe is the European Union's main funding programme for research and innovation, running from 2021 to 2027 with a total budget of €95.5 billion. It aims to address climate change, contribute to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and strengthen the EU's competitiveness and economic growth. The programme supports collaborative research across disciplines and borders to tackle global challenges and support EU policy priorities.

The structure of Horizon Europe revolves around three key pillars. The first, Excellent Science, strengthens the EU's science base through support for frontier research by top scientists (via the European Research Council), researcher mobility and training (through the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions), and development of world-class research infrastructures. The second pillar, Global Challenges and European Industrial Competitiveness, funds research to tackle major societal challenges such as health, climate, digital transformation, and food systems. The third, Innovative Europe, focuses on fostering disruptive and breakthrough innovation through mechanisms like the European Innovation Council, supporting start-ups and scale-ups, and promoting innovation ecosystems through the European Institute of Innovation and Technology.

Participation in Horizon Europe is open to a wide range of organisations from both the EU and beyond. Legal entities from EU Member States and associated countries are fully eligible for funding. Entities from other non-associated third countries can still take part in projects, but may not automatically receive EU funding unless their participation is deemed essential or if the specific call allows for it. For most projects, at least three independent organisations from three different EU or associated countries must be involved. Applications are submitted via the European Commission's Funding & Tenders Portal, and calls for proposals are announced regularly. The application process might take up to a year before financing is granted. The percentage of the budget financed by the program depends on whether the project is carried out within a consortium and whether it is intended to generate profit (European Commission, 2021).

Role of RVO: within RVO there is a team, that can assist any company or organisations during the writing of the application, finding consortium partners and review the proposal application and provide feedback. Evaluation finds place in brussels.

For more information on Horizon Europe. check: Horizon Europe - European Commission

Just Transition Fund

The **Just Transition Fund (JTF)** is a central component of the European Union's strategy to achieve climate neutrality by 2050, providing targeted support to regions and sectors most affected by the transition towards a green economy. With a budget of €19.7 billion for the 2021–2027 period, the JTF aims to mitigate the socio-economic impacts of the climate transition, particularly in areas heavily reliant on fossil fuels and carbon-intensive industries (European Commission, 2024a).

Eligible activities under the JTF include investments in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), the creation of new firms, research and innovation, environmental rehabilitation, clean energy projects, upskilling and reskilling of workers, job-search assistance, and the transformation of existing carbon-intensive installations, provided these investments lead to substantial emission reductions and job protection (European Commission, 2024). However, the fund explicitly excludes financing for the decommissioning or construction of nuclear power plants, activities related to tobacco products, investments related to fossil fuels, and support for companies in financial difficulty, unless authorized under temporary state aid rules addressing exceptional circumstances (EUR-Lex, 2024).

The JTF operates under a co-financing model, with the EU providing up to 85% of eligible costs in less developed regions, 70% in transition regions, and 50% in more developed regions. The remaining funding must come from national or regional sources (European Commission, 2024).

Applications for JTF funding are managed at the national and regional levels, with each Member State responsible for publishing calls for proposals, establishing selection criteria, and evaluating projects in line with their approved TJTPs. Prospective applicants should consult their respective national or regional managing authorities for specific application procedures and deadlines (European Commission, 2024).

For more information on the Just Transition Fund check: Inforegio - Just Transition Fund

LIFE Programme

The **LIFE Programme** is the European Union's primary funding tool dedicated to environmental, nature conservation, and climate action projects. Established in 1992, LIFE has supported more than 5,500 projects across the EU and associated countries, contributing significantly to the EU's environmental and climate objectives. The programme's focus spans several areas, including nature and biodiversity, circular economy, climate change mitigation and adaptation, and clean energy transition. LIFE supports projects that have a positive impact on the environment and contribute to sustainable development (European Commission, N.d).

All focus areas of the LIFE programme:

- Circular economy and waste
- Air
- Water
- Soil
- Noise
- Chemicals
- New EU Bauhaus

Eligibility for the LIFE Programme extends to a wide range of entities, primarily public or private legal entities from EU member states and countries associated with the programme (such as Moldova, North Macedonia, Iceland and Ukraine). Natural persons are not eligible to apply. Projects must align with LIFE's thematic areas, such as nature conservation, climate action, and environmental sustainability. Applications can be submitted individually or as part of a consortium, with cross-border projects encouraged but not mandatory. The programme is open to organisations with a proven track record of project management and capacity to implement large-scale initiatives that contribute to the EU's climate, circular or nature conserving policies. The project has to be located within the EU or an associate member country. There are rare exceptions for projects outside the EU, but the project has to have an positive impact on one of the focus areas of the programme within the EU (Astrid Hamer, 2025).

