

PROJECT

**POLREC**



Funded by  
the European Union

# Guide for Applicants

- Innovation Open call -  
Chemical recycling, mechanical recycling and digitalisation





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## 2. Abbreviations, acronyms and European Commission disclaimer

Table 1 – List of POLREC partners

Partner short name	Partner	Country
POL	Polymeris	FR
CEN	Centro Tecnológico da Indústria de Moldes, Ferramentas Especiais e Plásticos	PT
MAV	Clúster de Materials Avançats de Catalunya	ES
PCD	Plast Center Danmark	DK
WFG	Wirtschaftsförderung Raum Heilbronn GmbH	DE



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the European Union**

The POLREC project is funded by the European Commission Joint Cluster initiatives for Europe's recovery (Euroclusters) under the Single Market Programme (SMP COSME) Grant Agreement number 101074434. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or EISMEA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.





### 3. Introduction on POLREC project

The POLREC project is a collaborative project between the 4 European clusters and a technological centre: [Polymeris](#) (coordinator), [CENTIMFE](#), [Cluster Mav](#), [PCD/DMN](#) and [WFG](#). It started on the 1st of September 2022 and will end on the 31st of August 2025. It is funded by the European Commission Joint Cluster initiatives for Europe's recovery (Euroclusters) under the Single Market Programme (SMP COSME) Grant Agreement 101074434.

It focuses on sustainable development and recycling of high and low value polymers as a contribution to the objectives of the European Green Deal aiming at zero CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in 2050 and to increase the European strategic autonomy on raw materials for polymer production.

During the project period of 3 years the consortium will explore how an intensified cluster and business network collaboration across borders and across sectors can meet this challenge and exploit the international business opportunities related to this topic.

#### 3.1 Basic information about POLREC activities

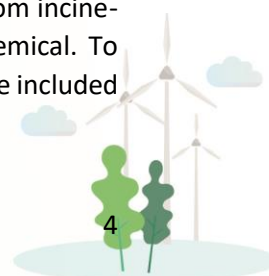
POLREC will support companies on the following topics:

1. Network to improve the resilience of the EU industrial ecosystems by developing value chain interlinkages in the EU Single Market.
2. Innovate for strategic autonomy to build capacity in the most critical supplies of their ecosystems.
3. Adopt processes and technologies to reinforce transformation into a greener and more digital economy.
4. Train to foster up- and re-skilling of the workforce whilst attracting talents.
5. Go international to boost access to global supply and value chains.
6. Outreach to attract economic actors, mainly SMEs, beyond Euroclusters' locations.

One of the means to provide this support is an open calls mechanism aiming to support European SMEs in developing solutions related to polymer recycling, training on recycling technologies, networking and matchmaking in Europe and beyond.

#### 3.2 Basic information about the POLREC Innovation Open Calls and general planning of Open Calls under POLREC

The general objective of the POLREC Innovation Open Call is to financially support SMEs with an ambition of decreasing the environmental impact of their products. Their practices must be switched from incineration and landfill of polymer waste towards polymer recycling – mechanical as well as chemical. To improve processing of recycled polymers, digital tools, improved moulds and processing aids are included in the switching of practices.



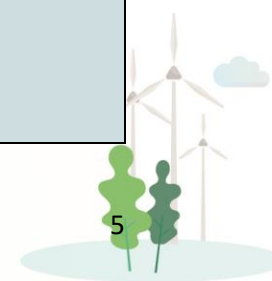


Under this Innovation Open Call, the POLREC consortium will select up to 33 projects. The total budget for the POLREC Innovation Open Call is 660,000 €.

The call will open on 01/09/2023 at 8:00 CET and close on 31/10/2023 at 12:00 CET. The link to the application documents and to submit your proposition can be found on the [Cluster Submission Platform](#).

