



Innovation and Capacity building

in Agricultural Environmental and Rural UAV Services



ICAERUS

PULL Open Call for Farming, Forestry and Rural Challenges (FFRC)

Applicants' Guide



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1. Introduction

This document provides information regarding the ICAERUS Open Calls, with a focus on PULL Open Calls for Farming, Forestry and Rural Challenges (FFRC), including the eligibility and evaluation criteria. The document in its entirety and all associated Annexes must be read carefully for the submission of an application.

1.1 About ICAERUS



Drones are an efficient, flexible digital technology that can perform increasingly complex tasks without damaging the environment, however their widespread adoption across the agri-food sector has been limited by costs, knowledge gaps, regulatory and safety restrictions.

ICAERUS aims to tackle these challenges by **supporting and showcasing the effective, efficient, and safe deployment of drones in applicable settings** and to **identify risks and added values associated with their use**. The ICAERUS vision is to explore drone-based opportunities and provide a more complete and interconnected account of their potential and impacts as multi-purpose vehicles in EU agriculture, forestry and rural areas.

ICAERUS will utilize an **application-oriented approach** to explore multi-purpose drone use in 5 specific drone applications, representing the most important sectoral and societal drone usage purposes in Europe. ICAERUS also plans to use **research, technology optimization, demonstration, and drone education** to create an efficient, trusted, and safe environment for the **EU drone service market** to flourish contributing to the achievement of the EU's decarbonization, digitalization and resilience. ICAERUS will also produce several exploitable results that will offer extensive positive impact including the ICAERUS platform.

ICAERUS Use Cases are large-scale multi-actor experiments and demonstration events aiming to optimise, test and demonstrate drone technology and showcase multiple drone applications while assessing and reducing their associated risks. Use Cases will take place in 5 countries and span across the 5 most important sectoral and societal drone usage purposes:

- 1) **Crop Monitoring UC (Spain):** a) **Demonstrate** the capacity of drones in disease and plant stress identification and weed detection in vineyards; b) **assess** drones as a 3D canopy reconstruction tool in vineyards, using aerial (top) with ground (side) image acquisition; c) **Develop** a user-friendly dashboard as a decision support system (DSS), for drone data analysis, visualisation and actions recommendations.
- 2) **Drone Spraying UC (Greece):** a) **Test and assess** spraying configurations for optimal drone spraying applications in field conditions; b) **compare** the efficiency and environmental impact of existing conventional spraying to drone spraying practices; c) **Identify** risks and develop mitigation strategies related to drone-based plant protection applications.
- 3) **Livestock Monitoring UC (France):** a) **Evaluate** drone solutions for monitoring different grazing cattle and sheep systems, building on existing and implemented solutions and avoiding duplication of effort; b) **assess** their labour-reduction capabilities for drone-based herd monitoring; c) **Examine** governance models and drone adoption barriers and drivers.
- 4) **Forestry and Biodiversity UC (Lithuania):** a) **Monitor** forest tree health through the use of drones, satellites and data science; b) **identify and inspect** areas of potentially high fire risk; c) **Monitor ecosystems** and assess biodiversity and wildlife populations; d) **Evaluate** the capacity of drones to manage or prevent the expansion of infectious diseases affecting both feral and domestic animals.

- 5) **Rural Logistics UC (Greece & N. Macedonia):** a) **Design and develop** an innovative drone-delivery fleet management system; b) **Automate** drone navigation operations by integrating state-of-the-art technologies; c) **Assess** three types of drones on delivery parcel size/weight and distance; d) **Implement** Drone as a Service (DAAS) model principles.



Figure 1 ICAERUS use cases

1.2 ICAERUS Approach

In order to achieve its vision, ICAERUS project will “rise up” by advancing existing drone software technology and knowledge, and utilize research to optimise and demonstrate technology and educate stakeholders. scale-up, technology optimisation, demonstration and education. Along with the ICAERUS platform, which is central to the project the following six major results will support the effective, efficient and safe incorporation of drones in the EU:

- The **ICAERUS Platform** - A one-stop web-based interactive platform to be used as the central node for information dissemination, communication and collaboration to increase the use of drones for sectoral and societal purposes.
- **Drone Market Landscape** - An inventory of current drone market intelligence, including actors, needs and innovations, standards, regulations, and risks.
- **Drone Data Analytics Library** - An open-access repository of the most significant existing and emerging drone data analytics models and algorithms according to the requirements of the end-users
- **ICAERUS Use Cases and Open Call Trials** - large-scale multi-actor experiments and demonstration events where drone technology (hardware and software systems) will be optimised, tested and demonstrated, to showcase multiple ways in which drones can be applied, whilst assessing and reducing associated risks.
- **Socio-economic and Environmental Impact Assessment (SEIA) Results** - An assessment of the factors influencing the decision-making process for adopting drone technologies, the economic benefits of the multi-purpose use of drones, and the environmental impacts associated with their uptake.
- **Inclusive Business and Governance Models** - A set of inclusive business and governance models that empower people to explore the opportunities of using drones and facilitate better informed decision-making processes, as well as helping to shape future policy design.

- **ICAERUS Academy** - The capacity building element of the ICAERUS Platform offering: i) A free, open access online training course, ii) Onsite learning workshops, and iii) Value-added services for Open Calls beneficiaries.

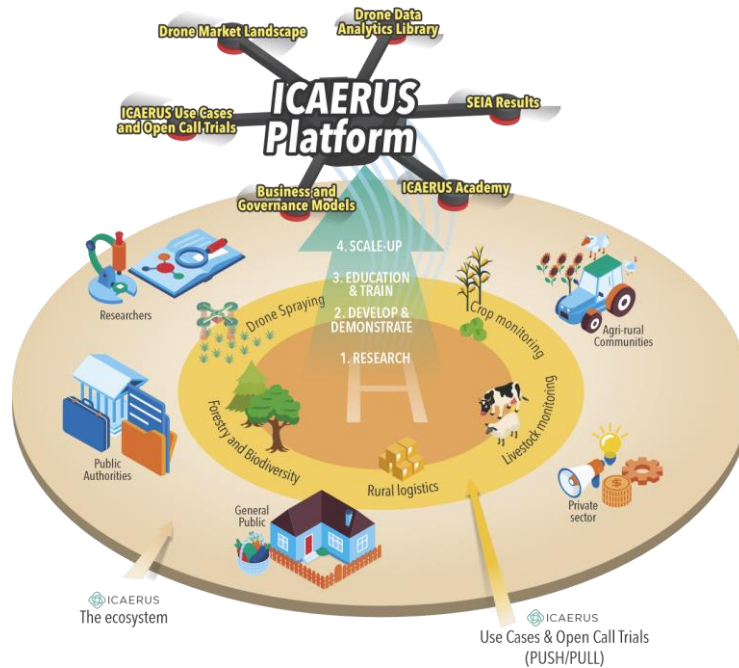


Figure 2 ICAERUS concept

1.3 ICAERUS Open Calls

ICAERUS will build upon the existing network through the issue and promotion of two (2) types of Open Calls (PUSH/PULL) providing financial support to third parties, as a **mechanism to harvest ideas** and datasets from the ecosystem and **accelerate the formation of a European network** for the effective and efficient adoption of drone technologies. The Open Calls will include:

