

## Guidelines for Call for Applications for Pitchers

4<sup>th</sup> edition of BlueInvest Africa

Autumn 2026, Cape Town – South Africa

# BLUE INVEST AFRICA



SOUTH AFRICA

#BlueInvestAfrica



## 1 What is BlueInvest Africa?

**BlueInvest Africa** is a European Union initiative supporting African entrepreneurs developing sustainable solutions within the blue economy.

The blue economy includes activities both from traditional and emerging sectors linked to oceans, seas, coasts, and inland waters such as fisheries, aquaculture, renewable energy, marine services, ports, tourism, biotechnologies, ocean AI and nature-based solutions.

BlueInvest Africa connects African businesses with European and African investors, development finance institutions, and ecosystem partners to accelerate sustainable growth and investment readiness.

Previous editions took place in Seychelles (2022), Kenya (2024), and Togo (2025), enabling African ocean SMEs to showcase their solutions and increase chances of securing funding.

The **4th edition of BlueInvest Africa** will take place in **Cape Town, South Africa, in November 2026**. The event will be organised in partnership with the Government of the Republic of South Africa.

Over and above the annual event, BlueInvest Africa is a community - join us <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/14605645> .

More information on <https://blueinvestafrica.eu/>

## 2 Who can apply and Why

BlueInvest Africa's primary goals include fostering valuable **business connections**, creating opportunities to establish a **network of potential partners**, showcasing **real-world business projects** from the field, and facilitating the exchange of **best practices** and **innovative ideas**.

Up to **30 companies** will be selected to pitch at the event before an anticipated attendance of more than 250 delegates, along with remote participants from both Africa and Europe, thanks to online live streaming. The **targeted audience** for this event includes:

- The **private sector**, encompassing African start-up companies engaged in the blue economy, including small-scale businesses.
- **International, regional and national financial institutions** and private investors.
- International, national, and regional organizations, particularly **private business platforms** within different countries.
- **Research institutions, incubators, and innovators** operating exclusively in the private sector.

**This call for applications** is targeting **registered African businesses** already engaged in the blue economy, including start-ups. It aims to engage **African Micro, Small, and Medium- sized Enterprises** that possess innovative ideas with potential for further commercial development within the African market. Applications from **women entrepreneurs, youth-led businesses and under-represented regions** are strongly encouraged.

The below outlines the criteria and procedure for their selection as the event seeks to **identify innovative entrepreneurs and select proficient presenters** who will participate in **BlueInvest Africa 2026 – South Africa**.

“Pitchers” are individuals who represent companies or businesses, selected as follows: After the application deadline, all submissions are first checked for eligibility and completeness. Only applications that meet the formal requirements (eligibility criteria, required documents, and completeness) proceed to the evaluation stage.

Eligible applications are then evaluated and scored by independent reviewers against four criteria: **impact and vision, business model, technology readiness, and team capacity**. Based on these scores, **30 companies** are selected to pitch at BlueInvest Africa 2026. The final selection is validated by the European Commission. Selection is competitive, and meeting the eligibility criteria does not guarantee selection. More information in Annex III.

The selected pitchers will benefit from:

- **presenting their projects** (“pitching”), business ideas, products or services **on stage in Cape Town, South Africa**, during the event plenary sessions.
- engaging in person with both **public and private investors** with the objective of securing deals and obtaining financial support for their businesses or projects.
- **coaching and mentoring sessions**, either in group settings or on an individual basis, tailored to prepare them for their pitches.
- connecting with fellow blue African entrepreneurs actively engaged in blue initiatives.
- promotion of their stories and projects through various media outlets and social media platforms, before and during the event.

The pitch is a **dynamic presentation** lasting between 4 to 5 minutes, offering a concise **overview of a company's project**, delivered in English or French. Within this pitch, you will present the project's core concept, the product or service it entails, its functionality and purpose, its value proposition, the target market, its uniqueness and innovation, the costs associated with design, production, and delivery, its sustainability aspects, and the required investment, among other key details.

### 3 What projects are eligible

**Projects falling within the following sectors are not eligible:**

- **Projects that endanger marine and onshore ecosystems:** Projects primarily focused on activities that pose a threat to the ecosystems are ineligible for consideration.
- **Projects that endanger Local and Indigenous Communities:** Projects that jeopardize the traditional life and communities of indigenous people are not eligible.
- **Projects linked to illegal and criminal activities:** Projects associated with or connected to criminal activities such as human and animal trafficking, child and women abuse, violence, drugs, weapons, tobacco trafficking, and similar unlawful practices are excluded from eligibility.
- **Projects involving defence matters:** Projects that are primarily defence-oriented or involve military cooperation are not eligible. However, dual-use technologies with clear civilian, environmental, safety, or sustainability applications in ocean contexts remain eligible.

**Selected applicants in response to this call must adhere to the following eligibility criteria:**

- applicants must be a **Micro, Small or Medium-Sized Enterprise** (see definition below)
- **legally registered and actively operating in an African Union member country** with the company's

- primary business activities conducted within the continent.
- operate within **blue economy** sectors (see table below).
- integrate **sustainability** considerations across applicant’s business model, production, distribution, service delivery, or product lifecycle.