The application process for the LIFE Programme begins with an annual call for proposals, typically published by the European Commission in April each year. For example, the next call will be published on April 24, 2025. Prospective applicants must submit their proposals through the EU's Funding & Tenders Portal. In addition, the European Commission organizes information sessions to help guide potential applicants through the application process. These sessions are often held before the proposal deadlines to clarify requirements and offer advice. Applicants may seek partnerships through the Funding & Tenders Portal, which offers tools to find project partners, and also have opportunities to network during the EU LIFE Info Days. The programme typically provides grants ranging from €1 million to €10 million or higher if the project has considerable impact (outliers up to 30 million), with EU contributions covering 60% to 95% of eligible project costs, depending on the project type. Although the Dutch enterprise agency can help you through the application process, the EU commission is responsible for grading and approving projects (European Commission, 2025). The Dutch Enterprise Agency (RVO) has a team dedicated to helping companies navigate the difficult LIFE application process and all the rules that come with it. For more information or if you need help during or for your application, contact the LIFE team at the Dutch Enterprise Agency (RVO) (Astrid Hamer, 2025).

ⓘ For more information on the LIFE programme check: LIFE - European Commission



International (non-EU) Subsidies

Global Environment Facility (GEF)

The **Global Environment Facility (GEF)** offers funding and partnership opportunities for private sector companies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that aim to advance the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These opportunities are designed to leverage the unique capacities of private businesses and NGOs to tackle global issues such as poverty, inequality, and climate change. To be eligible for UNDP funding or partnerships, organizations must demonstrate a strong alignment with UN values, including commitments to human rights, environmental sustainability, and anti-corruption practices. They must also have proven organizational capacity to implement projects effectively, possess financial stability or the ability to secure necessary resources, and comply with UNDP's general operational and procurement standards.

The application process typically begins with the submission of a concept note outlining the project's objectives, methods, and anticipated results. Selected applicants are invited to submit full proposals, including detailed budgets and implementation plans, which are then thoroughly reviewed by UNDP technical teams to ensure feasibility, impact, and strategic alignment. If approved, a formal partnership agreement is signed, detailing the roles, responsibilities, and funding terms (United Nations Development Programme, 2024).

Key funding mechanisms accessible to NGOs and companies through UNDP include the **Global Environment Facility (GEF)** Small Grants Programme, which finances community-driven environmental projects; the Business Call to Action (BCtA), which supports inclusive business models that benefit low-income populations; and the SDG Impact platform, which provides tools and frameworks to help businesses and investors align with SDG objectives (United Nations Development Programme, 2024).

ⓘ For more information on the United Nations Development Programme: Funding | United Nations Development Programme

Imagine H_2O (Only for rejected PfW projects)

The **Imagine H_2O Fund** is a nonprofit initiative that supports early-stage water startups through programs like the Imagine H_2O Accelerator and the Water Innovation Pilot Fund. These programs provide startups with resources to develop their solutions, commercialize technologies, and enter new markets. The Accelerator offers mentorship, industry visibility, and access to a global network of investors and partners, while the Pilot Fund provides financial support for pilot projects to validate technologies in real-world settings. Projects seeking funding must align with Imagine H_2O's mission to address water challenges through innovative solutions. They should demonstrate technical feasibility, potential for significant impact, and scalability. Successful applicants often have a proof of concept and can articulate a clear path to market adoption (imagine H_2O, n.d). To be eligible for Imagine H_2O funding, startups must meet specific criteria: they should be less than seven years in operation, have less than $5 million in annual revenue, and have received less than $10 million in equity investment. Additionally, applicants must be available for program meetings during designated time windows, which vary by region. The programs are open to global applicants (opportunity desk, 2024).