- a) PUSH Open Calls for Innovation Development (ID) and
- b) PULL Open Calls for Farming, Forestry and Rural Challenges (FFRC)

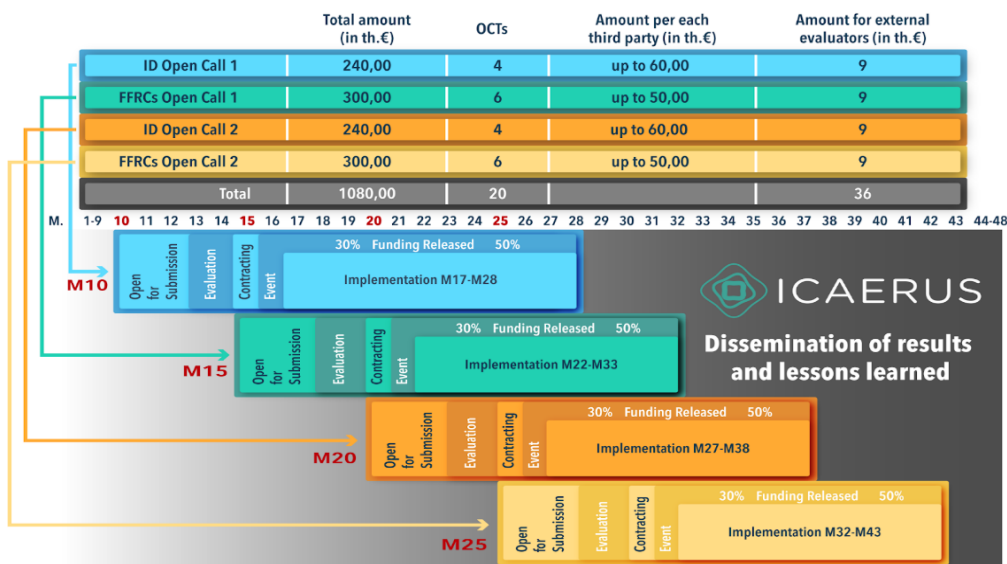


Figure 3 Graphical overview of Open calls

Both types of the Open Calls will have two release dates. In total, a **1,080,000 €** budget is allocated for financial support to third parties. The Open Calls will result in **8 PUSH Innovation Development winners** (480,000 € for ID - up to 60,000 € for each third party) and **12 PULL Farming, Forestry and Rural Challenges winners** (600,000 € for FFRC - up to 50,000 € for each third party). Each sub-project accepted will last for **12 months** and be divided into 3 phases: Design, Development and Market.

2. PULL Open Call for Farming, Forestry and Rural Challenges (FFRC)

2.1 General Information

ICAERUS PULL Open Calls for Farming, Forestry and Rural Challenges (FFRC) aim to attract **end-users (agri-food producers, environmental monitoring entities and rural communities)** to utilize drones and services built around them for **individual commercial needs** (e.g., crop production, early warning systems...) and/or **community-related issues** (e.g., disaster risk reduction, forest/wildlife conservation, etc.).

The 2 PULL Open Calls for Farming, Forestry and Rural Challenges (FFRC) will be initiated on **M16** and **M25** respectively and after proposal submission and evaluation, the selected stakeholders will apply the ICAERUS outputs to address their challenges between **M22-M33** and **M32-M43** respectively. The PULL Open Calls will result **12 FFRCs winners**. A total sum of **600,000 €** is dedicated to iterations of this type of open call, 300,000 € per iteration. Each winner may ask for up to 50,000 €.

The PULL 1 Open Call for Farming, Forestry and Rural Challenges (FFRC) will be published on October 17th, 2023. It is planned to finance 6 winners in this call. The total sum for this iteration of the PULL Open Call is 300,000 €, and each winner may ask for up to 50,000 €.

2.2 Topics for Farming, Forestry and Rural Challenges (FFRC)

Within ICAERUS PULL Open Call for Farming, Forestry and Rural Challenges (FFRC), the following types of applications/solutions (but not limited to) are expected to be funded:

- **Applying innovative solutions** that leverage drone technology to address specific challenges faced by farmers, foresters, and rural communities.
- **Sustainable agriculture**, e.g. using drones to support regenerative farming methods, reduce the use of pesticides and fertilisers, and improve soil health.
- **Logistics and supply chain management**, e.g. for transporting goods and deliveries to remote areas, managing inventory and distribution, and monitoring supply chain operations using drones.
- **Infrastructure monitoring and maintenance**, e.g. using drones to inspect and maintain roads, bridges and other critical infrastructure in rural areas.
- **Energy management**, e.g. using drones to monitor and optimise renewable energy systems such as wind turbines and solar panels (agrivoltaics).
- **Water management**, such as the use of drones to monitor and manage water resources, including dams, reservoirs and irrigation systems.
- **Public safety**, such as the use of drones for crime prevention and law enforcement, disaster relief and response, and emergency medical services.

Examples of applications eligible for funding:

- **Crop monitoring and analysis using drones:** Applying software and hardware solutions for the use of drones to collect and analyse data on crops, such as growth rates, yield estimates and pest infestations.
- **Precision agriculture with drones:** Applying drone-based systems for precision agriculture, e.g., for mapping soil moisture, applying fertilisers and pesticides and managing irrigation systems.
- **Monitoring forests and wildlife with drones:** Applying drone systems for forest and wildlife monitoring, including habitat mapping, animal tracking and forest fire detection.
- **Disaster management and risk reduction using drones:** Apply drone-based systems for disaster management, e.g., for search and rescue missions, delivery of medical supplies and providing situational awareness in disaster scenarios.
- **Environmental monitoring with drones:** Applying drone-based systems for environmental monitoring, e.g., for mapping water quality, measuring air pollution and tracking changes in land use.
- **Rural connectivity through drones:** Applying drone-based solutions for rural community connectivity, e.g., for providing internet access or communication during natural disasters.