POLREC will offer three distinct open calls focusing on Innovation, Training and Networking & Internationalisation. The table below present those 3 financing opportunities and their tentative opening dates and budget. For each of those open calls, a second round might be organised according to availability of funds after the closure of first round. An SME can apply to several of those open calls provided that the total amount asked in those different application does not exceed 60,000€.

POLREC Open call	Sub-topics	Max budget per SME	Max number of funded projects	Opening & closing dates	Max amount available for sub-grants in €
Innovation	Access to mechanical recycling	30,000€	33	1st September - 31st October 2023	660,000€
	Access to digital tools	20,000€		A second open call might be launched subject to availability of funds with provisional planning: 1st February- 1st April 2024	
	Access to chemical recycling	30,000€			
Training	Training on adopting innovative recycling methods	1,460€	72	1st May - 1st July 2024	105,000€
	Training on adopting digital processes	1,460€		A second open call might be launched subject to availability of funds with provisional planning (dates to be confirmed)	
	Training on specific technical profiles related to polymer recycling	1,460€			
Networking	Internationalisation	4,285€	35	1st February- 1st April 2024	210,000€
	Support for trade fair and conference participation	1,500€	50	A second open call might be launched subject to availability of funds with provisional planning: 1st May - 1st July 2024	52,900€





## 4. Scope and Expectations

The POLREC Innovation Open call focuses on the mechanical or chemical recycling of polymer waste and the digitalisation of recycling processes, with the overall aim to foster the adoption by European SMEs of recycling innovative solutions to reduce their CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and increase their collaboration with other European SMEs.

Applications shall be submitted by individual SMEs for a project focusing on the recycling of polymer waste or implementation of a digital solution that must use the services of a service-provider (which should preferably be a private enterprise or/and Research and Technology Organisation concerning the chemical recycling sub-grant)). To be selected for funding the applications are expected to be innovative and must go beyond the applicant's daily business but still related hereto.

The SMEs targeted by this call can cover various sectors, such as: transport and mobility, construction, renewable energy, digital and electronics, health, consumer goods, industrial and food packaging.

In brief, the POLREC Innovation Open call targets projects aiming to recycle on a long-term strategy any plastic or rubber waste stream causing an environmental issue due to either volume or severance.

### 4.1 Type of actions supported

The types of actions described below are within scope of obtaining a sub-grant. The types of actions listed are also referred to as sub-topics in this Guide for Applicants:

#### Chemical recycling

The applicant can apply for a sub-grant targeting the testing of a recycling solution for chemical recycling of plastic and rubber waste, which the applicant presently does not recycle.

Any kind of chemical or biotechnological recycling process can be selected, as long as the involved waste streams can be processed at least in a pilot scale equipment. The desired service-provider(s) and an estimate of the cost for recycling the waste must be indicated in the application form. The applicant can either indicate its selected service-provider or choose one from the list of service-providers identified by the POLREC partners that will be published on the partners website (see the links to the partners websites in section 3.1). Applicants without any identified service-providers are encouraged to contact one of the POLREC partners contact point (listed in section 12) to obtain support in identifying the relevant service-provider in accordance with their project.

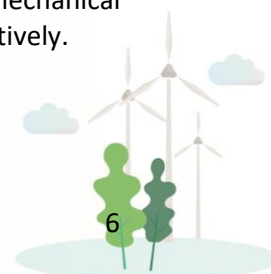
The sub-grant allocated shall cover part of or the total cost of the service-provider (s). No other expenditures can be covered by the sub-grant.

The activities financed by the sub-grant must contribute either to:

- Reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and the use of new fossil based raw materials
- Reduce waste generation.

#### Mechanical recycling

The applicant can apply for a sub-grant targeting the testing of a recycling solution for mechanical recycling of plastic or rubber waste, which is presently not being recycled or not recycled effectively.





Any kind of mechanical recycling process can be selected. Moreover, any process improving the use of recycled material can be chosen. The desired service-provider(s) and an estimate of the cost for recycling the waste must be indicated in the application form. The applicant can either indicate their selected service-provider or choose one from the list of service-providers identified by the POLREC partners that will be published on the POLREC partners website (see the links to the partners websites in section 3.1). Applicants without any identified service-providers are encouraged to contact one of the partners contact point (listed in section 12) to obtain support in identifying the relevant service-provider in accordance with their project.