NB: The organizers will make a concerted effort to ensure a balanced representation across diverse regions within Africa. Applications from women, people in need and young entrepreneurs are highly encouraged, fostering inclusivity and diversity.

**Micro, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprise (MSME) Status:**

The company or business must qualify as a **Micro, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprise (MSME)**, adhering to the definition outlined in the EU Recommendation 2003/361, meeting the following criteria:

Company category	Staff headcount	Turnover or Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR)
Medium-sized	< 250	≤ 15 million Euros or ≤ 5% CAGR
Small	< 50	≤ 2 million Euros or ≥ 10% CAGR
Micro	< 10	≤ 0.5 million Euros or ≥ 25 % CAGR

These ceilings apply to the figures for individual firms only. A firm that is part of a larger group or of a holding must include staff headcount/turnover/CAGR from that group too.

**The following criteria should be noted regarding the sustainable blue economy focus:**

The project presented by the pitching company must centre on a blue economy sector, whether it operates within a marine or coastal area of Africa or in African inland waters (including rivers, lakes, and deltas). The concept of the blue economy encompasses all maritime activities and sectors, traditional and emerging fields. Furthermore, eligible projects must incorporate sustainability considerations into their production, distribution, service delivery, or product lifecycle. A strong and explicit alignment with **Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)** is necessary and not limited to environmental impact - it integrates social equity, gender inclusion, and community participation, reflecting Africa and Europe’s commitment to a just and inclusive blue transition.

Projects in the following sectors are encouraged:

- Fisheries and aquaculture.
- Bio-marine technology (utilizing living resources).
- Coastal protection, nature-based and hybrid infrastructure solutions for climate adaptation and urban/community coastal resilience.
- Ecological restoration and regenerative ocean activities (e.g., coral rehabilitation, mangrove and seagrass restoration, regenerative aquaculture).
- Key enabling and dual-use technologies (e.g., robotics, sensors, materials).
- Reduction of marine litter, notably from plastics.
- Marine financial services (such as insurance, leasing, etc.).
- Renewable energy solutions.
- Shipbuilding.
- Shipping operations.
- Tourism ventures.

- Digital and AI-driven ocean solutions (e.g., predictive analytics, autonomous monitoring, early-warning systems, marine data platforms, etc.).
- Carbon absorption operations.

The above list is not exhaustive, and candidates may propose projects within other blue economy sectors.

A growing number of technologies originally developed for terrestrial sectors—such as robotics, drones, sensors, advanced materials, and AI tools—have strong application potential in ocean sustainability, safety, monitoring, and conservation. These ‘dual-use’ innovations are welcome as long as their proposed application is civilian, environmentally beneficial, and aligned with sustainability objectives. Applicants are encouraged to explain how such tools can be responsibly adapted to blue economy contexts

## 4 Practical information (costs)

### Costs covered by BlueInvest Africa

For each of the **30 selected pitching companies**, BlueInvest Africa will cover the following costs **for one (1) designated representative only**:

- **Coaching and mentoring**  
Participation in online coaching and mentoring sessions to prepare for the pitch, delivered in group and/or individual formats.  
The schedule will be shared in advance. Participation in **at least 65% of sessions is mandatory**. Failure to meet this requirement may result in exclusion from the pitching sessions and the event.
- **Round-trip international flight**  
A return economy-class flight from the pitcher's country of residence (international airport) to **Cape Town, South Africa**.
- **Hotel accommodation**  
Hotel accommodation in Cape Town for the official duration of the event. Check-in and check-out dates will depend on flight schedules and will be confirmed by the organisers.
- **Local transfers**  
Airport–hotel–venue transfers in Cape Town during the official event period.
- **Meals during the event**  
Breakfast (included with accommodation) and lunch on official event days.

All travel and accommodation arrangements covered by BlueInvest Africa will be **booked and paid directly by the organisers**.

**No per diem or daily allowance** (cash or bank transfer) will be provided.

### Costs not covered by BlueInvest Africa

The following expenses remain the responsibility of the selected pitcher:

- **Passport and visa costs**, including transit visas if required
- **Travel and health insurance**
- **Meals outside official event days**, including dinners on event days and meals during travel days
- **Transport from home to the departure airport**
- **Any personal expenses** (e.g. phone charges, additional hotel nights)

If a pitcher chooses to travel with a companion, **all costs related to that person must be covered privately**, and participation of accompanying persons cannot be guaranteed.

### Important note

Selected pitchers are responsible for ensuring they have sufficient personal funds to cover any expenses not included above and should travel with appropriate payment means (bank card and/or cash).

## 5 Pitchers' Duties

Selected pitchers are expected to meet the following obligations:

### Coaching and mentoring



Pitchers must participate in the coaching and mentoring sessions organised by BlueInvest Africa. These sessions are designed to support pitch preparation and are a mandatory part of the programme.

#### **Pitch preparation**

Pitchers must prepare a pitch presentation in **English or French**, following the guidance provided by the BlueInvest Africa team. The pitch must clearly present the project and its business case.

#### **Physical presence**

Pitchers must travel to **Cape Town** and deliver their pitch **in person** during the BlueInvest Africa event.

#### **Event participation**

Pitchers are expected to attend the **full duration of the BlueInvest Africa event** and participate actively in its activities.

#### **Statement of availability**

Pitchers must sign a statement confirming their availability and commitment to comply with all programme requirements.