It is important to note that the list above is only indicative and that the applicants are encouraged to submit proposals based on their own ideas related to the topic of ICAERUS PULL Open Calls. In order to be eligible, proposals need to address challenges in Rural Areas.

2.3 Submission procedure

The entry point for submitting of all proposals for ICAERUS Open Calls is the ICAERUS website, <https://icaerus.eu/open-calls/>.

Submissions received through any other channel will be automatically discarded.

Documents required in subsequent phases will be submitted via dedicated channels, which will be indicated by the ICAERUS consortium in the contracting phase.

2.4 Language

English is the official language for ICAERUS Open Calls. Applications submitted in any other language will not be evaluated. English is also the only official language throughout the whole execution of the ICAERUS project. This means all requested contributions must be submitted in English to be eligible.

2.5 Documentation format

Any document requested in any of the phases must be submitted electronically in PDF format without restrictions for printing. When filling in the proposal template, make sure to keep provided set formatting of the document, including margins, font size and do not exceed the defined maximum of 10 pages, as given in the proposal template. Cover page and table of content are included in the maximum of 10 pages.

2.6 Origin of the funds

All sub-grantees will sign a dedicated sub-grant Agreement with the ICAERUS consortium. The funds provided to the sub-grantee Agreement come directly from the funds of the European Project ICAERUS funded itself by the European Commission under Grant Agreement Number 101060643, and remain

therefore, property of the EU until the balance is paid, whose management rights have been transferred to the project partners in ICAERUS. This relation between the sub-grantees and the European Commission through ICAERUS project carries a set of obligations to the sub-grantees with the European Commission. It is the responsibility of the sub-grantees to fulfil these, and of the ICAERUS consortium partners to inform them of these.

More details on obligations of sub-grantees can be found in Chapter 5.

3. Proposal submission and Selection

In the first iteration of the PULL Open Call for Farming, Forestry and Rural Challenges (FFRC), ICAERUS will select 6 FFRC solutions. All Open Call winners must meet the eligibility criteria outlined in this Section and sign and submit the same documents. At the time of application, all applicants must submit the following: Annex 4 (Declaration of Honour) and Annex 5 (Declaration of Conducting Business/SME Declaration/Business Activity Statement or equivalent document/Declaration for Rural Communities/ Cooperatives).

During the contracting phase, winners of the Call for Farming, Forestry and Rural Challenges (FFRC) must also provide: Annex 6 (Bank account information) and three signed copies of the Sub-grant Agreement for ICAERUS Open Call winners, which will be given to them upon being declared a winning applicant. Figure 4 below presents the provisional timeline during which each relevant phase for the applying to the ICAERUS PULL 1 Open Call for Farming, Forestry and Rural Challenges (FFRC) will take place. The dates may change due to unforeseen events and situations. Therefore, these are an indication of what is initially expected; the dates are to be confirmed by the ICAERUS team along the process and are not binding.

During the contracting phase, winners of the ICAERUS PULL 1 Open Call for Farming, Forestry and Rural Challenges (FFRC) must also provide: Annex 6 (Bank account information) and three signed copies of Sub-grant Agreement for ICAERUS Open Call winners (indicative model given as an Annex 7), which will be given to them upon being declared the winning applicant. Figure below presents the provisional timeline during which each relevant phase of the ICAERUS PULL 1 Open Call for Farming, Forestry and Rural Challenges (FFRC) will take place. The dates may change due to unforeseen events and situations. Therefore, these are an indication of what is initially expected; the dates are to be confirmed by the ICAERUS team along the process and in agreement with the EC and are not legally binding.

An initial timeline for PULL 1 Open Call for FFRC can be seen in tables below:

Table 1 PULL 1 Open Call – application and selection timeline

	Activity	Date
Application and selection	Launch of the PULL 1 Open Call	October 17 th , 2023
	Deadline for submitting the proposals	January 16 th , 2024, 17.00 CET
	Eligibility check	Mid. January 2024
	Evaluation and selection	January - February 2024
	Evaluation results and contracting	February - March 2024

Table 2 PULL 1 Open Call – implementation timeline

	Activity	Date
Implementation	Phase 1 - Design	April – May 2024

	Phase 2 – Develop	June – December 2024
	Phase 3 - Market	January – March 2025

3.1 Open Call Publication

ICAERUS PULL 1 Open Call for Farming, Forestry and Rural Challenges (FFRC) will be published on the ICAERUS website, <https://icaerus.eu/open-calls/>, and Funding & Tenders Portal on **October 17th, 2023 and it will remain open until January 16th, 2024, 17.00 CET**. The publication will be supported by the Open Call Kit, which includes the following documents:

1. Open Call text, which provides the scope and objectives of the open call.
2. Applicants' Guide, this document.
3. Proposal template, word document to be submitted as a PDF in the application phase.
4. Declaration of Honour (DoH), which declares that all conditions of the Open Call are accepted by an SME/cooperative legal representative.
5. Declaration of conducting business, which declares that the applicant is an SME according to EC standards. In case of Rural communities/cooperatives, a confirmation from responsible authority/registry (e.g., Commercial court or similar) should be uploaded.
6. Bank account information, which collects information on the applicant's bank account where the ICAERUS payments will be transferred to (only for winners of the Open Call).
7. Indicative Model sub-grant agreement, for information purposes only.
8. Frequently asked questions & answers published at the community feed of the specially dedicated channel for ICAERUS Project and Open Calls on the Open Call Hub Platform/ICAERUS PULL 1 OC tab, <https://opencallhub.eu/>

3.2 Eligibility Criteria

ICAERUS PULL 1 Open Call is aimed at (but not limited to) European **agri-food producers, environmental monitoring entities and rural communities/cooperatives**. Detailed eligibility criteria are described in this section. Overall eligibility criteria for the ICAERUS PULL Open Calls are:

- Applicants need to be either an SME or rural community/cooperative (see 3.2.1 and 3.2.2)
- The applicant must have a valid VAT number. However, in case having VAT number is not mandatory according to the national legislation of the applicant's country, a registration number from the respective national authority (National business registry, Commercial court or similar) must be provided.
- Existing consortium members of ICAERUS project are not eligible for the Open Calls of ICAERUS.
- The proposal is delivered before the defined deadline, applying the requested submission procedure.
- Proposals shall only ask for funding for that part of the work that is not yet accomplished and will be carried out after having been selected for funding. Of course, this does not exclude the usage of e.g., results, IP, infrastructures or approaches already held by the applicants.
- Only one proposal per applicant can be selected for funding. SMEs that receive funding within one Open Call are not eligible to apply for additional funding in other ICAERUS Open Calls. In case an applicant submits more than one proposal and both (all) of them are shortlisted for funding, only the one with the highest score could be selected.