The sub-grant allocated shall cover part of or the total cost of the service-provider(s). No other expenditures can be covered by the sub-grant.

The activities financed by the sub-grant must contribute to reduced CO<sub>2</sub> emissions due to reduced use of new fossil based raw materials.

### Digitalisation

The applicant can apply for a project targeting digital solutions that will contribute to improved quality control and tracking of the applicant's recycled materials and/or recycling processes. Applications for projects involving tools linked to tracking recycled materials across different value chains will receive extra points in the evaluation process.

The service-provider(s) and their foreseen cost must be indicated in the application form. Applicants struggling to identify a service-provider are encouraged to contact one of the partners contact point (listed in section 12) to obtain support in identifying the relevant service-provider in accordance with their project.

The sub-grant allocated shall cover part of or the total cost of the service-provider(s). No other expenditures can be covered by the sub-grant.

## 4.2 Expected impacts

The main impact of the project shall be to obtain a reduction in incineration and/or landfill of the SME's plastic and/or rubber waste fractions approaching the overall goal of a reduction in CO<sub>2</sub>-emissions.

Applications should demonstrate through setting up a value chain collaboration how their project will contribute to increase the use of recycled plastic or rubber materials or the use of products made from recycled plastic or rubber materials. Setting up a value chain collaboration to increase the use of recycled plastic or rubber materials involves a coordinated effort among different stakeholders from the value-chain to create a sustainable and impactful project (for further information please refer to section 5) for the polymer industry.

## 5. Type and composition of the proposals

The POLREC Innovation Open Call will provide financial support to applications including the recycling actions described above.

Moreover, specific weighting score of 5% will be given to applications, in which the SME applicant plans to work in partnership with two to three companies with different positions on the value chain. For example,





application from an SME requesting a sub-grant to have its plastic waste recycled by a recycler with the purpose to sell the manufactured recyclate to an injection moulder producing a plastic item to be used for example in a car. In the example given the applicant, which is an SME, must be the company with a waste fraction presently not being recycled. Please note that the other partnering companies cannot receive funding from the POLREC Open Call. For more information please refer to section 10.1)

The table below shows the corresponding TRL, timing and the maximum amount of sub-grant per applicant.

Sub-topic	Chemical recycling	Mechanical recycling	Digitalisation
Maximum financial contribution	30,000 €	30,000 €	20,000 €
Type of support	Sub-grant based on quote from the recycler/service-providers.	Sub-grant based on quote from the recycler/service-providers.	Sub-grant based on quote from the recycler/service-providers.
Project duration	6 to 12 months	6 to 12 months	6 to 12 months
Eligible Applicant	1 SME The applicant should be an SME with a considerable waste stream (500 kg minimum per delivery to be adjusted with the service-provider).	1 SME The applicant should be an SME with a considerable waste stream (500 kg minimum per delivery to be adjusted with the service-provider)	1 SME The applicant should be an SME with a considerable waste stream (5 tonnes per year)
Networking criteria (weighting score 5%): Number of companies collaborating in the project value chain (for more information please refer to section 10.1)	In case the applicant SME collaborates with up to 2 other companies with different positions in the value chain (recycler/service-provider, injection moulders, sellers etc.)	In case the applicant SME collaborates with up to 2 other companies with different positions in the value chain (recycler/service provider, injection moulders, sellers etc.)	Because of the complexity of integrating digital tools, there will be no weighting score for an SME cooperating with other companies across the value-chains.

All entities applying must be autonomous to one another (without capital or family links).

The POLREC partners or their employees are not considered as eligible applicants and cannot apply for funding.