#### **Backup pitcher**

Each company must designate a **backup representative** who can replace the primary pitcher in case of exceptional circumstances (e.g. illness or accident). The backup person must be equally prepared to deliver the pitch.

#### **Dissemination and visibility**

Pitchers agree to act as **BlueInvest Africa ambassadors** by engaging with the BlueInvest Africa community and contributing to the visibility of the event through their networks and communication channels.

## **6 Application and supporting documents.**

### **Application**

Individuals interested in applying for this call for applications must complete and **submit their online application** via the VC4A webpage or before the deadline of the 13<sup>th</sup> February 2026 by midnight (CEST time). Content of the online form is detailed in Annex I.

Applicants can fill out the application in **English or French**.

In case the applicant is pre-selected, documents will be needed in order to complete the selection. The list of required documents to complete the selection process is detailed in Annex II.

For questions and clarifications please contact the Secretariat of BlueInvest Africa, at the email address

**[secretariat@blueinvestafrica.eu](mailto:secretariat@blueinvestafrica.eu)**



**Annex I - application form (must be filled online using VC4A)**

**Annex II - list of required documents to complete the selection process**

**Annex III - SDGs**

**Annex IV – Selection Process – BlueInvest Africa 2026**

## **Annex I – application form (must be filled online using VC4A)**

### **A/ Personal information:**

1. Name: [Text box of 1 line]
2. Surname: [Text box of 1 line]
3. Address/ Geographic Address: [Text box of 2 lines]
4. Phone number: [Text box of 1 line]
5. Pitchers' profile - Please describe yourself in 5 sentences maximum (professional experience, studies, areas of activities, etc.): [Free text for 250 words max / 1000 characters (no space) max.]
6. Name of the designated backup person, phone number and email address: [Text box of 1 line]

### **B/ Company/Institution you represent:**

7. Company name: [Text box of 2 lines]
8. Company address/ Geographic Address (with localisation on the map, longitude and latitude): [Text box of 2 lines]
9. (please indicate also if you have set up branches in other regions/countries): [Text box of 1 line]
10. Email: [Text box of 1 line]
11. Company website and/or social media accounts (if any): [Text box of 2 lines]
12. The company was established in (month/year): [drop down list with years to choose]
13. Statutory registration number: [Text box of 1 line]
14. Company's team structure: [Text box of 2 lines]
15. Number of customers and either turnover or Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR): [Text box of 2 lines]

### **C/ Project information:**

16. In this context, a "project" refers to any distinct product (e.g., software development or the creation of an energy-efficient device) or service (e.g., data processing and training). What sets a project apart is its non-routine nature, as it involves unique and innovative endeavours.
17. Title of the project: [Text box of 2 lines]
18. Context and story behind the project (how did you come up with the idea, how/from what did the project started): [Text box for 400 words or 2000 characters (no spaces)]
19. Abstract (short description of the project, max 10 lines): [Text box for 400 words or 2000 characters (no spaces)]
20. What's the thematic area of your project? [Box to tick in front of each thematic area bellow]
  - Fisheries and aquaculture.
  - Bio-marine technology (utilizing living resources).
  - Coastal protection, nature-based and hybrid infrastructure solutions for climate adaptation and urban/community coastal resilience.
  - Ecological restoration and regenerative ocean activities (e.g., coral rehabilitation, mangrove and seagrass restoration, regenerative aquaculture).
  - Key enabling and dual-use technologies (e.g., robotics, sensors, materials).
  - Reduction of marine litter, notably from plastics.
  - Marine financial services (such as insurance, leasing, etc.).
  - Renewable energy solutions.



- Shipbuilding.
- Shipping operations.
- Tourism ventures.
- Digital and AI-driven ocean solutions (e.g., predictive analytics, autonomous monitoring, early-warning systems, marine data platforms, etc.).
- Carbon absorption operations.
- Other: please specify [(when ticking this box, a text box of 1 line should open up)]

BlueInvest Africa will not provide support for projects that are centred on activities that pose a threat to marine and onshore ecosystems, activities that put at risk the traditional lifestyles and communities of indigenous people, projects with associations to criminal activities like human and animal trafficking, abuse of children and women, violence, drugs, projects tied to any kind of trafficking .

21. To which of the **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals** is your project contributing to? [At most 3 choices:]

SDG	SDG title	Topic	Possible sub-topics
SDG 2	Zero hunger	Sustainable food and feed from the ocean	Food security, improved nutrition, promotion of sustainable practices Fisheries, aquaculture, biotechnology, sustainable fish supply, small-scale food producers
SDG 7	Affordable and clean energy	Ocean energy potential for all	Affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all Marine renewable energies, connectivity, energy efficiency, investment in energy infrastructure and clean energy technology
SDG 9	Industry, innovation and infrastructure	Sustainable blue infrastructure	Ports, digitalisation, ship manufacturing / building (incl. cruising), transport, sand and gravel extraction, maritime safety and surveillance, logistics/storage capacities.
SDG 12	Responsible consumption and production	Circularity and eliminating waste	Sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources Decommissioning of oil and gas platforms, recycling of wind turbine and large ships, bioplastics (algae), responsible tourism, food waste, waste management
SDG 13	Climate change	Ocean and climate	Adaptation, mitigation, decarbonisation, sea-level rise, green shipping, nature-based solutions, disaster risk management
SDG 14	Life below water	Healthy ocean	Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing, coastal management/marine spatial planning/ integrated coastal management, depollution, protection and conservation of biodiversity, marine protected areas, ocean knowledge/marine data/ocean observation
	Other:	Please mention here:	Please mention here and <b>explain</b>