Note: ICAERUS consortium reserves the right to ask for additional explanations from the applicants during the eligibility check.

3.2.1 Definition of an SME eligible for ICAERUS Open Calls

An SME is considered as such if it complies with the European Commission Recommendation 2003/361/EC¹, and the SME user guide². In summary, the criteria which define an SME are the following:

- Independent, partner or linked enterprises, with financial and staff figures calculated in accordance with instructions given by Recommendation 2003/361/EC³.
- It is a legal entity established and based in one of the EU Member States or an HE Associated country as defined in HE rules for participation⁴ (see section 3.2.3).
- Headcount in Annual Work Unit (AWU) less than 500.
- Annual turnover less or equal to €100 million.

If applicants are not sure whether they comply with the SME criteria, an online SME self-assessment questionnaire is provided by the EC, for these purposes, on this link: [SME self-assessment questionnaire](#).

3.2.2 Definition of a Rural Community/cooperative for ICAERUS Open Call

A **rural community/cooperative** is a group of people in a rural area who form an organisation to address common challenges, based on democratic decision-making, equality and mutual support. The cooperative does not need to be an SME but must provide confirmation of registration from a business registry such as the Commercial Court in order to participate in the ICAERUS Open Call.

3.2.3 Definition of eligible countries

Association with Horizon Europe is governed by the Horizon Europe Regulation 2021/6951. Legal entities from associated countries can participate under the same conditions as legal entities from the EU Member States, unless specific restrictions or conditions are set in the work programme and/or call/topic text. Such measures could include the limitation of participation in certain actions to legal entities established only in the EU, or in the EU and specified non-EU countries, in order to safeguard the EU's strategic assets, interests, autonomy or security.

Important notice:

The Open Call adheres to the **Council Implementing Decision 2022/2506** that stipulates that legal commitments must not be entered into with any public interest trusts established on the basis of the Hungarian Act IX of 2021 or any entity maintained by such a public interest trust, concerning inter alia financial support to third parties. Consequently, the concerned Hungarian entities are excluded from receiving FSTP (financial support to third parties) from this Open Call. For further information please follow this [link](#).

According to the *EU Grants: List of Participating Countries (HE): V2.6 – 01.08.2023⁴*, besides the **EU Member States** (including their outermost regions, as well as **Overseas Countries and Territories (OCT)** linked to EU Member), the following **Horizon Europe associated countries** are eligible to receive funding through ICAERUS Open Calls (listed in alphabetical order): Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Faroe Islands, Georgia, Iceland, Israel, Kosovo⁵, Moldova, Montenegro, New Zealand (associated to Pillar II 'Global Challenges and European Industrial Competitiveness' as from the Work Programmes 2023 onwards, including for the institutionalised European partnerships), North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia, Tunisia, Türkiye, and Ukraine.

¹ European Commission Recommendation 2003/361/EC.

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2003:124:0036:0041:en:PDF>

² SME definition: <https://op.europa.eu/s/ouL1>

³ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2003:124:0036:0041:en:PDF>

⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/list-3rd-country-participation_horizon-euratom_en.pdf

⁵ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

Until association agreements start producing legal effects either through provisional application or their entry into force, transitional arrangements may apply if provided for in the particular Horizon Europe Work Programme. The transitional arrangements apply with regard to the following countries and legal entities established in these countries, with which association negotiations are being processed or where association is imminent (listed in the alphabetical order):

1. Morocco (applicable for the entire Programme)
2. United Kingdom (applicable for the entire Programme⁶). UK is eligible, but this is provided that the UK signs the association agreement before the signature of the sub-grant agreement.

Legal entities established in Switzerland are currently not covered by the transitional arrangement (funded through its own funding programme and budget). Liechtenstein does not intend to associate to Horizon Europe.

Participants (other third countries) from the following low- to middle-income countries are **automatically eligible** for funding⁷ according to the List of Participating Countries in Horizon Europe, as of August 1st, 2023⁴:

- Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Azerbaijan
- Bangladesh, Belarus, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi
- Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, Comoros, Congo (Democratic Republic), Congo (Republic), Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba
- Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic
- Ecuador, Egypt (Arab Republic), El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Eswatini, Ethiopia
- Fiji
- Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana
- Haiti, Honduras
- Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic), Iraq
- Jamaica, Jordan
- Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kiribati, Korea (Democratic People's Republic), Kyrgyz Republic
- Lao (People's Democratic Republic), Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya
- Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Mauritius, Micronesia (Federated States), Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar
- Namibia, Nepal, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria
- Pakistan, Palestine⁸, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines
- Rwanda
- Samoa, São Tomé and Príncipe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Sudan, Suriname, Syrian Arab Republic
- Tajikistan, Tanzania, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tonga, Tunisia, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu
- Uganda, Ukraine, Uzbekistan
- Vanuatu, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic), Vietnam
- Yemen Republic
- Zambia, Zimbabwe.

⁶ The UK will participate in all parts of the Horizon Europe programme with the only exception of the EIC Fund.

⁷ Subject to the respect of EU restrictive measures: *Please note that entities subject to [EU restrictive measures](#) under Article 29 of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU) and Article 215 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU) and entities covered by Commission Guidelines No [2013/C 205/05](#) are NOT eligible to participate in any capacity (including as beneficiaries, affiliated entities, associated partners, third parties giving in-kind contributions, subcontractors or recipients of financial support to third parties, if any).*

⁸ This designation is not to be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual positions of the Member States on this issue.