## 6. Eligibility conditions

To be eligible, applicants must satisfy all the following conditions:

1. Be a legal entity.
2. Be a small or medium sized enterprise (SME) in accordance with the [SME definition of the European Union](#). An SME self-assessment tool is available [via this link](#).
3. Apply as an individual organization
4. Be located in one of the Single Market Programme (SMP) associated countries
  - EU Member States
  - Other countries which participate in [SMP Work Programmes 2022 and 2023](#)
5. Do not have a conflict of interest with the partners in POLREC project
6. Be an SME from the plastic or rubber industry with a strong recycling issue of related waste streams. The applicant can also be a SME generating a plastic or rubber waste stream, that can be recycled rather than incinerated or landfilled.

Applications must be written in English and complete in all the parts indicated in application form. Only parts written in English will be evaluated.

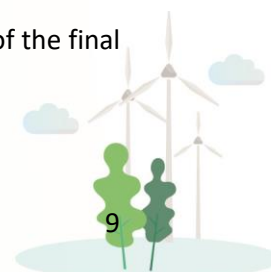
SMEs that are under liquidation, in financial difficulty, or excluded from the possibility of obtaining EU funding under the provisions of both national and EU law, or by a decision of both national or EU authority are not eligible to apply for funding.

Each SME applicant can be engaged in more than 1 application to the POLREC Innovation Open Calls or any other up-coming POLREC Open calls (see calendar in section 8) given that the total budget requested for the different cascade-funding sub-grants does not exceed 60,000€ per SME and that the SME send only one application per sub-topic (mechanical, chemical & digitalisation sub-topics). If more than one proposal is submitted by an SME for a sub-topic of the POLREC Innovation Open calls (even with a different service-provider or for a different project), only the proposal that has been submitted at last will be evaluated. An SME can apply on the same sub-topic for the second round of the Open call if its application on the first round did not succeed. SMEs which receive funding under a sub-topic on the first round of an Open Call cannot apply for the same sub-topic on the second round but can apply to another sub-topic. For example, a SME which has been granted funding for the mechanical recycling Open Call on the first round of the Innovation Open Call can apply for a sub-grant on digitalisation in the second round, given that this second round is organised and that the total budget of the two sub-grants will not exceed 60,000€.

## 7. Funding conditions

Successful applications will receive the requested financial contribution in the form of a lump sum according to the following schedule:

- A pre-funding payment of 70% of the requested financial contribution will be provided within 10 days after the signature of the Sub-Grant Agreement
- A final payment of 30% of the requested contribution will be provided after approval of the final report on the results of the project by the POLREC consortium.





The approval process will check the project output and the expected results mentioned in the final report submitted by the SME. Furthermore, a physical or remote meeting between the funded SME and POLREC partner(s) may be organised to better qualify the technical results.

## 8. Innovation Open Call calendar

The POLREC Innovation Open calls will be published in accordance with the following schedule (this schedule remains tentative for the 2<sup>nd</sup> open call):

### Chemical recycling sub-grant

- 1<sup>st</sup> Open Call 1 September – 31 October 2023
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Open Call (optional) 1 February – 1 April 2024

### Mechanical recycling sub-grant

- 1<sup>st</sup> Open Call 1 September – 31 October 2023
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Open Call (optional) 1 February – 1 April 2024

### Digital tools sub-grant

- 1<sup>st</sup> Open Call 1 September – 31 October 2023
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Open Call (optional) 1 February – 1 April 2024

The organisation of a second open call for the chemical, mechanical recycling and digital tools is optional, depending on the number of applications approved in the first round and the availability of budget, and might defer from the dates mentioned above. Please note that POLREC project partners reserve the right to modify the rules and conditions for this second round. A new Guide for Applicant will be issued with the up-dated rules and conditions of application.

