



PEDvolution

Interoperable solutions to streamline
PED evolution and cross-sectoral integration

Deliverable 8.2

Demonstrator acquisition process



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Glossary of terms and abbreviations used

ABBREVIATION TERM	/ DESCRIPTION
FSTP	Financial Support to Third Parties
F&T	Funding & Tenders
GA	Grant Agreement
PED	Positive Energy District

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report acts as a comprehensive record of the acquisition process for the PEDvolution Open Call for Demonstrators.

The Open Call served as the primary mechanism to acquire three additional PED demonstrators that will participate in the demonstration and validation of the PEDvolution solutions, thereby expanding the project's reach beyond the three co-developer PEDs (Wunsiedel-Germany, Kranj-Slovenia, and Winterthur-Switzerland). The selected PEDs will play a central role in validating PEDvolution solutions under diverse urban, social, and regulatory conditions, strengthening scalability and replication potential.

The approach followed combined: (i) the preparation of a structured documentation package (Guide for Applicants, Call Conditions, Proposal Template, Budget Template, Declaration of Honour), (ii) a dissemination strategy targeting relevant PED stakeholders, (iii) evaluation by an independent external jury, and (iv) final contracting and preparation for onboarding of the selected demonstrators.

The call was published on the EU Funding & Tenders portal² on May 1st, 2025, and closed on June 30th.

The open call successfully attracted qualified PED applicants across 15 countries, reflecting strong interest in PEDvolution solutions. Four applications were above the predefined quality threshold. The three highest scoring applications have passed the legal check and are currently in the process of signing the sub-grant agreement. As soon as the signing is completed, the three PEDs will be announced on the project communication channels and onboarding and capacity building activities will commence.

² Open Call published on the F&T portal: <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/competitive-calls/cs/10741?order=DESC&pageNumber=1&pageSize=50&sortBy=relevance&keywords=PEDvolution&isExactMatch=true&type=8&status=31094501,31094502&frameworkProgramme=43108390>

2 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this deliverable is to document the design, implementation, and results of the PEDvolution Open Call for Demonstrators. The deliverable addresses Task 8.3 (Call for Demonstrators) and fulfils the Grant Agreement requirement to ensure the transparent selection of additional PED sites through a competitive and fair process. In line with GDPR restrictions, applicant details, External Jury members, and evaluation results are not documented in this deliverable but can be made available to the European Commission upon request.

The objectives of this deliverable are threefold:

- To outline the methodology and procedures followed for launching and managing the open call.
- To describe the evaluation and selection framework ensuring fairness and transparency.
- To present the outcomes of the process and next steps.

These objectives are directly aligned with the overall aims of PEDvolution, which seeks to accelerate the evolution of Positive Energy Districts by validating and scaling interoperable technical, business, and social innovation tools. By expanding the project’s demonstrator base beyond the three co-developer PEDs, Task 8.3 strengthens the project’s capacity to test solutions across diverse contexts, thereby enhancing scalability, replicability, and impact at European level.

2.1 Mapping Project’s Outputs

The purpose of this section is to map PEDvolution’s Grant Agreement commitments, both within the formal Deliverable as well as the Task description, against the respective outputs and work performed.

Table 1: Adherence to Project’s GA Deliverable & Tasks Descriptions.

PROJECT COMPONENT TITLE	GA PROJECT COMPONENT OUTLINE	GA RESPECTIVE DOCUMENT CHAPTER(S)	JUSTIFICATION
DELIVERABLE			
D8.2 Demonstrator acquisition process	Description of open call and acquisition activities for additional PEDvolution demonstration partners	Chapters 3-8	The deliverable describes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -the methodology and procedures followed for launching and managing the open call (chapters 3, 5-6). -the evaluation and selection framework ensuring fairness and transparency (chapters 4, 7). -the outcomes of the process and onboarding activities (chapters 7-8).
TASKS			

<p>T8.3 Call for demonstrators</p>	<p>An open call for demonstrators will be launched in the end of the first half of the project: preparation of open call (M17-M18), launch open call (M19), deadline for candidates (M20), evaluation and selection of candidates from the call (M21), agreement and planning demonstration phase with all PEDs (co-developers and those selected in the call).</p>	<p>Chapters 3-8</p>	<p>The Open Call was launched in the <i>end of the first half of the project</i> (Month 17, project duration 36 months). The deadline for candidates was Month 18 (June 30th 2025) to anticipate the summer vacation period in which a high number of applicants may not have been available.</p> <p><i>Preparation of the open call</i> is described in chapters 4 and 5.</p> <p>The <i>launch of the open call</i> and communication campaign are described in chapter 6.</p> <p><i>Evaluation and selection of candidates</i> from the call is described in chapter 7.</p> <p>The obligations for the <i>demonstration phase</i> are summarised in chapter 4 and the <i>sub-grant agreement</i> to be signed by the successful applicants in chapter 5. The planned onboarding activities are reported in Chapter 8.</p> <p>All steps are summarised in chapter 3.</p>
	<p>Free access to the developed tools and both technical and financial support will be offered to the applicants.</p>	<p>4</p>	<p>Applicants will have free access to the tools they will be testing and financial support up to EUR 50,000 / applicant is foreseen to allow to carry out all foreseen activities (chapter 4.3).</p>
	<p>The consortium has already identified a list of 5 potential PEDs (see section 1.2.3) based on the experience already gathered from the 3 co-developer PEDs that will apply to the Call for Demonstrators together</p>	<p>6, 7</p>	<p>Chapter 6 summarises the publication and dissemination activities of the open call.</p> <p>The predefined potential PEDs were notified about opportunity to submit an application to the Open Call from the consortium members. Those PEDs are located in Norway, Austria, Slovenia and Belgium. Only one of</p>

with other PEDs reached through the consortium's own networks and through networking activities built along the project.