22. What challenge(s) does your project address? [Text box for max 400 words or 2000 characters (no spaces)]
23. What's the added value of your project? How is it different from existing competing solutions, if any? [Text box for max 400 words or 2000 characters (no spaces)]
24. What is the Technology Readiness Level<sup>1</sup> of your project <https://www.entsoe.eu/Technopedia/trls/> (please provide evidence if available: photos, video, certificates, etc.) [Text box for 400 words or 2000 characters (no spaces). Here possibility to upload or attach photos, video (or link towards a video), certificate]
25. Does your project hold any patents or other protected Intellectual Property rights? If yes, please provide details (**patents filling /dépôt du brevet**). [Text box for 400 words or 2000 characters (no spaces)]

#### **D/ Exposure of your project to the market:**

26. Is your project already on the market? If yes, in which markets and countries? [Box for Yes and No. Once ticking yes, it should open up a text box for max 50 words /250 characters (no space)]
27. Do you have first (paying) customers? If yes, which ones? [Box for Yes and No. Once ticking yes, it should open up a text box for max 50 words /250 characters (no space)]

#### **E/ Financing:**

28. How much money has already been raised from investors and/or invested in this project? [Under this question 1 box called "Raised from investors" and next to it a box to insert amount with approximatively.]  
[Then, under 1 box called "invested in this project" and next to it a box to insert amount with approximatively.]
29. Indicate any investors or other shareholders of your project: [Text box of 1 line]
30. Have you received public funding (from the institutions of your country, national or regional schemes, EU or other international donors)? If Yes, from which organisation (s)? [Box for Yes and No. Once ticking yes, it should open up a text box for max 50 words /250 characters (no space)]
31. What kind of investment are you looking for? [Text box of 1 line]
32. Amount of investment sought: [1 Box for numbers and a drop-down menu for international currencies (only a couple important worldwide) the EUR, USD.]

#### **F/ The pitch**

33. Have you already pitched in front of a panel of investors? If yes, on which occasion? [Box for Yes and No. Once ticking yes, it should open up a text box for max 50 words /250 characters (no space)]
34. Please upload (up to 3) supporting materials that provide more information about your project [Text



box here were the applicant can mention the names and another button to attach max 3 docs/files]

35. Tweet for promotion (max 280 characters). Please note that if your application is selected, the tweet text **may** be used by the European Union to promote the pitcher. [Text field for max 280 characters]
36. Do you have any device/prototype you would like to showcase during the event? If so, please provide a short description and indicate size (length, width, height)? [Box for Yes and No. Once ticking yes, it should open up a text box for max 250 words / 1000 characters (no space) max]
37. Any other information you deem relevant. [Once ticking yes, it should open up a text box for max 250 words / 1000 characters (no space) max]

#### **G/ Other**

38. In order for my application to be considered, I hereby certify that I have read, understood and I agree to the guidelines for pitchers (link to document) [Box for Yes and No]

#### **H/ Data Protection**

Declaration of consent for events organized by the European Commission the storage, use of personal data and/or pictures and videos (stored in European-based datacentres)

Based on **Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2018** and when applicable **General Data Protection Regulation 2016/679**, the following data will be stored and used in the context of Blueinvest Africa.

- Personal data received with the registration is stored on contractor servers and used solely for logistic management, networking and/or statistic purpose.
- The contractor uses appropriate technical and organisational measures to secure your data against unintentional or intentional falsification, destruction, loss or access by unauthorized persons. Access to your personal data is restricted to Event Management of Contractor staff from Brussels who need to process the data for the above-mentioned purpose, and who will handle the information you provide in a proper and confidential manner.
- The contractor is also authorized to forward data to the following organisations/entities to be processed for the above-mentioned purposes: Client (and its bodies) on behalf of whom the contractor organizes the event, travel agencies, transport companies and hotels, subcontractors bound by contracts for GDPR (e.g. companies providing troubleshooting and technical support for virtual events). Before data is passed on to other individuals or institutions outside the organisations/entities mentioned above, the person responsible will contact the data subjects concerned.
- Depending on the type of registration, the following data will be collected: **mandatory info**: gender, your first name, last name, nationality, mobile phone, email, name of organisation represented, department, function, phone, address (street, post code, city, country), travel information as passport (n°, type of passport, place of issuance, expiry date); **optional info**: dietary and medical requirements (food allergies, dietary requirements, emergency contact phone number, medical conditions). Audio/video recording of the event and/or pictures taken only upon express consent.
- Your data will not be kept for any longer than is required for the purpose for which it is processed or than it is required to be retained in order to comply with statutory obligations. Maximum storage data is 5 years for personal data and 3 months for video recording.



- No cookies or small text files are stored locally in your browser cache when you visit the registration web page.
- In accordance with [Regulation \(EU\) 2018/1725](#) and when applicable [Regulation 2016/679](#) you have the right at any time to obtain comprehensive information from us about the data that we hold about you. For more information related to data protection and/or to revoke this consent you can contact [secretariat@blueinvestafrica.eu](mailto:secretariat@blueinvestafrica.eu)

I confirm that I did read the above declaration.