## 9. Application process

Applicants must submit their proposal for POLREC innovation Open Calls on the [Cluster Submission Platform](#) by logging in the platform and filling-in the required fields. If the applicant does not already have an account on this platform, it must create one to access to the application form. Once logged in, the applicant must follow the 5 steps submission:

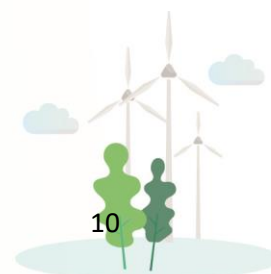
Step 1: APPLICANT INFORMATION. Please complete the fields with your business information;

Step 2: BASIC PROJECT INFORMATION. Please complete the fields with your business information;

Step 3: PROJECT DESCRIPTION. Please complete the fields with project information;

Step 4: ANNEXE. Only one annex is required: the quotation from your service-provider on which is based the amount requested for POLREC sub-grant. Please upload the requested document.

Step 5: VALIDATE AND SUBMIT your application after completing all mandatory fields





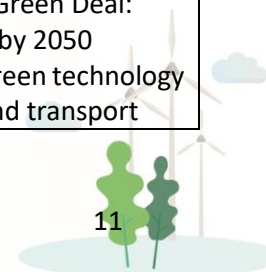
Applicants will receive an e-mail confirming that their application has been successfully submitted. Applications to the POLREC open call can be submitted exclusively on Cluster Submission Platform. No other documents are needed at this stage of the application process.

## 10. Evaluation and selection

Each application will be assessed by 2 POLREC project partners according to the following criteria.

### 10.1 Evaluation Criteria

Criteria	Weighting score	Maximum note	Description
1. Network	10%	6 points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Member of one of the following networks: Centimfe, DMN, MAV, Polymeris or WFG or an SME located outside the POLREC partner countries</li> <li>Part of new recycling value-chain, if possible involving SMEs based in other EU countries.</li> </ul>
2. Green business potential	20%	6 points	Increased green business potential for example in terms of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More environmentally friendly than existing concepts</li> <li>Entering a more circular business model</li> <li>Work with local suppliers</li> </ul>
3. Innovation potential	20%	6 points	Assessment of the innovation potential based on four steps on the innovation scale: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Renewal that solves routine issues leading to improvements.</li> <li>Minor improvements to existing systems, using known methods, but used in new context.</li> <li>Fundamental improvement of an existing solution that typically involves solutions from other industries.</li> <li>An unprecedented solution that creates radical change. The solution is new and unrelated to current or other industries.</li> </ol>
4. Scientific and technical quality	10%	6 points	Involvement of new research, technologies, process developments and technical solutions.
5. Organisational capacity and capability	15%	6 points	The company has sufficient managerial power, professional and administrative skills and financial resources to run the project.
6. Scalability	10%	6 points	The project idea can be scaled up/implemented on the long run in the SME strategy and thus lead to increased impact.
7. Supporting the European Green Deal	15%	6 points	The project must support the European Green Deal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To make Europe climate neutral by 2050</li> <li>To boost the economy through green technology</li> <li>To create sustainable industry and transport</li> </ul>





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A score from 1 to 6 will be assigned to each of the criteria. Only full scores will be given for each individual criterion. The meaning of the scores is as follows:

6	Superior quality
5	High quality
4	Exceeds expectations
3	Meets expectations
2	Needs development
1	Below expectations

The final scores of each application will be calculated as an average of the individual assessment provided by each evaluator with a maximum of 42 points per application

In order to be considered for receiving the sub-grant, the minimum threshold for each criterion will be 3 points and the minimum total pass score of 21 points. The applications with the highest score will be selected within the limit of the available budget. Obtaining the pass score does not guarantee that the application will receive funding.

## 10.2 Evaluation and Ranking for selected projects

After the external evaluation process, a ranking list will be defined where all the applications will be ranked according to their final scores. In the case of ties, priority will be given to projects with partners coming from EU-13 countries (Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia).

Successful proposals above the minimum pass score (per criterion and in total) are funded in descending order until the available sum for the call is totally assigned.