The applications will be evaluated by an external jury, being experts in PED-related aspects, not active for the project partners. The jury will express their opinion (e.g. ranking of applications) and the General Assembly will be making the final decision (D8.2). INLE, as Technical Coordinator, will determine the compliance criteria for the candidate PEDs. 4, 7

these PEDs submitted an application; however it is not in the three PEDs currently in contract signature phase.

The applications were evaluated by an external jury of PED experts (chapter 7).

The ranking of applications resulting from the external jury evaluation was endorsed by the General Assembly (Chapter 7).

INLE determined the compliance criteria for candidate PEDs together with the solution providers to ensure that the requirements set for applicants were technically sound, achievable, and aligned with the expected performance indicators of the project (chapter 4.2)

2.2 Deliverable Overview and Report Structure

This deliverable provides a clear and transparent account of the full demonstrator acquisition process, from initial planning to evaluation and selection of the three follower PEDs. The chapters are organised as follows:

- **Chapter 3** describes the timeline of milestones of the Open Call from laying the foundations of the Open Call until the onboarding of successful applicants.
- **Chapter 4** presents the PEDvolution objectives that guided the Open Call, how solution providers shaped the call requirements, the compliance conditions imposed on applicants, and the obligations agreed with selected demonstrators.
- **Chapter 5** documents all applicant-facing material, including the Application Form, Budget Template, Guide for Applicants, Call Conditions, and, Declaration of Honour.
- **Chapter 6** describes the Open Call announcement and dissemination campaign for reaching the highest possible number of potential applicants.
- **Chapter 7** details the evaluation procedure and outcomes including the independent jury evaluation and endorsement by the General Assembly.
- **Chapter 8** summarises the planned onboarding activities including kick-off meetings, familiarisation with tools, baseline data collection, and co-development planning.

3 TIMELINE AND MILESTONES

The Open Call process was structured around a predefined timeline outlined in Task 8.3 (Call for demonstrators).

Phase I: Preparation Phase (Feb – Apr 2025): This phase focused on laying the foundations of the Open Call. Key activities included:

1. Gathering technical requirements for all PEDvolution solutions from Solution Providers.
2. Drafting the Open Call documentation package (Application Form, Guide for Applicants, Call Conditions, Declaration of Honour, Budget template).
3. Formulating the External Jury, with PED expertise, based on profiles suggested by partners.
4. Finalising all call materials and submitting them to the Project Officer for feedback.
5. Officially publishing the Open Call on the EC Funding & Tenders Portal and announcing it on PEDvolution channels.

Phase II: Launch and Application Phase (May – Jun 2025): The call was formally published on the Funding and Tenders portal³ on May 1st 2025 and was kept open for two full months. Dissemination was carried out through targeted networks as well as direct outreach to PED stakeholders identified in earlier project stages. Multiple rounds of social media posts and dissemination announcements took place within relevant project channels. The call closed on June 30th with 15 PEDs submitting applications.

Phase III: Evaluation Phase (Jul – Nov 2025): A structured two-step evaluation was implemented:

1. Internal Screening - verification of completeness, validity, and compliance with eligibility criteria.
2. External Jury Evaluation - independent PED experts evaluated the applications based on context, solution fit, and feasibility using an evaluation template.

Phase IV: Selection and Contracting (Nov – Dec 2025): The General Assembly reviewed the External Jury recommendations and endorsed the ranking recommendation.

Legal checks have been performed for the 3 top ranked candidates. The three PEDs are currently in the process of signing the sub-grant agreement where their participation, roles, responsibilities, funding arrangements, and compliance obligations are defined.

Phase V: Onboarding Phase (Jan – Mar 2025): The awarded PEDs will enter an onboarding process designed to ensure readiness for demonstration.

³ Open Call published on the F&T portal: <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/competitive-calls/cs/10741?order=DESC&pageNumber=1&pageSize=50&sortBy=relevance&keywords=PEDvolution&isExactMatch=true&type=8&status=31094501,31094502&frameworkProgramme=43108390>

4 DEFINITION OF REQUIREMENTS AND CONTRACTUAL OBLIGATIONS

The definition of requirements, performance indicators, and contractual obligations was a central preparatory step for the Open Call.

In early 2025, a series of dedicated meetings and interactions with the consortium were organised, under the coordination of INLE, to help capture the needs of the project as a whole, as well of the individual solution providers, and effectively translate them into testing requirements for the Open Call applicants as well as eligibility and selection criteria. The outcomes of these interactions have been reflected in the Open Call documentation package (Application Form, Guide for Applicants, Call Conditions, Budget template).

A set of technical, legal, and financial compliance requirements for candidate PEDs was agreed upon and documented. These included the ability to provide reliable energy and emissions data, interoperability readiness with open standards, active stakeholder engagement, and financial viability for sustaining demonstration activities. These criteria were embedded in the eligibility screening and evaluation process to guide the selection of the most suitable candidates.

The following subsections describe the PEDvolution objectives that guided the Open Call requirements, how solution providers shaped the call requirements, the compliance conditions imposed on applicants, and the obligations of awarded demonstrators.