I consent: to my personal data being stored by the contractor of the European Commission for this event, shared with third parties involved in the organizations of the event and/or participants and viewed; Photographs and video recordings being taken of me during the event, on some of which I will be clearly identifiable may be used in the public relations work of the European Commission and/or client on the behalf of which the event(s) are organized, including being published on their website or shared for networking.

[Button to tick in front of the last 2 paragraphs just like above.]

[Here insert:

A button called "attach supporting documents"

Under the button "attach supporting documents" a text explanation should be provided such as: 'Please upload the extract trade register of your pitching company, the letter of designation as pitcher on behalf of your company signed by your company. Failing to submit your application without the supporting documents required will lead to the exclusion of your application from the competition'.

Then a 'submit' button. After they click the submit button a confirmation message that the applicant has successfully submitted the application, such as " Thank you for applying to '#BlueInvest Africa, for any further question, please contact: [secretariat@blueinvestafrica.eu](mailto:secretariat@blueinvestafrica.eu)" should appear on the screen or as pop-up window.]

<sup>1</sup> For more information about TRL please visit the following link: [Technology Readiness Levels - ENTSO-E \(entsoe.eu\)](https://entsoe.eu)



## **Annex II – List of required documents to complete the selection process in case of pre-selection**

- Statement of Availability

A signed document confirming the availability of the company and its representative for participation in the pitching process.

- Declaration on Honor

Confirmation of compliance with eligibility criteria.

Disclosure of all funding sources relevant to the project or company.

- Proof of Legal Establishment

An extract from the trade register or a certificate from the relevant Ministry, serving as evidence that the pitching company is legally established and registered in an African country.

- Intellectual Property Ownership Certification

A self-certification guaranteeing that the company is the owner of the intellectual property (IP) or holds exclusive licenses for the IP being pitched.

- Designation Letter for Pitcher

A letter designating the applicant as the official pitcher representing the company, in cases where the pitcher's name does not appear in the company's official legal documents.

Annex III - SDGs

SDG	SDG title	topics	Possible areas for the projects	short blurb	for each sub theme (some overlapping)
SDG 2	<b>Zero hunger</b>	Sustainable food and feed from the ocean	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Food security, improved nutrition, promotion of sustainable practices</li> <li>Fisheries, aquaculture, biotechnology, sustainable fish supply, small-scale food production, marine phyculture (seaweeds), oyster and other invertebrate farming (crabs/shrimps and crustaceans; micro/macro algae, cyanobacteria and seaweeds; bivalves and other molluscs; fish; worms and invertebrates (e.g. sponges))</li> </ul>	Addressing the increasing global demand for food by exploring the ocean's potential as a source of sustainable and nutritious food through sustainable and equitable practices in both wild-caught fisheries and aquaculture value chains.	<p><b>Food Security and Improved Nutrition:</b> Addressing the increasing global demand for food by exploring the ocean's potential as a source of sustainable and nutritious food. Highlighting innovative solutions that contribute to food security and improved nutritional outcomes for communities.</p> <p><b>Promotion of Sustainable Practices:</b> Emphasizing the importance of environmentally friendly and socially responsible practices in ocean-related industries. Showcasing startups and initiatives that prioritize sustainability in their production processes and supply chains.</p> <p>.....</p> <p><b>Fisheries and Aquaculture:</b> Exploring sustainable practices in both wild-caught fisheries and aquaculture to ensure the responsible utilization of ocean resources. Encouraging the development of technologies and methods that minimize environmental impact while maximizing efficiency. Regenerating aquaculture approaches that restore ecosystems while producing food—such as multi-trophic systems and native species cultivation—</p> <p><b>Sustainable Fish Supply:</b> Focusing on initiatives that contribute to the</p>