3.3 Eligible costs

ICAERUS projects follows the guidelines of the European Commission in terms of cost eligible for financing within its open calls. According to the *EU Grants: AGA — Annotated Model Grant Agreement: V1.0 DRAFT– 01.04.2023*⁹, the following cost categories are considered eligible:

1. **Personnel costs** – Costs of the personnel realizing the work and preparing the deliverables/reports after each of the 3 phases. Calculate personnel costs according to the rules and regulations of your country and real labour market data regarding the relevant positions. For the proposal template, only the final amount allocated to personnel costs is necessary. Personnel costs are considered direct costs and can't be managed as indirect cost.
2. **Travel costs** – Travel costs necessary for the execution of the sub-project.
3. **Equipment costs** – Borrowing or loaning of the necessary equipment is not eligible, only depreciation costs for purchased equipment are eligible.
4. **Other goods & services** – Other goods and services include, for instance, consumables and supplies, dissemination (including open access), protection of results, certificates on the methodology, translations and publications.
5. **Subcontracting** - Subcontracting should be clearly justified. Costs must be reasonable and comply with the principle of sound financial management. Coordination tasks cannot be subcontracted. You should ensure that there are sufficient details for: the action tasks, the estimated budget, the procedure that will be followed to ensure best value-for-money. Any kind of organization could be subcontracted, provided that they are not part of the ICAERUS consortium. The evaluators will assess the scope and value-for-money aspects of subcontracting and their assessment will be reflected in the score of each proposal. Subcontracting is allowed for up to maximum of 60% of the proposed budget when properly justified. When submitting the proposal applicants should only write the total amount for subcontracting. Selected applicants should follow the standards for subcontracting set by the European Commission, ensuring best value for money and absence of conflict of interest, during the project implementation. Procurement should be done according to the national and European regulation that is applied to your institution.
6. **Indirect costs** - Indirect costs (overheads) could be up to 25% of the direct cost. Subcontracting is not included in indirect cost calculation.

3.4 Application process

3.4.1 Applicants' registration

Interested applicants should register at the ICAERUS PULL 1 Open Call page on the [Open Call Hub](#). This will be the central interface for managing the proposal applications for the remainder of the Open Call.

The information on ICAERUS PULL Open Call for FFRC for will also be available at the specially dedicated page of the ICAERUS website, <https://icaerus.eu/open-calls/>, as well as the Funding & Tenders Portal.

It is important to note that only individuals registered on the Open Call Hub platform will be in position to apply for the ICAERUS Open Call, but also to submit questions on the dedicated FAQ section on the Open Call Hub platform.

3.4.2 Application preparation

Please follow the steps:

1. Please register to the platform prior to the submission of your proposal.

⁹ https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/aga_en.pdf

2. For the application preparation, the applicants are requested to apply online and provide all necessary information. Applicants must submit all requested documents on this application platform.
3. Applicants that do not accept the terms and conditions and do not sign and upload to the platform the completed Declaration of Honour (Annex 4) and the Declaration of Conducting Business (Annex 5), both in PDF format, will not be able to submit the application. Later submissions of these documents will not be accepted.
4. In case applicants have any technical difficulties, they should contact the FSH support team at icaerus@opencallhub.eu.

It is strongly recommended not to wait until the last minute to submit the application. Failure of the application to arrive in time for any reason, including network communications delays or working from multiple browsers or multiple browser windows, is not acceptable as an extenuating circumstance. The time of receipt of the application as recorded by the submission system will be definitive.

Technical issues may occur with large documents in different formats. ICAERUS project does not bear responsibility for technical problems at any stage. Make sure to check and test upload on time. If technical issues do arise, applicants may contact ICAERUS team for support, via email: icaerus@opencallhub.eu, until January 14th at 17:00 CET (48 hours prior to the deadline).

3.4.3 The application reception

Submissions will **ONLY** be done via the OCH platform/ICAERUS PULL 1 tab on <https://opencallhub.eu/>. A full list of applicants will be drafted containing their basic information for statistical purposes and clarity (which will be also shared with the EC for transparency). **The application reception will close at 17:00 CET (Brussels time) on January 16th, 2024.**

3.5 Evaluation process

3.5.1 Eligibility check

Once the Open Call for PULL trials has been closed (January 16th, 2024, 17.00 CET), an eligibility check will be carried out in order to discard non-eligible applications. The eligibility check will be carried out by ICAERUS Advisory Board, consisting of representatives from domain experts (AUA); drone specialists (GS); models experts (WU); and business and governance model experts (FSH), in January 2024. Please note that only complete applications will be considered, those with missing or incomplete information will be discarded.

This procedural part of the evaluation will verify if:

- i) alignment with the Open Calls' objectives,
- ii) address of challenges in rural areas,
- iii) eligible legal entity in eligible HE country,
- iv) proposal not pre-submitted in the other open calls,
- v) proposed work to be carried out after the selection process,
- vi) all required documents are correctly submitted,
- vii) timely and in accordance with the rules, submission.

Important note: During the eligibility check the applicants might be requested to provide additional explanations if their application raises questions such as, but not limited to, additional explanation/supplementary documents in case VAT is not mandatory according to the national legislation, ambiguity of the information, inconsistencies which are obvious error, among others. In that case, applicants may be given 3 working days from the day of notification to correct or provide additional

documents to complete their initial application. If the requested corrections are not provided in the time specified, their application will be discarded and will not continue to evaluation.

3.5.2 Remote Evaluation

The evaluation will be done by a carefully selected pool of external reviewers. Each proposal will be reviewed by two different reviewers, with specific technical and/or business expertise related to the topics of the call. Remote evaluation will be performed during January-February 2024.

3.5.3 Key points for evaluation

All eligible proposals will be assessed by two expert evaluators against the following **award criteria**:

- i) concept and feasibility – 30%,
- ii) technology readiness and innovation development – 20%,
- iii) impact and exploitation – 30%,
- iv) organisational capacity, sufficiency in the applicant's background and allocation of resources – 20%.

Each criterion can be scored with marks from 1 to 5. The average mark for each criterion has to be at least 3 and 12 points in total.

Some specific cases might require the organization of **remote (online) consensus meetings** between the evaluators in order to align evaluation reports (i.e., in case of large discrepancies between the marks given by the evaluators, or similar).

In case consensus is not reached after the remote evaluation by external experts, **an interview of the applicant** by the Advisory Board will be conducted. The following weighted criteria are to be evaluated:

- a) confirmation of proposed targets/technology (40%),
- b) viability of proposed business model (30%),
- c) reliability to reach exploitation milestones (30%).

Proposals with the highest scores will be selected for funding. If more than one proposal shares the same score and is listed at the last place planned for funding, scores received for the criteria of iii) impact and exploitation, and i) concept and feasibility will be compared. If the scores are identical, scores received for ii) technology readiness and innovation development, and iv) organizational capacity, sufficiency in the applicant's background and allocation of resources will be compared. If a tie persists, an interview will be conducted with the applicants in question, with the participation of evaluators and the ICAERUS Open Call Advisory board.