4.1 Open Call scope and PEDvolution objectives

The PEDvolution Open Call invited “*Positive Energy Districts (PEDs), municipalities, energy communities, and urban developers to participate in the demonstration and validation of interoperable solutions that accelerate sustainable urban transformation. This call aims to enhance energy efficiency, sector integration, digital interoperability, and community-driven innovation within PEDs across Europe.*”

In the Open Call, Positive Energy Districts were defined as “*energy-efficient, energy-flexible urban areas or groups of interconnected buildings designed to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions and generate an annual positive energy balance. They actively manage energy flows through the integration of renewable energy sources, buildings, mobility, energy, and ICT systems. PEDs prioritise the use of local renewable resources and aim to enhance the interaction between these systems to deliver social, economic, and environmental benefits to the community. Effective implementation of PEDs requires a multi-sectoral approach, clear spatial boundaries, and alignment with broader energy systems to ensure sustainability and resilience.*”

The Open Call mechanism was designed as an extension of PEDvolution’s core objectives, ensuring that new demonstrator PEDs contribute to and validate the project’s ambitions. In particular, the Open Call directly supports the following objectives project objectives (O):

O1 - PED Planning, Design and Stakeholder Engagement. By inviting additional PEDs to participate, the Open Call broadens the capture of social, market, technological, and interoperability aspects across diverse contexts. Selected PEDs are expected to engage local stakeholders and communities, thereby enriching the project’s user requirements, use cases, and social innovation activities.

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02 - Integrated Modelling and Digital Twins. Through the Open Call, follower PEDs can apply and test the PED Design and Planning Toolset, based on Digital Twin methodologies. This ensures that modelling and planning methods are validated in new environments, allowing optimisation of PED design and district-level energy measures under varying local conditions.

03 - Energy Asset Management and Flexibility (PED Energy Manager). The Open Call expands the scope for testing energy management solutions, including real-time monitoring, demand response, and cross-sector optimisation. Additional PEDs provide new data sources and use cases for extracting flexibility and testing market participation.

04 - Interoperability and Data Exchange. By involving new demonstrators, the project enhances validation of the Data Exchange, Integration and Interoperability Platform. The Open Call ensures that interoperability requirements are tested with a wider set of assets, systems, and standards (e.g. SAREF, open protocols), and that integration with external platforms (DSOs, markets, smart grids) is achieved under diverse conditions.

05 - PED Readiness and Certification Framework. The selected Open Call PEDs will undergo the PED Readiness Assessment, providing insights into their preparedness for certification. This helps harmonise the methodology across more sites and refines the Dynamic Decision Support Guideline by applying it to different planning and operational contexts.

06 - Demonstration, Validation and Replication. The Open Call is central to achieving PEDvolution's aim of scaling beyond the three co-developer PEDs. By onboarding three follower demonstrators, the project expands its demonstration base to six PEDs in total, thereby validating solutions under diverse geographies and operational conditions. This supports replication and mainstreaming of PEDvolution's tools across Europe.

07 - Business Models and Social Innovation. Through the Open Call, additional PEDs engage with the Business Models Innovation Tool and Social Innovation and Engagement Tool, testing new models for community participation, revenue streams (e.g. demand response, flexibility trading), and social entrepreneurship. This strengthens the project's capacity to validate innovative economic frameworks and citizen-driven energy transition approaches.

As a project requirement the number of PEDs to test the PEDvolution Tools are listed below. The project already has 3 PEDs acting as co-developers. The additional PEDs to test the PEDvolution Tools should result from the Open Call for Demonstrators.

- PED Design and Planning Toolset (O2): 3 PEDs.
 - Requirement for additional testing: none
- PED Energy Manager (O3): 4 PEDs.
 - Requirement for additional testing: 1 PED
- Data Exchange and Interoperability Platform (O4): 4 PEDs.
 - Requirement for additional testing: 1 PED
- Dynamic Decision Support Guideline (O5): 6 PEDs.
 - Requirement for additional testing: 3 PEDs
- PED Readiness Assessment (O5): 6 PEDs.
 - Requirement for additional testing: 3 PEDs
- Social Innovation Tool (O6): 6 PEDs.
 - Requirement for additional testing: 3 PEDs
- Business Model Tool (O7): 6 PEDs.

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- Requirement for additional testing: 3 PEDs

4.2 Engagement with Solution Providers

The solution providers were central to the design and specification of the Open Call. As the developers and owners of the PEDvolution tools, their input was necessary to ensure that the requirements set for applicants were technically sound, achievable, and aligned with the expected performance indicators of the project. Their engagement spanned the early drafting of compliance criteria, the definition of evaluation methodologies, and the mapping of requirements to project-level KPIs.

Definition of technical criteria: Each solution provider outlined the data, infrastructure, and operational prerequisites necessary to test their respective tools. For instance:

- The PED Readiness Assessment Framework required applicants to provide baseline data on energy demand, renewable energy penetration, and emissions.
- The Data Exchange and Interoperability Platform required demonstration sites to commit to data-sharing via open standards (e.g., SAREF, GAIA-X) and to ensure compatibility with the Common Information Model (CIM).
- The PED Energy Manager required a minimum share of assets with monitoring and control capabilities, enabling demand-response and flexibility testing.

Iterative feedback process: To refine requirements, a series of draft compliance criteria documents was produced and circulated among consortium members. Each iteration incorporated technical feedback and practical adjustments, targeting a balance between ambition (ensuring meaningful demonstrations) and feasibility (not excluding promising applicants lacking full maturity). This iterative process reinforced consortium ownership of the Open Call and ensured criteria reflected the real needs of the tools and the demonstration plan.

Alignment with PEDvolution objectives and expected impacts: A key outcome of the engagement with solution providers was the alignment of tool-specific requirements with the project's Key Performance Indicators. This was not limited to technical outputs but extended to the broader objective of ensuring that each solution would be validated across a representative number of demonstrator sites, both the three co-developer PEDs and those brought in through the Open Call. In this way, the evaluation of applicants was directly tied to the project's capacity to meet its objectives and targeted impacts (and associated KPIs), which depend on the effective deployment, testing, and validation of the PEDvolution solutions across multiple contexts.