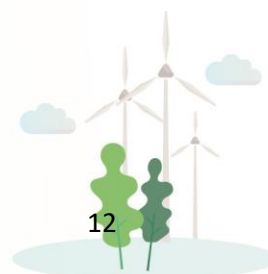
A Selection Committee composed of one representative of each POLREC partner will be reserved the rights to modify the ranking of successful proposals (in case of equal scores) to balance the list of selected projects according to geographical coverage and vertical sectors represented.

The final shortlist will be prepared by the POLREC coordinator (Polymeris) and POLREC partner - Plast Center Denmark. The assessment period will take maximum 40 days starting from the closing date of the open call.

## 10.3 Information to the applicants

Following the evaluation phase, the applicants will be informed about the outcome of the evaluations. The evaluation results will be sent to the main applicant's e-mail address associated with the application:

- A rejection letter in the event of the failure of the application with the detailed explanation.
- Or a notification letter for successful application. The instructions for the next steps will be described, with a focus on those related to the contractualisation process.





## 10.4 Complaint procedure

If after receiving the evaluation results an applicant disagrees with the result, a complaint can be sent (in English) to the project coordinator's e-mail ([europa@polymeris.fr](mailto:europa@polymeris.fr)) within 3 working days following the official receipt of the evaluation result. The following information must be included:

- contact details and name of the application
- the subject of the complaint
- information and evidence regarding the alleged breach

In case of such complaints are received, a re-evaluation will only be carried out if there is evidence of a shortcoming affecting the final decision on whether to fund the proposal.

The Review Committee will consist of the project coordinator and the WP2 leader. It will examine the complaint on the basis of the information brought forward by the applicant and decide whether the complaint is justified or not and will inform the applicant and the consortium on the decision taken.

If the complaint is considered justified, the Review Committee will notify 2 POLREC project partners, different to those which have done the initial evaluation, and ask them to re-evaluate the application and specifically the assessment part, subject to the complaint. The evaluators will then provide the Review Committee with an updated assessment. The final decision on the complaint will be communicated by the Review Committee to the applicant in writing within 7 working days from the date of submitting the complaint.

## 11. Signature of sub-grant agreement and payment of the sub-grant

The winning applicants selected for funding will firstly have to provide a set of administrative and financial documents to prove their eligibility. Applicants will have a maximum delay of 10 working days after receiving their notification letter to provide the requested documentation.

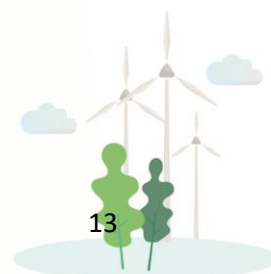
The POLREC Consortium will proceed to verification of these documents to make sure the selected applications are eligible in a delay of 15 working days.

### 11.1 Sub-Grant Agreement (SGA) signature

If all eligibility conditions are met and confirmed, the SMEs selected for funding will be invited to sign a Sub-Grant Agreement with the POLREC partner - Plast Center Denmark (PCD). This Sub-Grant Agreement details all rights and duties of the SMEs funded in the framework of the POLREC Innovation Open Call.

### 11.2 Payment procedure

The pre-funding payment of 70% of the total sub-grant allocated to the applicant will be proceeded by PCD no later than 14 days after the signature of the Sub-Grant Agreement.





### 11.3 Implementation and reporting

The awarded applications will start their implementation in maximum 2 months following the signature of the SGA. Each funded project within the POLREC Innovation Open Call will be followed by one POLREC consortium partner.

The use of the project budget will be controlled by the appointed POLREC partner at the beginning of the implementation of the action with the quotation from the service-provider and during the project with the invoice(s) and proof(s) of payment of the service(s) delivered.

The following rules must be respected:

- Only costs generated between the date of submission of the application and the end of lifetime of the subcontract are eligible.
- Expenditures incurred before the submission date of the application are not eligible. Expenditures incurred after the end date of the project as per the SGA are not eligible.

The projects' performance will be assessed:

1. During online interim interview at mid-term of the project
2. During the final online review within the month following the closure of the project implementation, based on the final report provided by the funded project.