The ICAERUS consortium, with the approval of the EC, retains the discretion to select a higher or lower number of applications than initially scheduled, which may impact the subsequent call.

3.5.4 Redress procedure

Within five working days of the delivery of a rejection letter considering the application as noneligible or an Evaluation Summary Report that ranks the application below the selection threshold, the applicants may submit a request for redress to the ICAERUS Advisory Board via the following mail: icaerus@opencallhub.eu if they believe there has been a procedural shortcoming in the way their application has been evaluated or if they believe that the results of the eligibility checks are incorrect.

The redress may address the eligibility check and/or evaluation procedural activity of the application. The request for redress must clearly explain the redress points and elaborate on every stated point. Request must be:

- Related to the evaluation procedural process or eligibility checks, for example errors like a freelancer (with a registered VAT number) being discarded as ineligible by accident,
- Clearly describing the complaint,
- Received within the time limit (five working days) from the reception of a rejection letter considering the application as non-eligible or an Evaluation Summary Report that ranks the application below the selection borderline,
- Sent by the SME legal representative, or the SME representative that has submitted the application.

In this case, ICAERUS Advisory Board will examine the request for redress within two working days and decide whether the application in question will be re-evaluated or the request for redress will be rejected. If there is clear evidence of a shortcoming that could affect the eventual decision to select an applicant as a winning entity of the Open Call, it is possible that all or part of the application will be re-evaluated. The ICAERUS Advisory Board's role is to ensure a coherent interpretation of such requests and equal treatment of applicants.

Please note:

- This procedure is concerned only with the evaluation procedural activities and/or eligibility checking process. The ICAERUS Advisory Board will not call into question the business or technical judgement of appropriately qualified experts.
- Any redress request that calls into question the technical/business judgement of appropriately qualified experts will automatically be rejected.
- A re-evaluation will only be carried out if there is evidence of a shortcoming that affects the final decision on whether to select the applicant as a winning entity or not. This means, for example, that a problem relating to one evaluation criterion will not lead to a re-evaluation if an application has failed anyway on other criteria.
- The evaluation score following any re-evaluation will be regarded as definitive. It may be lower than the original score.

Only one request for redress per application will be considered by the committee. If more requests for redress are submitted, only the first request sent will be taken into consideration. The application that is approved for re-evaluation will be re-evaluated timely and prior to the contract preparation phase. In case an application under the redress procedure is re-evaluated and the new evaluation score is higher, it will be included in the final overall ranking. In case the application under the redress procedure ranks higher than the last application on the initial list set to receive funding, then the application under the redress procedure will be determined the winner.

3.5.5 Contracting

After the Open Call evaluation conclusion and projects selection, the ICAERUS Open Call Manager and Treasurer (FSH), assisted by the project Coordinator (AUA) will start the contract preparation in collaboration with the winning applications' representatives. Contract preparation will go via an administrative and financial checking. On a case-by-case approach, a phone call or teleconference may be needed for clarification.

The objective of the contract preparation is fulfilling the legal requirements between the ICAERUS consortium and every beneficiary of the call. The items covered will be:

- To validate the status information of the SME, the following documents will be required:
 - **Legal existence:** Company Register, Official Gazette or other official document per country showing the name of the organisation, the legal address and registration number and a

copy of a document proving VAT registration (in case the VAT number does not show on the registration extract or its equivalent).

- Legal proof that the applicant's organization is not under liquidation or has filed for bankruptcy.
- **Bank Account Information:** The account where the funds will be transferred will be indicated via a form signed by the legal representative and the bank representative. The account should be a business bank account of the winning entity. The financial information should not be older than three months.

The Subgrantee assumes full responsibility on the bank account info they provide through *Annex 6 – Bank account information*. For instance, if they provide a wrong IBAN, and the ICAERUS team proceeds with the transfer to that account, they will assume any costs related to the transfer (expenses with the return of the amount from the wrong bank account and/or expenses with the new transfer will be deducted from their grant transfer). Ultimately, in a worst-case scenario, if the ICAERUS team does not manage to recover the amount transferred to the wrong bank account, the winning entity who provided a wrong IBAN will not be able to claim that payment.

The request, by the ICAERUS consortium, of the above documentation will be done within designated deadlines. The sub-project contract negotiations will be carried out during February/March 2024.

In case negotiations have not been concluded within the above period, the application is automatically rejected and the next application in the reserve list is invited.

The Sub-grant agreement will be signed between the ICAERUS consortium represented by the Treasurer (FSH) and the winning entity.

4. Implementation of PULL 1 winners for FFRC

4.1 Implementation timeline and activities

The implementation will be divided in 3 phases: **Phase.1 - Design** (M1-M2), **Phase.2 - Development** (M3-M9), and **Phase.3 - Market** (M10-M12 months). Each of the 3 phases will be completed with submission of deliverable, which summarized the work done during that phase, namely an Activity plan resulting from Phase 1, Results demonstration as a result of Phase 2, and Report on market associated activities as a result of Phase 3.

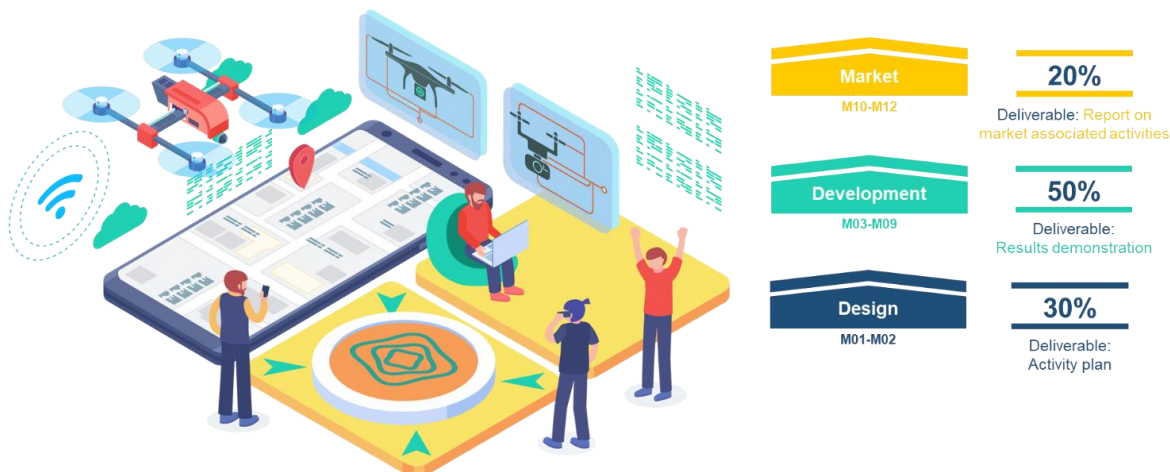


Figure 4 Implementation timeline and activities

4.2 Reviews

The review process will be followed for each phase of the implementation and will be conducted by the ICAERUS Open Call Advisory Board, chaired by ICAERUS project coordinator. Once the deliverable is received, it will be assessed by the ICAERUS Open Call Advisory Board members. A request for the deliverable's update may occur with specific requirements for what should be modified. When the deliverable is officially accepted, the Chair of the AB will inform the Treasurer and the payment will be released.