4.3 Technical, Legal and Financial Requirements of Open Call

The PEDvolution Open Call was framed around a set of technical, legal, and financial requirements designed to ensure that applicants were both eligible under Horizon Europe rules and capable of contributing meaningfully to the project's objectives. These requirements, defined in the *Call Conditions for FSTPs* and the *Guide for Applicants* (see chapter 5), provided the foundation for a transparent and competitive selection process.

Technical Requirements

Applicants were required to demonstrate that they had the capacity, infrastructure, and readiness to host PEDvolution demonstrations. Specifically, they had to:

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- Be an active PED initiative (operational, in development, or in planning), representing either existing districts or new projects with the potential to evolve into PEDs.
- Provide baseline data on key dimensions, including energy demand and consumption, renewable energy penetration (% RES self-supply), greenhouse gas emissions, and relevant community engagement metrics. This data is essential for the benchmarking of project KPIs.
- Demonstrate system readiness, such as having a minimum share of monitored or controllable assets, the capability to exchange data in line with open standards (e.g., SAREF, GAIA-X), and a willingness to integrate with the PEDvolution Common Information Model (CIM).
- Ensure stakeholder engagement structures were in place, enabling the use of the Social Innovation Tool and guaranteeing that local communities and authorities could participate in the demonstration.

In addition, all applicants were obliged to test four PEDvolution solutions, in order to reach the contractual obligations of the project. Namely:

1. Dynamic Decision Support Guideline (DDSG)
2. PED Readiness Assessment Framework (PED RA)
3. Social Innovation and Engagement Tool
4. PED Business Models Innovation Tool (BMI)

The remaining tools, namely the PED Energy Manager, the Data Exchange & Interoperability Platform, and the PED Design and Planning Toolset, could be selected depending on the PED's specific context and maturity. This requirement also ensured that project KPIs related to the deployment and testing of solutions across a defined number of PEDs (both co-developer and Open Call sites) would be achieved.

Legal Requirements

Legal and compliance obligations were based on Horizon Europe's framework for Financial Support to Third Parties. Applicants were required to:

- Submit a Declaration of Honour confirming:
 - Compliance with EU/national tax and social security obligations.
 - No involvement in insolvency, fraud, or double funding.
 - Absence of Conflicts of Interest.
- Agree to contractual conditions (Sub-Grant Agreement) specifying:
 - Roles and responsibilities of both parties.
 - Data ownership and confidentiality terms.
 - Conditions for further use and exploitation of PEDvolution solutions.
- Respect GDPR (EU Regulation 2016/679) and data protection provisions:
 - Personal and project-related data collected only for evaluation and implementation.
 - Applicants consented to data processing and could request deletion post-call.

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- Provide supporting compliance documents, including legal entity forms, bank account validation, and, if applicable, Double Taxation Avoidance Forms.

Financial Requirements

The financial support mechanism was structured to ensure fairness, transparency, and alignment with project objectives:

- **Budget Range:** Total available funding of €150,000, with individual grants between €30,000 and €50,000 per PED.
- **Funding Structure:** Sub-grants provided as lump sum contributions, disbursed in three instalments:
 - 30% advance payment upon signature of the Sub-Grant Agreement.
 - 30% after completion of the Onboarding Phase, contingent on delivery of data, metrics, and KPIs.
 - 40% final payment after successful completion of the Demonstration, Validation and Revision Phase and approval of the final Periodic Report.
- **Eligible Costs included:**
 - Personnel directly working on PEDvolution-related tasks.
 - Travel costs necessary for implementation.
 - Depreciation of equipment compliant with Horizon Europe rules.
 - Other goods and services (e.g., consumables, dissemination activities, software licences, data services, market studies, external expertise).
- **Budget Justification:** Applicants had to provide a clear budget plan using the official template (detailed in chapter 5), justifying each category in terms of tasks and goals. Costs had to be necessary, reasonable, and verifiable.
- **Audits & Controls:** Selected PEDs must retain original financial documentation for up to five years after project completion, subject to audit by the EC or external auditors.

4.4 Awarded PEDs Obligations

Awarded PEDs will not only be recipients of financial support but will become active co-developers in the PEDvolution ecosystem. Their role will be to validate, test, and demonstrate the PEDvolution solutions in real contexts, ensuring that project results are scalable, replicable, and impactful. Through these obligations, the awarded PEDs become integral partners in the project's demonstration activities, not only validating the technical feasibility of the PEDvolution solutions but also ensuring their social acceptance, market relevance, and long-term replicability of the PEDvolution solutions.

Onboarding and Capacity Building

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- PEDs are required to participate in onboarding activities organised as soon as the sub-grant agreement is signed. These include technical workshops, bilateral meetings, and training sessions to familiarise local teams with PEDvolution tools.
- Dedicated capacity-building sessions will be designed to support the PEDs in the effective integration of the solutions, adapt local infrastructures, and mobilise stakeholders.

Baseline Data and Monitoring

- PEDs are obliged to provide reliable baseline data on energy demand, renewable energy share, emissions, and community engagement indicators, forming the benchmark for evaluation of progress.
- PEDs should be committed to maintaining continuous data collection and monitoring throughout the demonstration, in line with project KPIs.
- For sensitive and personal data and monitoring, a relevant Joint Controllership Agreement along with an informed consent form template (already developed and implemented within the project) will be provided to the PEDs.

Tool Deployment

- PEDs are contractually bound to test and validate the four mandatory PEDvolution tools (Dynamic Decision Support Guideline, PED Readiness Assessment, Social Innovation Tool, and Business Models Innovation Tool).
- In addition, each site should implement at least one of the three additional solutions (PED Design and Planning Toolset, PED Energy Manager, Data Exchange & Interoperability Platform) according to local priorities and readiness.
- PEDs have to collaborate closely with solution providers to ensure smooth technical integration and provide feedback for tool refinement.