The final payment (30% of the total sub-grant) will be sent to the beneficiary in a delay of 15 days after the approving of the final report by the POLREC consortium partners, based on the following criteria:

1. Overall quality and completeness of the final project report
2. Technical performance
3. Deadline Compliance

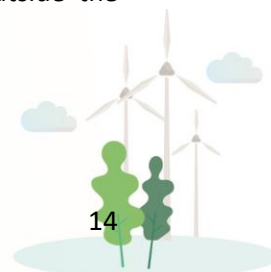
The beneficiaries must keep the original documents of their expenses in case of an audit for a period of at least 5 years after the end of the POLREC project (at least until end of August 2030).

## 12. Helpdesk

For any enquiries regarding information and/ or clarification about the present call, please contact one of the POLREC National Contact point listed:

- Denmark: [dwb@plastcenter.dk](mailto:dwb@plastcenter.dk)
- France (coordinator) : [europe@polymeris.fr](mailto:europe@polymeris.fr)
- Germany: [adelhelm@wfgheilbronn.de](mailto:adelhelm@wfgheilbronn.de)
- Spain: [clusterdematerials@outlook.es](mailto:clusterdematerials@outlook.es)
- Portugal: [tania.mendes@centimfe.com](mailto:tania.mendes@centimfe.com)

Applicants located in other EU countries are invited to contact POLREC's coordinator should they have any question on the application process. Support in finding a service-provider located outside the partner's countries cannot be guaranteed.





## 13. Confidentiality, GDPR protection & intellectual property rights

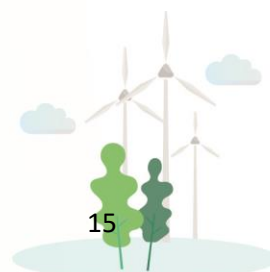
A full list of applicants will be prepared containing their basic information for statistical purposes and clarity, which will be also shared with the European Commission for transparency.

The applicants' list will not be public but will serve as statistics in project communication materials.

To process and evaluate proposals, the POLREC consortium will need to collect personal and industrial data. The POLREC project coordinator will act as a Data Controller for data submitted through the Cluster Submission platform. [The Cluster Submission platform](#)'s system design and operational procedures ensure that data are managed in compliance with The General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (GDPR). Each applicant will accept the Cluster Submission platform terms to ensure coverage.

The final list of the awarded projects and beneficiaries will be made public, including name of the projects, abstract, legal name of the companies, sector, country/region of origins, results of the project and duration of the projects.

The results and IPR developed during the project implementation will be the exclusive property of the corresponding SME. For dissemination and use of results generated through the financial support from POLREC, the SMEs must credit the POLREC project through proper citation and appearance of the POLREC logo and EU Logo, including the proper citation: "This project is funded by the European Commission Joint Cluster initiatives for Europe's recovery (Euroclusters) under the Single Market Programme (SMP COSME) grant agreement number 101074434".





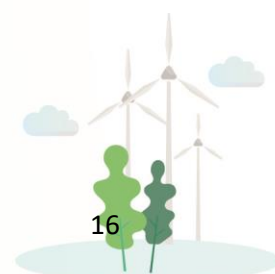
## PROJECT INFO

Grant Agreement	Project 101074434 — POLREC
Programme	Single Market Programme (SMP COSME)
Call	SMP-COSME-2021-CLUSTER
Topic	SMP-COSME-2021-CLUSTER-01
Type of action	SMP Grants for Financial Support
Project Title	Supporting a green and resilient Europe through POLymer RECYcling
Project starting date	1 <sup>st</sup> September 2022
Project end date	31 <sup>st</sup> August 2025
Project duration	36 months

## PROJECT CONSORTIUM



Written by Dorte Walzl Baelum (Plast Center Danmark – Danish Material Network) & Roxane Girard (Polymeris)





PROJECT

# POLREC



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