SDG 7	<b>Affordable and clean energy</b>	Ocean energy potential for all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all</li> <li>Marine renewable energies, connectivity, energy, efficiency, investment in energy infrastructure and clean energy technology</li> </ul>	<p>Harnessing the vast potential of the ocean as a source of affordable, reliable, and sustainable energy for everyone and encouraging collaboration between startups, investors, and policymakers to accelerate the growth of the ocean energy sector.</p>	<p><u>Affordable, Reliable, Sustainable, and Modern Energy for All:</u>          Highlighting the need for inclusive access to energy, emphasizing affordability and reliability.          Showcasing innovations that leverage the ocean's energy potential to provide clean and modern energy solutions for diverse communities.</p> <p><u>Marine Renewable Energies:</u>          Exploring the various forms of renewable energy derived from the ocean, such as tidal energy, wave energy, and ocean thermal energy. Showcasing startups and technologies that harness these marine renewable energies for power generation.</p> <p><u>Connectivity:</u>          Addressing the role of ocean energy in improving connectivity, especially in remote or underserved areas, including energy access solutions that support resilient coastal communities and blue enterprises          Discussing how ocean energy projects can contribute to powering communication networks, supporting digital infrastructure, and fostering economic development.</p> <p><u>Energy Efficiency:</u>          Emphasizing the importance of energy- efficient technologies and practices in ocean energy projects.          Showcasing innovations that optimize energy production, storage, and distribution for</p>
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					<p>maximum efficiency and minimal environmental impact.</p> <p><u>Investment in Energy Infrastructure:</u> Incentivising strategic investments in the development of ocean energy infrastructure. Encouraging collaboration between startups, investors, and policymakers to accelerate the growth of the ocean energy sector.</p> <p><u>Clean Energy Technology:</u> Showcasing cutting-edge technologies and solutions that contribute to the transition to a clean energy future. Discussing advancements in energy storage, grid integration, and other clean energy technologies that complement ocean energy generation.</p>
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SDG 9	<b>Industry, innovation and infrastructure</b>	Sustainable blue infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Ports,</li> <li>b) digitalisation,</li> <li>c) ship manufacturing / building (incl. cruising),</li> <li>d) reduced maritime shipping emission,</li> <li>e) sand and gravel extraction,</li> <li>f) maritime safety and surveillance,</li> <li>g) logistics/storage capacities</li> </ul>	<p>Developing and managing maritime infrastructure in an environmentally friendly and socially responsible manner. Sustainable practices and alternative materials to reduce the ecological impact of marine resource extraction.</p>	<p><u>Ports:</u> Emphasizing sustainable practices in port development and operations to minimize environmental impact. Showcasing innovations in green port infrastructure, energy-efficient technologies, and eco-friendly port management practices.</p> <p><u>Digitalization:</u> Exploring the role of digital technologies in optimizing maritime operations for sustainability. This includes AI-driven optimisation, smart logistics, predictive maintenance, autonomous inspection robotics, and digital twins for safer and more sustainable maritime operations.</p> <p><u>Ship Manufacturing/Building (including cruising):</u> Promoting sustainable shipbuilding and maintenance practices, including the use of eco-friendly materials and energy-efficient design. Developing innovations in cruise ship design and operations to minimize the ecological impact of maritime tourism.</p> <p><u>Transport:</u> Highlighting sustainable transportation solutions for both cargo and passengers. Showcasing startups involved in developing eco-friendly propulsion systems, fuel alternatives, and efficient routing technologies.</p> <p><u>Sand and Gravel Extraction:</u> Addressing the environmental concerns</p>
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					<p>associated with sand and gravel extraction from the ocean floor.</p> <p>Discussing sustainable practices and alternative materials to reduce the ecological impact of marine resource extraction.</p> <p><u>Maritime Safety and Surveillance:</u> Exploring technologies and solutions that enhance maritime safety while minimizing environmental risks. Showcasing innovations in surveillance, monitoring, and emergency response systems for sustainable maritime operations.</p> <p><u>Logistics/Storage Capacities:</u> Promoting sustainable logistics and storage solutions for maritime goods. Discussing efficient storage practices, green warehouses, and eco-friendly transportation within port facilities.</p>
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<p>SDG 12</p>	<p><b>Responsible consumption and production</b></p>	<p>Circularity and eliminating waste</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources</li> <li>• Decommissioning of oil and gas platforms, recycling of wind turbine and large ships, bioplastics (algae), responsible tourism, food waste, waste management Biotech/pharma</li> </ul>	<p>Promoting sustainable practices that minimize ocean-bound wastes and foster circular economies in ocean-related industries.</p>	<p><u>Sustainable Management and Efficient Use of Natural Resources:</u> Emphasizing responsible and sustainable practices in the extraction and use of natural resources from the ocean (and avoiding extraction when impact or consequences are unknown). Showcasing startups and initiatives that focus on minimizing resource depletion and promoting efficient resource management.</p> <p><u>Decommissioning of Oil and Gas Platforms:</u> Addressing the environmental challenges associated with the decommissioning of oil and gas platforms, turning a challenge into an opportunity. Supporting innovative and environmentally friendly approaches to decommissioning or, better still, repurposing offshore structures.</p> <p><u>Recycling of Wind Turbine and Large Ships:</u> Exploring solutions for the recycling and repurposing of end-of-life wind turbines and large ships. Showcasing startups involved in sustainable dismantling, recycling, and upcycling of materials from these structures.</p> <p><u>Bioplastics (Algae):</u> Promoting the use of bioplastics derived from algae as a sustainable alternative to traditional plastics. Discussing innovations in bioplastic production, applications, and their role in reducing plastic pollution in the ocean.</p>
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					<p><u>Responsible Tourism:</u> Encouraging tourism practices that minimize environmental impact and contribute to local conservation efforts. Showcasing startups and initiatives focused on responsible tourism, including eco-friendly accommodations, low-impact transportation, and community engagement.</p> <p><u>Food Waste:</u> Addressing the issue of food waste in the context of ocean-related activities, such as fisheries and aquaculture. Discussing innovative solutions for reducing, repurposing, or recycling food waste along the ocean value chain.</p> <p><u>Waste Management:</u> Highlighting sustainable waste management practices in coastal areas, ports, and marine environments. Showcasing startups that offer innovative solutions for waste collection, recycling, and waste-to-energy conversion, including circular business models that transform waste streams into energy, materials, or ecosystem-restoring inputs.</p>
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<p>SDG 13</p>	<p>Climate change</p>	<p>Ocean and climate</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adaptation, mitigation, decarbonisation, sea-level rise, green shipping, nature-based solutions, disaster risk management</li> </ul>	<p>Addressing the interconnected challenges of climate change and its impact on the ocean.</p>	<p><u>Adaptation:</u> Emphasizing strategies and innovations that help communities and industries adapt to the changing climate, including rising sea levels, changing weather patterns, and ocean acidification. Showcasing startups working on adaptive technologies, resilient infrastructure, and community-based approaches to climate adaptation.</p> <p><u>Mitigation:</u> Addressing the role of the ocean in climate mitigation efforts, such as carbon sequestration and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. Showcasing startups involved in blue carbon initiatives, ocean-based carbon capture technologies, and other strategies to mitigate climate change.</p> <p><u>Decarbonization:</u> Focusing on initiatives and innovations that contribute to the decarbonization of ocean-related industries. Discussing sustainable energy solutions, green shipping practices, and technologies that reduce the carbon footprint of maritime activities.</p> <p><u>Sea-level Rise:</u> Addressing the impacts of sea-level rise on coastal communities and ecosystems. Showcasing startups developing solutions for coastal protection, resilient infrastructure, and community engagement to cope with and adapt</p>
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					<p>to rising sea levels.</p> <p><u>Green Shipping:</u> Promoting sustainable practices in the maritime industry to reduce its environmental impact. Supporting innovations in green shipping technologies, including alternative fuels, energy-efficient vessel design, and emission reduction strategies.</p> <p><u>Nature-Based Solutions:</u> Exploring the role of nature-based solutions in climate adaptation and mitigation. Showcasing startups involved in projects such as coastal restoration, mangrove conservation, hybrid grey-green infrastructure that protects vulnerable coastal cities and communities, and other nature-based approaches to enhance climate resilience.</p> <p><u>Disaster Risk Management:</u> Addressing the increasing frequency and intensity of climate-related disasters affecting coastal regions. Showcasing startups focused on early warning systems, disaster response technologies, and community-based disaster risk reduction.</p>
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<p>SDG 14</p>	<p><b>Life below water</b></p>	<p>Healthy oceans</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing, coastal management/marine spatial planning/integrated coastal management, depollution, protection and conservation of biodiversity, marine protected areas, ocean knowledge/marine data/ocean observation, reducing noise from human activities.</li> </ul>	<p>Promoting initiatives and innovations that contribute to the well-being of ocean ecosystems.</p>	<p><u>Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing:</u> Addressing the threat of IUU fishing through technological solutions, monitoring systems, and initiatives that enhance enforcement and regulatory measures to promote sustainable fisheries.</p> <p><u>Coastal Management/Marine Spatial Planning/Integrated Coastal Management:</u> Showcasing startups involved in coastal management, marine spatial planning, and integrated coastal management, emphasizing sustainable development, habitat protection, and community engagement.</p> <p><u>Depollution:</u> Focusing on solutions to reduce marine pollution, including plastic waste, chemical contaminants, and oil spills. Showcasing startups with innovations in waste management, cleanup technologies, and policies to minimize pollution in oceans.</p> <p><u>Protection and Conservation of Biodiversity:</u> Highlighting initiatives that contribute to the protection and conservation of marine biodiversity. Showcasing startups engaged in habitat restoration, conservation programs, and technologies that safeguard marine species.</p> <p><u>Marine Protected Areas (MPAs):</u> Emphasizing the importance of establishing and maintaining Marine Protected Areas to conserve ecosystems and promote sustainable</p>
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					<p>fisheries. Showcasing startups involved in MPA management, monitoring, and community engagement.</p> <p><u>Ocean Knowledge/Marine Data/Ocean Observation:</u> Highlighting the role of technology and data in improving our understanding of the ocean. Showcasing startups focused on ocean observation technologies, marine data analytics, and initiatives that contribute to scientific knowledge for informed decision-making, including AI-enhanced analytics, satellite data fusion, and autonomous sensing platforms that support evidence-based management and early warning systems.</p>
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## Annex IV - Selection Process — BlueInvest Africa 2026