Stakeholder and Community Engagement

- PEDs are expected to actively engage local stakeholders, including municipalities, utilities, DSOs, citizen groups, and businesses, in all demonstration phases.
- PEDs should organise workshops, surveys, and co-creation activities to ensure that solutions respond to local needs and foster acceptance.

KPI Contribution and Reporting

- PEDs are contractually required to contribute to achieving the project's KPIs, in particular those linked to the deployment of PEDvolution solutions in a specified number of demonstrators (both existing and Open Call PEDs).
- PEDs are responsible for delivering contributions within key technical project deliverables, using the templates provided, covering technical results, stakeholder engagement, and financial use of funds.
- Project Periodic and Final reporting are directly tied to payment instalments, creating a strong link between obligations, performance, and funding.

Knowledge Sharing and Dissemination

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- PEDs should contribute to project-wide dissemination activities, including conferences, workshops, and contributions to the PEDvolution website.
- They also commit to share non-confidential results openly, promoting replication and uptake across Europe.

Contractual Compliance

- Obligations will be formalised in the Sub-Grant Agreement to be signed between the coordinator and each awarded PED. This agreement includes provisions on intellectual property, confidentiality, GDPR compliance, and audit rights.

5 THE APPLICATION DOCUMENTS

Application documents combined technical rigor with ease of use, so that all applicants, regardless of their prior experience with EU-funded projects, could present high-quality, comparable, and compliant proposals.

The drafting process drew upon lessons learned from earlier EU project open calls, and incorporated a multi-layered set of documents:

1. The Guide for Applicants and Call Conditions, providing detailed rules, explanations, and obligations for both eligibility and participation. Accessed by applicants as:
 - **Call Conditions for Financial Support to Third Parties:** Full details on objectives, eligibility, timeline, and available funding.
 - **Annex I – Guide for Applicants:** Step-by-step guidance on how to apply, evaluation criteria, and FAQs.
2. The Application Form and Budget Template, ensuring structured, verifiable, and comparable submissions. Accessed by applicants as:
 - **Annex II – Application Form (Template):** The form applicants must complete and submit.
 - **Annex IV – Budget Application (Template):** Outline of the proposed allocation of funding.
3. The Declaration of Honour and Sub-Grant Agreement, ensuring legal, financial, and ethical compliance in line with EU and national regulations. Accessed by applicants as:
 - **Annex III – Declaration of Honour (Template):** To be signed by the legal representative.
 - **Annex V – Sub-Grant Agreement (Template):** Contractual terms applicable to selected applicants.

All documents remain accessible through the Open Call announcement on the EU F&T portal: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/competitive-calls-cs/10741?order=DESC&pageNumber=1&pageSize=50&sortBy=relevance&keywords=PEDvolution&isExactMatch=true&type=8&status=31094501,31094502&frameworkProgramme=43108390](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/competitive-calls/cs/10741?order=DESC&pageNumber=1&pageSize=50&sortBy=relevance&keywords=PEDvolution&isExactMatch=true&type=8&status=31094501,31094502&frameworkProgramme=43108390)

5.1 The Call Conditions Document

The Call Conditions served as the formal contractual and technical reference point for the Open Call. It translated the objectives of PEDvolution into concrete obligations for applicants and ensured that all activities were legally and strategically aligned with Horizon Europe rules for Financial Support to Third Parties. Namely:

- It defined the scope and objectives of the call, highlighting the ambition to accelerate urban energy transformation by testing seven interoperable PEDvolution solutions in diverse Positive Energy Districts.
- It gave a strategic framing, presenting how additional PEDs selected through the call would complement the three existing demonstrators in Germany, Slovenia, and Switzerland

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(Wunsiedel, Kranj, Winterthur), thereby broadening geographic, technological, and community diversity.

- It detailed the practical obligations of selected PEDs, outlining daily activities from onboarding to demonstration, and specifying the datasets, infrastructure, and engagement measures they were required to provide.
- It set the testing requirements for each PEDvolution solution, including minimum data, technical integration, and operational KPIs.
- It clarified legal, ethical, and financial compliance, covering GDPR, exclusion criteria, double funding, intellectual property, and the principles of equal treatment of applicants.

5.2 The Guide for Applicants

The Guide for Applicants was conceived as the central reference document for all interested stakeholders. Its primary function was to translate the technical, legal, and financial obligations of the PEDvolution Open Call into a clear and user-friendly format, reducing entry barriers for municipalities, SMEs, citizen groups, and other entities that may have had limited prior experience with EU funding.

The Guide was divided into distinct sections, each focusing on a core dimension of the call:

- **Eligibility and Who Should Apply:** Applicants had to be legal entities based in eligible EU Member States or Associated Countries, belonging to categories such as municipalities, DSOs, SMEs, startups, large enterprises, universities, or energy cooperatives. Crucially, the Guide clarified that eligible PEDs could be at different stages of maturity: planning, implementation, or operation.
- **Eligible Activities:** All awarded applicants are obliged to test and validate the four mandatory PEDvolution solutions while also encouraged to adopt as many of the optional tools as possible. This ensured comparability across all funded PEDs while still allowing room for local tailoring.
- **Submission Procedures:** The Guide provided explicit instructions on how to compile and submit the application package via the EU Funding & Tenders Portal. It specified document formats (PDF), naming conventions, and warned that incomplete or late submissions would be automatically disqualified.
- **Funding Conditions:** Clear guidance was provided on the financial structure of the support, with a total budget of €150,000, individual sub-grants of €30,000–€50,000, and a staged disbursement scheme.
- **Financial Compliance and Audits:** The Guide underscored that all costs must be actual, reasonable, verifiable, and compliant with Horizon Europe rules. It explained the obligation to retain supporting documentation for up to five years after the end of the project, noting that audits could be conducted by the European Commission or its representatives.
- **Evaluation and Selection Process:** It outlined the evaluation system and explained the scoring model (0–5 scale) with weighted criteria (PED context, solutions tick-box, solution-specific questions, and budget). It also clarified that the final endorsement rested with the PEDvolution General Assembly, ensuring applicants understood the governance of the process.
- **Legal and Compliance Requirements:** The Guide detailed GDPR obligations, intellectual property provisions, and rules on conflicts of interest. It highlighted that while sub-grantees retained ownership of any results developed, the consortium and the European Commission had rights to use outputs for reporting and dissemination.