Based on the results of the review and acceptance of respected deliverables, payment will be made towards the subgrantees in the following modalities:

Phase 1 - Design (M02), Deliverable: Activity plan - Payment of **30%** of the total fund.

Phase 2 - Development (M09), Deliverable: Results demonstration - Payment of **50%** of the total fund.

Phase 3 - Market (M12), Deliverable: Report on market associated activities - Payment of **final 20%** of the total fund.

5. Applicants' responsibility

The selected Subgrantees are indirect beneficiaries of European Commission funding. As such, they are responsible for the proper use of the funding and ensure that the beneficiaries comply with the obligations set out in HE specific requirements as described in [HORIZON.2.6 - Food, Bioeconomy Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment](#). The obligations that are applicable to the beneficiaries include (but are not limited to):

5.1 Conflict of interest

The Subgrantee representative must take all measures to prevent any situation where the impartial and objective implementation of the subproject is compromised for reasons involving economic interest, political or national affinity, family or emotional ties or any other shared interest ('conflict of interests'). At the same time, applicants cannot be affiliated with consortium partners, nor can they be employees of the consortium partners. All potential conflicts of interest will be assessed carefully. Please see more info [HERE](#).

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

If the Subgrantee representative breaches any of its obligations, the Sub-grant agreement may be automatically terminated. Moreover, if the Sub-grant Agreement is terminated due to a breach made by the Subgrantee, the ICAERUS consortium reserves the right to suspend further payments to the Subgrantee and claim the Subgrantee the full refund of all payments made to the Subgrantee up to date.

5.2 Linked applicants

In the case of applications submitted by linked applicants¹⁰, all must clearly state the differences between them including but not limited to, technical aspects, market strategy and team composition, so that no doubt remains that there is no risk of double funding. In order to properly assess these concerns ICAERUS may assign all applications to the same set of evaluators and, should any doubt remain after the completion of evaluation process for eligible applications, exclude all applications.

5.3 Ethics, Data Protection & Confidentiality

During implementation of the sub-project and for five years after the end of the sub-project, the parties must keep confidential any data, documents or other material (in any form) that is identified as confidential at subcontract signing time ('confidential information').

If a Subgrantee SME requests, the Commission and the ICAERUS consortium may agree to keep such information confidential for an additional period beyond the initial five years. This will be explicitly stated in the Sub-grant Agreement. If information has been identified as confidential during the subproject execution or only orally, it will be considered confidential only if this is accepted by the ICAERUS Coordinator and confirmed in writing within 15 days of the oral disclosure. Unless otherwise agreed between the parties, they may use confidential information only to implement the Agreement.

The Subgrantee representative(s) may disclose confidential information to the ICAERUS consortium and to the selected reviewers, who will be bounded by a specific Non-Disclosure Agreement.

Applicants must confirm that all proposed services, including the means of their delivery and upkeep, have been reviewed to ensure compliance with all relevant legislation on data protection, privacy, and fundamental rights.

5.4 Promoting the action and giving visibility to the EU funding

The Subgrantees must promote the sub-project, the ICAERUS project and its results, by providing the description of their project upon request from the ICAERUS Consortium and highlight the financial support of the EC.

Unless the European Commission or the ICAERUS coordinator 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:

- a. display the EU emblem,
- b. display the ICAERUS logo, and
- c. include the following text:

For communication activities: "This project has indirectly received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under project ICAERUS (grant agreement No 101060643)".

¹⁰ User guide to the SME Definition: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/79c0ce87-f4dc-11e6-8a35-01aa75ed71a1>

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. It is subject to general third-party use restrictions which do not permit the appropriation of the emblem, or of any similar trademark or logo, whether by registration or by any other means. Under these conditions, the Subgrantee is exempted from the obligation to obtain prior permission from the EC to use the emblem. Further detailed information on the EU emblem can be found on the Europa web page.

Any publicity made by the Subgrantee with respect to 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 ICAERUS consortium are not liable for any use that may be made of the information contained therein.

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

- the name of the Subgrantee,
- contact address of the Subgrantee,
- the general purpose of the sub-project,
- the amount of the financial contribution foreseen for the subproject; after the final payment, and the amount of the financial contribution actually received,
- 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 subproject, the published version or the final manuscript accepted for publication,
- the publishable reports submitted to ICAERUS,
- any picture or any audio-visual or web material provided to the EC and ICAERUS in the framework of the sub-project.

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

Upon a duly substantiated request by the Subgrantee representative, the ICAERUS 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.

5.5 Financial audit and controls

The European Commission (EC) will monitor that ICAERUS beneficiaries and the Subgrantees comply with the conditions for financial support to third parties set out in Annex 1 of the ICAERUS grant agreement and may take any action foreseen by the grant agreement in case of noncompliance vis à vis the beneficiary concerned.

Moreover, the EC may at any time during the implementation of the ICAERUS project and up to 5 (five) years after the end of the ICAERUS project, arrange for financial audits to be carried out, by external auditors, or by the EC services themselves including the European Anti-Fraud office (OLAF). The audit procedure shall be deemed to be initiated on the date of receipt of the relevant letter sent by the EC. Such audits may cover financial, systemic and other aspects (such as accounting and management principles) relating to the proper execution of the grant agreement. They shall be carried out on a confidential basis.

The Subgrantee shall make available directly to the EC all detailed information and data that may be requested by the EC or any representative authorised by it, with a view to verifying that the grant agreement is properly managed and performed in accordance with its provisions and that costs have been charged in compliance with it. This information and data must be precise, complete and effective.

The Subgrantee shall keep all sub-project deliverables and the originals or, in exceptional cases, duly authenticated copies – including electronic copies – of all documents relating to the sub-project contract for up to five years from the end of the project. These shall be made available to the EC when requested during any audit under the grant agreement.