The selection process is designed to be **fair, structured, and transparent**. It consists of **three stages**: eligibility screening, shortlisting, and final selection.

### Eligibility Screening

After the call closes, all submitted applications are first checked to make sure they meet the basic requirements. This includes confirming that:

- The applicant completed all required questions and documents.
- The company meets the eligibility criteria (e.g., registered in an African country, operating in the blue economy, qualifies as an MSME).
- The nomination and supporting documents are valid.

Applications that are incomplete or do not meet these requirements will be removed at this stage. This screening is done by the BlueInvest Africa organisers and administrative support team.

### Shortlisting

Eligible applications are placed into the **shortlisting phase**. A core review committee (usually including BlueInvest Africa organisers and partners) will:

- Review all eligible applications on the selection platform.
- Score each application against a set of clear criteria:
  - **Impact and Vision** (environmental/social contribution).
  - **Business Model** (market need and potential, traction).
  - **Technology Readiness** (innovation, feasibility, IP).
  - **Team Strength** (skills, roles, focus).
- Identify the **top applications** for deeper review.

The goal of this stage is to reduce the full applicant pool to a more manageable list of strong contenders (e.g., from ~150 applications down to ~60).

### Final Evaluation and Selection

The shortlisted applications are evaluated more thoroughly by a **selection committee** of independent reviewers with expertise in blue economy sectors, investment, innovation, and business evaluation.