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- **FAQs Appendix:** To lower entry barriers, a practical FAQ section answered recurring questions about eligibility, costs, and submission. For example, it clarified the meaning of FSTP, maximum funding amounts, and the timeline of disbursements.

5.3 The Application Form template

The Application Form (Proposal Template) served as the structured blueprint for capturing all critical details about the applicant entity, the context of the PED, and the intended use of PEDvolution solutions. It allowed the evaluation process to operate on a standardised basis, enabling reviewers to assess different PEDs under the same categories and requirements. It was divided into several distinct parts:

Information of the Applicant. Including legal name, registration number, VAT number, year of establishment, and contact details.

Application Declaration. Including confirmation that the applicant was authorised to represent the PED, acknowledgement that the Guidelines for Applicants had been read and understood and consent for the collection, processing, and storage of personal data in line with GDPR.

PED Context. Applicants were asked to provide a short but precise description of their PED, including:

- Location of the PED (urban/rural context, geographic details).
- Energy metrics: baseline demand per building or at district level, annual energy consumption, renewable energy share (% RES self-supply).
- Community involvement: existing or planned initiatives involving citizens or stakeholders.
- Infrastructure status: description of existing energy systems (district heating, smart grids, PV, etc.) and operational readiness.
- Stage of development: planning, implementation, or operation.
- Compliance with PED definition.
- Cooperation strategy for local partnership.

PEDvolution Solutions Tick-Box. Applicants indicated which solutions they intended to test, from the full suite of seven.

Solution-Specific Questions. For each selected solution, applicants were asked a number of targeted technical questions designed to assess feasibility and data availability.

5.4 The Budget template

The Budget Template was a mandatory attachment to the application. It guaranteed transparency in financial planning and ensured that requested funding corresponded directly to proposed activities. It was structured in compliance with Horizon Europe's financial rules and helped safeguard against ineligible costs or overestimations.

Applicants had to break down their requested funding across eligible cost categories:

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- Personnel Costs: calculated based on actual hours worked, in line with the applicant's normal remuneration practices. The form required linking personnel allocations to specific tasks and goals.
- Travel Expenses: only travel directly necessary for the execution of tasks (e.g., workshops, consortium meetings, site visits) was eligible.
- Equipment: limited to depreciation costs of equipment purchased during the project, compliant with Horizon Europe rules.
- Other Goods and Services: consumables, dissemination, licenses, data services, or external expertise (e.g., technical assessments, market studies), provided they were essential and ancillary to the main activities.

Payment is tied to performance-based disbursements:

- 30% advance payment upon signature of the Sub-Grant Agreement.
- 30% upon completion of the Onboarding Phase, contingent on delivery of baseline data, metrics, and KPIs.
- 40% after successful completion of the Demonstration, Validation, and Revision Phase and approval of the final Periodic Report.

5.5 The Declaration of Honor template

The Declaration of Honour was a mandatory compliance document that all applicants were required to sign and submit as part of their application package.

The Declaration ensured that every applicant explicitly confirmed their compliance with fundamental eligibility conditions, ethical standards, and EU financial rules. It provided the consortium and the European Commission with a legally enforceable assurance that only eligible, trustworthy, and financially sound entities would participate in the PEDvolution Open Call.

A Legal Entity Form, a standard EU template verifying the applicant's official registration details, organisational type, and eligibility status was also provided.

5.6 The Sub-Grant Agreement template

The Sub-Grant Agreement template that awarded applicants would need to sign was provided together with the actual application documentation. This agreement will form the formal contract between the PEDvolution coordinator and each of the beneficiaries of the awarded PEDs.

The document sets out what the Beneficiary must do, how the funding will be provided, and what rules apply ensuring that the beneficiaries work within the Open Call is properly aligned with EU funding rules, PEDvolution's objectives, and the overarching Horizon Europe grant agreement. It also details responsibilities (reporting, record-keeping, visibility, confidentiality, data protection), payment conditions, and legal safeguards like liability, audits, and dispute resolution.

6 OPEN CALL PUBLICATION AND DISSEMINATION

The call was published on the EU Funding & Tenders portal⁴ on May 1st, 2025, and closed on June 30th. It was available to any interested applicant as any open call funded by EU projects (Figure 1).

The screenshot displays the details of an open call for proposals. At the top, the title is "PEDvolution Open Call for Demonstrators: Positive Energy Districts (PEDs)". Below this, it specifies "PEDvolution | Cascade funding" and provides the "Opening date: 01 May 2025 | Deadline date: 30 June 2025 | Single-stage". The programme is identified as "Horizon Europe (HORIZON)" with a type of action of "-".

The main content area is titled "PEDvolution Open Call for Demonstrators: Positive Energy Districts (PEDs)" and includes a "PEDvolution" sub-header. There are two tabs: "Grant" (selected) and "Cascade funding".