ⓘ For more information on Image H20 check: Water Innovation Pilot Fund - Imagine H_2O

Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Initiative (African Development Bank, only for projects in Africa)

The **Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Initiative (RWSSI)** is a flagship programme of the African Development Bank (AfDB) focused on improving access to safe water and sanitation services for rural communities across Africa. Since its inception, RWSSI has mobilised a total budget of approximately €6 billion, sourced from the AfDB, donor contributions, African governments, and beneficiary communities.

The initiative supports a wide range of activities including the construction of water supply infrastructure, sanitation facilities, policy and strategy development, capacity building, and community engagement.

Funding provided through RWSSI typically covers a substantial share of project costs, helping to leverage additional investments from local governments and other partners. To qualify for RWSSI support, projects must align with AfDB's strategic priorities, demonstrate clear benefits for rural populations, promote sustainable water and sanitation solutions, and comply with environmental and social safeguard standards. Collaboration with national or local government entities is generally required to ensure ownership, effective implementation, and long-term sustainability (African Development Bank, 2021).

For more information check on RWSSI check: Rural Water Supply & Sanitation Initiative | African Development Bank Group

The Water Financing Partnership Facility (Asian Development Bank, only for projects in Asia)

The Water Financing Partnership Facility (WFPF) is a collaborative funding mechanism established by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to support sustainable water resource management and improve water supply and sanitation services across Asia and the Pacific. It exists to mobilise financial resources and technical expertise from development partners, governments, and the private sector to tackle critical water challenges, including water scarcity, pollution, and climate resilience. The WFPF focuses on projects that promote integrated water resources management, enhance water security, and improve access to clean and safe water for vulnerable communities. The total budget of the WFPF is approximately USD 200 million, pooled from various donor contributions. Funding for individual projects varies but generally covers between 30% and 70% of project costs, depending on the nature of the project and the partners involved.

To be eligible for WFPF support, projects typically must align with ADB's strategic priorities, demonstrate regional or cross-sectoral benefits, and involve partnerships with public or private stakeholders. Additionally, projects should contribute to long-term sustainable water management, show potential for scaling up or replication, and comply with environmental and social safeguard standards. By fostering innovation and collaboration, the WFPF aims to catalyse transformative impacts in water governance and infrastructure throughout the region (Asian Development Bank, 2024).

For more information on the WFPF check: Water Financing Partnership Facility | Asian Development Bank

The Water Research Foundation

The **Water Research Foundation (WRF)** is a nonprofit organisation advancing water science to protect public health and the environment. Through its main programs namely the Research Priority Program and the Tailored Collaboration Program, WRF funds projects that tackle critical water sector challenges and deliver practical and innovative solutions. The Tailored Collaboration Program enables utilities and other interested parties to co-develop and co-fund research projects addressing their specific need. The Research Priority Program focuses on issues identified as high priority by WRF's subscribers and is designed to deliver practical solutions to pressing water-related problems (Water Research Foundation, 2024).

Eligible applicants include water utilities, universities, and research institutions, which must submit detailed financial documentation and comply with U.S. federal grant regulations. Projects must align with WRF's identified research priorities, demonstrate technical feasibility, present clear environmental or operational benefits, and offer broad applicability to the water sector. Applications require a research proposal, certification forms, and, where applicable, co-funding agreements(Water Research Foundation, 2022).

For more information on the water research foundation fund visit: Homepage | The Water Research Foundation

United Nations Environment Programme

The **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)** offers various funding and partnership opportunities for private sector companies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) committed

to advancing environmental sustainability. While UNEP primarily receives funding from Member States, it actively collaborates with diverse stakeholders, including the private sector and NGOs, to implement its programmes and initiatives.

UNEP's funding mechanisms include the Environment Fund, which supports the core programme of work, and the Planetary Funds comprising the Climate Fund, Nature Fund, and Pollution Fund that address specific environmental challenges. These funds are open to contributions from various partners, enabling UNEP to accelerate its efforts in tackling the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. Projects need to have clear environmental impact, ensure scalability and suitability to be able to qualify for funding (UNEP, 2025).

For NGOs seeking to engage with UNEP, obtaining accreditation is a crucial step. Accredited organizations gain observer status to the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) and its subsidiary bodies, allowing them to participate in meetings and contribute to UNEP's work. The accreditation process requires NGOs to be legally registered, non-profit entities with an international scope of work, and to have been in existence for at least two years (UNEP, 2025).