In order to carry out these audits, the Subgrantee shall ensure that the EC's services and any external body(ies) authorised by it have on-the-spot access at all reasonable times, notably to the sub-project applicant offices, to its computer data, to its accounting data and to all the information needed to carry out those audits, including information on individual salaries of persons involved in the sub-project. They shall ensure that the information is readily available on the spot at the moment of the audit and, if so requested, that data be handed over in an appropriate form.

On the basis of the findings made during the financial audit, a provisional report shall be drawn up. It shall be sent by the EC or its authorised representative to the Subgrantee concerned, which may make observations thereon within one month of receiving it. The Commission may decide not to take into account observations conveyed or documents sent after that deadline. The final report shall be sent to the beneficiary concerned within two months of expiry of the aforesaid deadline.

On the basis of the conclusions of the audit, the EC shall take all appropriate measures which it considers necessary, including the issuing of recovery orders regarding all or part of the payments made by it and the application of any applicable sanction.

The European Court of Auditors shall have the same rights as the EC, notably right of access, for the purpose of checks and audits, without prejudice to its own rules.

In addition, the EC may carry out on-the-spot checks and inspections in accordance with Council Regulation (Euratom, EC) No 2185/96 of 11 November 1996 concerning on-the-spot checks and inspections carried out by the Commission in order to protect the European Communities' financial interests against fraud and other irregularities.

5.6 Sub-project Communication

The Subgrantee representative should:

- Provide any notices in writing to the ICAERUS consortium.
- Notify the ICAERUS coordinator immediately of any change of persons or contact details. The address list shall be accessible to all concerned.

5.7 Originality of the sub-granted projects

It is required that applications submitted are based on original works by the applicants and that their foreseen developments are free from third party rights. ICAERUS consortium is not obliged to verify the authenticity of the ownership of the foreseen products/services. Any issues delivered from third party claims that arise a result of the sub-granted projects are on the sole responsibility of the applicant.

5.8 IPR Ownership of the sub-granted projects

Each Subgrantee that generates results owns the attached Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs) generated during the development process and will own results that are not IPRs. Each contractor is responsible for the management and protection of its IPRs and bears the costs associated with this.

The Subgrantees funded within ICAERUS project will be the unique owners of the technologies created within the framework of their sub-granted projects. Parts of their works will be requested to be public for ICAERUS dissemination purposes.

5.9 Liability

ICAERUS consortium and the European Commission cannot be held liable for any acts or omission of the applicant in relation to the selected sub-granted project implemented by the Subgrantee. The ICAERUS consortium shall not be liable for any defaults of any products, processes or services created in the sub-granted project. Including, for instance, anomalies in the functioning or performance thereof.

In case any damage is caused to a third party by the Subgrantee, the Subgrantee will assume full responsibility for the damage caused. In no way will the ICAERUS Consortium be responsible for any damages caused by the Subgrantee. Subgrantees shall bear sole responsibility for ensuring that their acts within the framework of their sub-granted projects do not infringe third parties right.

5.10 Do Not Significant Harm (DNSH)

Subgrantees must always respect the 'Do Not Significant Harm Principle'. The Commission Communication on the European Green Deal introduced the green oath to 'do no harm'. The 'Do not Significant Harm' (DNSH) principle has been further specified in the EU Regulation on the establishment of a framework to facilitate sustainable investments (Regulation (EU) 2019/2088), commonly defined as the 'EU Taxonomy Regulation'. Six environmental objectives are listed in Article 23 of the EU Taxonomy and Article 17 specifies what can constitute a 'significant harm' for these objectives. Thus, the regulation provides that no measure should lead to significant harm to any of the six environmental objectives within the meaning of Article 17 of the Taxonomy Regulation.

5.11 ICAERUS platform

The Open Call Trials will connect with the ICAERUS platform, which will collect, host and disseminate drone-related information. The platform will consist of six main components, including a drone market landscape, a drone data analytics library, ICAERUS Use Cases and Open Call Trials, socio-economic and environmental impact assessment results, inclusive business and governance models, and the ICAERUS Academy capacity building programme. The Drone Data Analysis Library will be constantly updated with information from ongoing research and the Open Call Trials. The PUSH OCTs will optimise the models within the library, while the PULL OCTs will test, evaluate and validate the optimised models. These models will be scaled up to be used in new settings, to respond to additional challenges and to be applied to new cases.

6. Checklist

- 1) **Does your planned work fit with ICAERUS PULL Open Call for Farming, Forestry and Rural Challenges (FFRC)?** Check that your proposed work does indeed address one of the topics open in this call and addresses **rural areas**?
- 2) **Does your proposal address usage of drones in various sectors, such as agriculture, livestock monitoring, forestry and biodiversity, logistics in rural areas, etc.?** Check that your proposed work does indeed address drones' technologies in the target sector.
- 3) **Is your proposal eligible?** The eligibility criteria are given in chapter 3 "Proposal Submission and Selection". Make sure that you satisfy the minimum participation requirements (entity from eligible countries).
- 4) **Is your proposal complete?** Have you completed all mandatory questions?
- 5) **Have you checked all technical details related to submission?** Difficulties with application and submission arising from technical aspects will not be taken into consideration by ICAERUS project. Applicants should do test rounds and make sure to submit everything on time.
- 6) **Does your proposal fulfil questions requests/comments?** Proposals should be precise, concise and must answer to requested questions, which are designed to correspond to the applied evaluation. Omitting requested information will almost certainly lead to lower scores and possible rejection.
- 7) **Have you maximised your chances?** There will be strong competition. Therefore, edit your proposal tightly, strengthen or eliminate weak points.
- 8) **Have you submitted your proposal before the deadline?** It is strongly recommended not to wait until the last minute to submit the proposal. Failure of the proposal to arrive in time for any reason, including network communications delays, is not acceptable as an extenuating circumstance. The time of receipt of the message as recorded by the submission system will be definitive.
- 9) Have you provided the necessary annexes?
- 10) **Do you need further advice and support?** You can reach out to the ICAERUS Open Call team via icaerus@opencallhub.eu. Technical team can provide assistance to the extent possible, **until January 14th at 17:00 CET (48h prior to the deadline)**.

7. Points of contact

For all the information related to ICAERUS Open Calls please state your question on FAQ section on the Open Call Hub/ICAERUS PULL 1 OC Tab, <https://opencallhub.eu/>, or contact us at icaerus@opencallhub.eu.