Internal navigation:

- General information (selected)
- Submission & evaluation process
- Further information
- Task description

General Information:

- Opening date:** 01 May 2025
- Deadline date:** 30 June 2025 23:59 (Brussels time)
- Expected duration of participation:** 60 calendar days
- Project acronym:** PEDvolution
- Grant agreement number:** 101138472

Deadline model: single-stage

Total funding available: 150 000,00 €

Open For Submission: A green button with a checkmark icon.

Full name of the EU funded project: Interoperable solutions to streamline PED evolution and cross-sectoral integration

Topic: HORIZON-CL5-2023-D4-01-03 - Interoperable solutions for positive energy districts (PEDs), including a better integration of local renewables and local excess heat sources

Figure 1: Open Call publication on EU F&T portal.

6.1 Dissemination campaign

A dissemination campaign was performed, led by the Communication and Dissemination Manager SXS, targeting PED related projects and initiatives aiming to reach the highest possible number of potential applicants.

The PEDvolution project website (Figure 2) and social media accounts (Figure 3) acted as the key promotional tools and sources of updates on open call developments.

Projects partners promoted the open call through their own networks and during project related dissemination activities. Examples include closed meetings of the Scalable Cities Large Board of Coordinators, FlexOffer User Group and Scalable Cities Community as well as open events like the joint workshop of PED sister projects "Building the Future of Energy: A Joint Workshop on PED Innovation and Collaboration".

⁴ Open Call published on the F&T portal: <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/competitive-calls-cs/10741?order=DESC&pageNumber=1&pageSize=50&sortBy=relevance&keywords=PEDvolution&isExactMatch=true&type=8&status=31094501,31094502&frameworkProgramme=43108390>

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The open call was further propagated via the websites, newsletters and social media of major EU initiatives such as the Covenant of Mayors and Smart Cities Marketplace (Figure 4) and PED related EU projects such as ASCEND (Figure 5).



Figure 2: Open Call announcement of PEDvolution website.

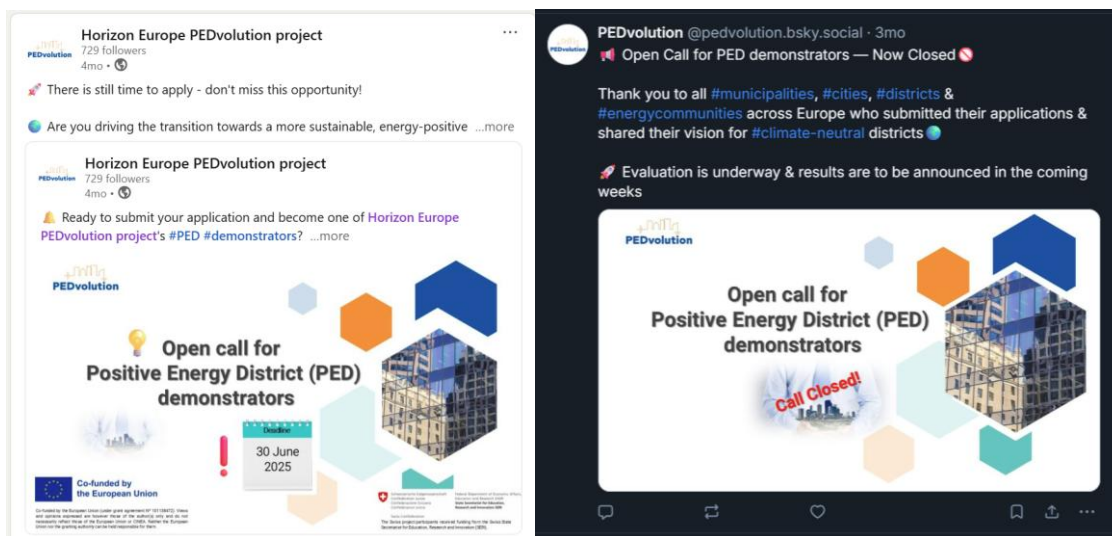


Figure 3: Open Call announcement and status updates on PEDvolution social media.

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Figure 4: Open Call announcement on Covenant of Mayors and Smart Cities Marketplace websites.