To apply for funding or participate in UNEP-led projects, organizations should monitor UNEP's open calls for proposals, which outline specific project opportunities, eligibility criteria, and application procedures. The application process typically involves submitting a detailed project proposal, budget, and letters of support from relevant stakeholders. Applicants are encouraged to engage with national focal points and align their proposals with UNEP's strategic priorities (UNEP, 2025).

ℹ For more information on the United Nations Environment programme check: www.unep.org/about-un-environment-programme/funding-and-partnerships



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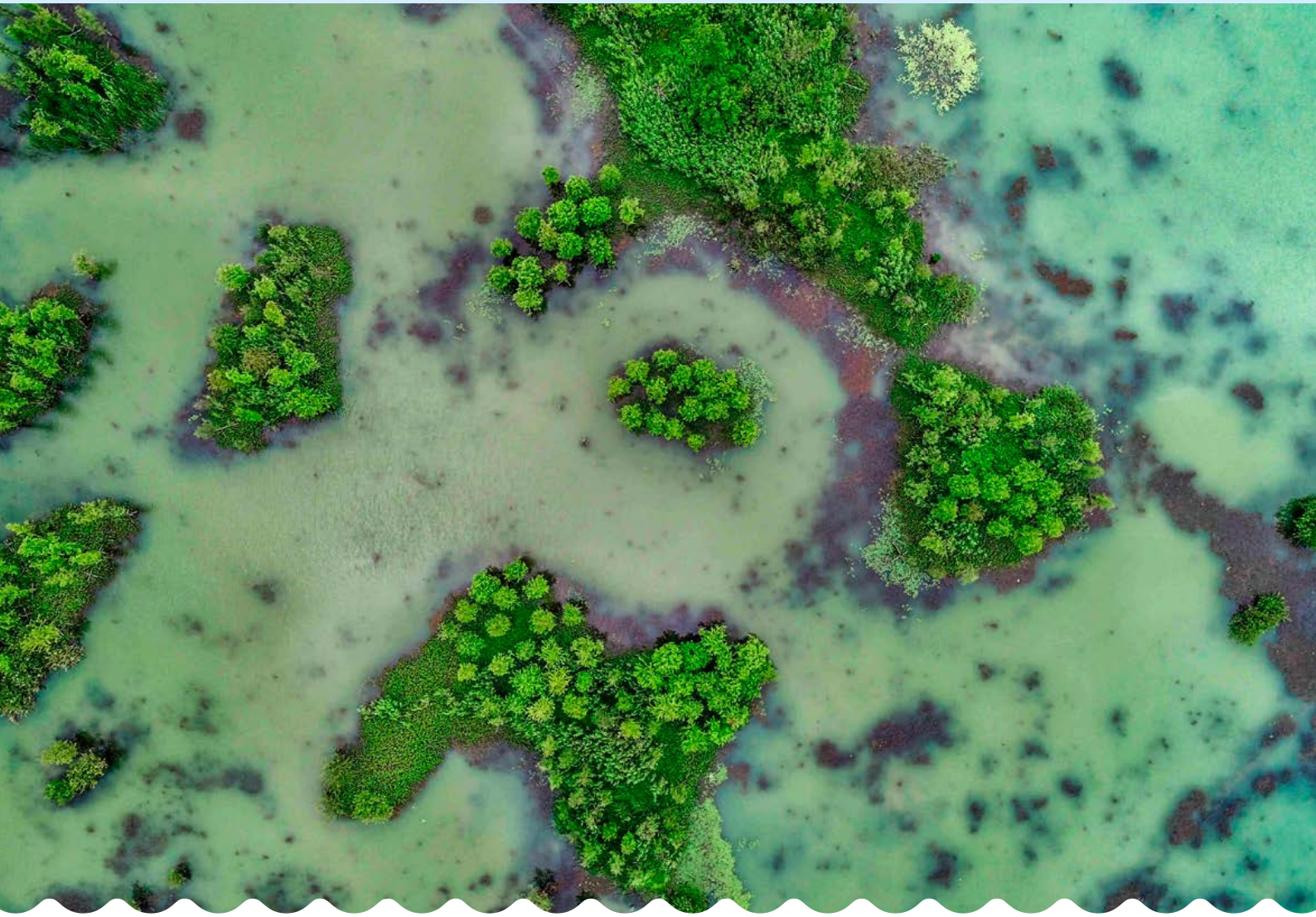
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