For fairness and objectivity:

- Reviewers independently score each application using a **common evaluation template**.
- Scores are based on the published criteria, with pre-defined scoring scales.
- Reviewers provide comments to support their scores.
- Where needed, the committee reviews scores together to ensure consistency, diversity, and balance across sectors and regions.

From this evaluation, the committee identifies: the **top 30 companies** that will be invited to pitch in Cape Town.



This final list is approved by the European Commission before being confirmed publicly.

### Evaluation criteria and grid

The evaluations of the applications will be structured in 2 steps:

#### Step 1 - Evaluation against eligibility criteria

The following criteria as summarized in the table below, will be used to assess the eligibility of projects. Projects failing to meet these requirements will be excluded and deemed non- admissible for Step 2 of the evaluation.

Criteria	Yes/No
Is the pitcher a key company member designated by the company for pitching (i.e. CEO)?	
Is the pitching company based in an African Union member country?	
Is the proposed project carried out in a blue economy sector?	
Does the project contribute to any of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)?	
Does the project promote sustainability with a positive environmental and/or social impact?	
Does the pitching company have a business plan for the project proposed?	
Is the pitching company an MSMEs (including start-ups)? (based on criteria mentioned at point .3	

#### Step 2 - Evaluation against selection criteria:

Projects will be evaluated against the following criteria. Projects that fall below the minimum threshold of 60/100 points will be rejected. Each project must score a minimum number of points for each of the four criteria, as indicated in the table below. Only the first 30 applications with the highest scores will be selected. Before announcing the evaluation results, the organizers of BlueInvest Africa reserve the right to conduct necessary checks on the legal existence of the company and the project.

Criteria	Score
Technical viability: robustness and quality of the product/service (section C, points 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Existence of the product/service at a validated prototype stage (ie Technology Readiness Level 4 or above).</li> <li>● Added value of the project /product/service.</li> <li>● Tackling risks and challenges.</li> <li>● Self-certification guaranteeing that the company is the owner of the intellectual property (IP) or exclusive licensees</li> </ul>	Minimum 20 points out of a maximum of 30 points.

<p>Market and value proposition of the product/service (section D points 25, 26 and section C, points 17 and 18)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Presence of the project on the markets, which markets and where.</li> <li>● To what extent the project is different from existing competing solutions.</li> <li>● Extent to which the solution incorporates ecological regeneration, community resilience, or climate-adaptation benefits.</li> <li>● Existence of paying customers.</li> <li>● How does the project contribute to improving the life of local communities (social, economic aspects) or the end-consumers.</li> <li>● Environmental friendliness of the product/service.</li> <li>● To what extent have any risks linked to the project implementation been taken into account, together with mitigation strategies</li> </ul>	<p>Minimum 20 points out of a maximum of 30 points</p>
<p>Financial viability of the product/service (section B, point 15 and section E, points 27, 28, 29, 30, 31)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Expected return on investment.</li> <li>● Is the amount of investment sought in line with the planned project development?</li> <li>● Financial risk mitigations.</li> <li>● Previous funding received from public and private donors.</li> <li>● Use of previous funding.</li> <li>● Use of the sought investment.</li> </ul>	<p>Minimum 10 points out of a maximum of 20 points</p>
<p>Communication and management of the project (section F, points 32, 33, section B, point 11, 14, section C point 17, section A point 5, 6):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Online presence, existence of communication and presentation materials.</li> <li>● Pitching experience.</li> <li>● Existence of a demo version for showcasing/exhibiting purposes.</li> <li>● Competence/experience of the project team.</li> <li>● Staff allocation.</li> <li>● Quality of impact reporting, including the existence of environmental and social performance indicators.</li> </ul>	<p>Minimum 10 points out of a maximum of 20 points</p>

### Announcement of the selection

The results of the selection process will be announced well in advance, ensuring that the selected pitchers have ample time to participate in the coaching program, prepare their presentations, and make necessary travel arrangements to **Cape Town, South Africa**. These results will be communicated to each selected pitcher and their respective pitching company via email.

It is mandatory for the chosen pitchers to **confirm** their **participation** in **BlueInvest Africa** within a **maximum of 2 calendar days** after receiving the selection results.

Once a pitcher and their company/business are selected, an online briefing meeting will be scheduled to provide detailed information about the coaching and mentoring program.

Each selected pitcher will receive coaching and training to help them deliver a compelling and well-prepared pitch to present their project. The coaching program will be tailored to the individual needs and pitching



experience of each participant, and it may include both individual and group sessions.

These coaching sessions will be conducted online through platforms such as Teams, Skype, Webex, and others. Interpretation in French and English will be available.

To ensure readiness for the event, all pitchers must be physically present in Cape Town, South Africa at the latest one day before the event. Individual pitching sessions will be conducted face-to-face, followed by a general rehearsal of the pitching sessions. This preparation process is essential for a successful and impactful presentation during **BlueInvest Africa**.

### **Important Notes**

- Meeting eligibility requirements does **not guarantee** selection.
- Selection is competitive; only the best-scoring applications are chosen for pitching.
- The organisers reserve the right to adjust the process slightly to ensure a balanced set of finalists across sectors and geographies, while maintaining fairness and transparency.