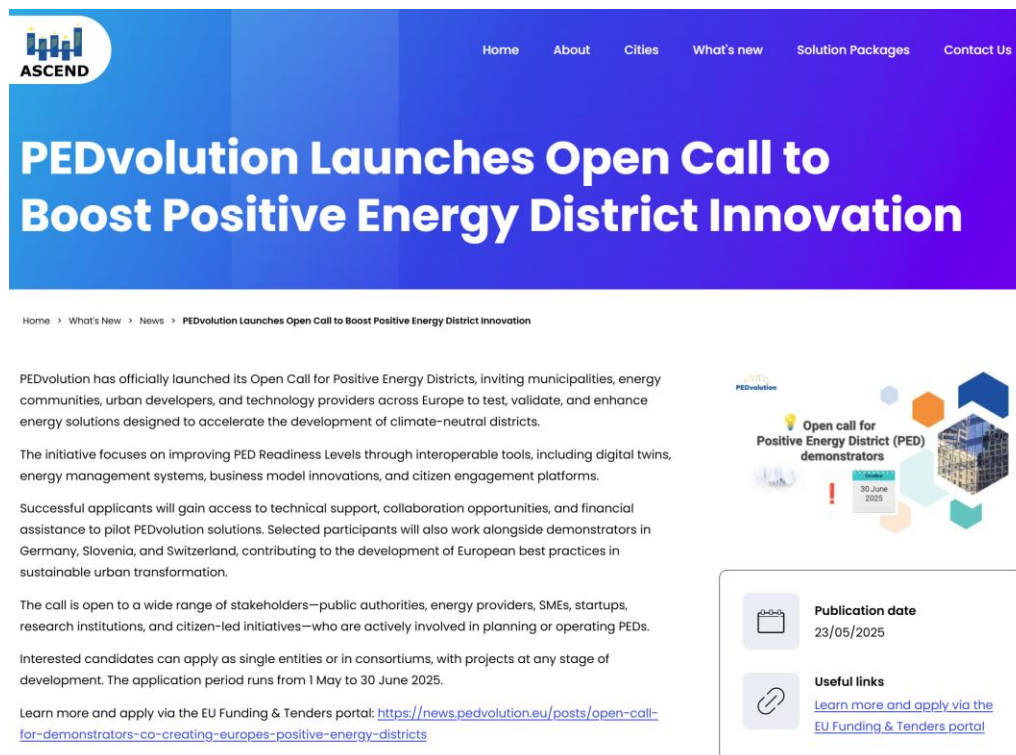


Figure 5: Open Call announcement on the ASCEND project website.

7 EVALUATION PROCEDURE AND OUTCOMES

A total of fifteen (15) applications from eight countries (Belgium, Greece, Italy, Spain, Turkey, Switzerland, Germany, Slovenia) were submitted to the Open Call. All applications underwent a common and transparent evaluation process. A structured two-step evaluation was implemented:

1. Eligibility Screening - verification of completeness, validity, and compliance with eligibility criteria (July 2025).
2. External Jury Evaluation - independent experts evaluated the applications based on context, solution fit, and feasibility using an evaluation template (July – November 2025).

Results were consolidated and submitted to the PEDvolution General Assembly for endorsement.

7.1 Internal Screening

7.1.1 Eligibility Criteria

As outlined in the Guide for Applicants, the following eligibility criteria were considered (numbered E1-E5 to facilitate the report's readability):

- **E1** Submission before the call deadline.
- **E2** Compliance with legal eligibility criteria (legal entity status, country)
- **E3** Compliance with project scope, open-call scope.
- **E4** Completeness of the application form and required documents.
- **E5** Alignment with the objectives of the PEDvolution Project.

In order to be considered in alignment with the objectives of the PEDvolution project (eligibility criterion E5) applicants should:

- **E5.1** Have an active PED initiative in planning, implementation, or operation.
- **E5.2** Test and validate the following mandatory tools along with at least one to three of the additional PEDvolution tools of their choice:

Mandatory Tools:

- Dynamic Decision Support Guideline
- PED Readiness Assessment
- PED Social Innovation Tool
- PED Business Models Innovation Tool

Additional PEDvolution tools (minimum one, maximum three)

- PED Design and Planning Toolset
- PED Energy Manager
- Data Exchange, Integration, and Interoperability Platform
- **E5.3** Provide essential technical data to facilitate tool deployment.
- **E5.4** Engage local stakeholders in the demonstration process.

Applications failing to meet these criteria will be rejected without further evaluation.

7.1.2 Eligibility Screening

The eligibility screening was performed using both administrative and technical criteria. The associated checks were performed by INLE as the coordinator of the PEDvolution project and Open Call leader.

A. ELIGIBILITY SCREENING - Administrative Criteria (E1-E4) (1 July 2025 - 2 July 2025)

The initial screening of all received applications was conducted within one week of their submission. This step involved conducting an initial eligibility check based on the aforementioned administrative criteria, checking the completeness, validity, and eligibility of the submitted documentation regarding the submission of the application before the call deadline (E1), the legal entity status of applicants and country (E2), Compliance with project scope, open-call scope based on the replies of the application form (E3), and the completeness of the application form and required documents (E4). To ensure consistency and transparency in this process, INLE developed a Financial and Administrative Eligibility Checklist template that was applied uniformly across all proposals.

The checklist was structured into three main sections, each comprising detailed review items with corresponding “Check” and “Notes” fields for documentation:

1. **Administrative Eligibility**

- Timely submission before the official deadline.
- Submission via the correct platform.
- Completion of the Application Form.
- Provision of mandatory legal documents (Legal Entity Form, Financial Identification Form, Identification documents).
- Signed Declaration of Honour by the legal representative.

2. **Financial Documentation Completeness**

- Submission of the detailed budget table.
- Verification that the budget matches the requested funding amount.
- Allocation of costs to eligible categories (personnel, travel, equipment, other goods and services).
- Confirmation that requested funding does not exceed the €50,000 maximum per applicant.
- Checks on co-funding (if applicable).
- Justification of personnel, equipment, travel, and other costs with clear supporting detail.

3. **Logic and Consistency Checks**

- Cross-check of budget tables against application content.
- Internal consistency across all submitted documents.
- Verification that funding requests aligned with Horizon Europe financial rules.

4. **Document Completeness and Format**

- All required annexes uploaded.
- Documents signed where necessary.
- Files are readable and not corrupted.
- File names and formats comply with submission rules.

ELIGIBILITY SCREENING RESULTS

Criterion E1: Submission before the call deadline

INLE carried out an initial eligibility screening to ensure all submissions were made before the call deadline (June 30th at midnight).

Conclusion: All applications that were submitted (15), were on time.

Criterion E2: Compliance with eligibility criteria - Legal entity status and country

INLE verified that applicants were established as legal entities in eligible countries.

Conclusion: All applications were deemed eligible, and the legal status, along with the country of origin, was validated.

Criteria E3: Compliance with project scope, open-call scope

INLE verified that applicants were compliant with the project scope and open-call scope based on the replies of the application form.

Conclusion: All applications were deemed compliant with the project scope and open-call scope.

Criterion E4: Completeness of the application form and required documents

INLE reviewed all application forms and confirmed applications completeness and compliance.

Conclusion: All 15 applications were complete, having all application forms and required documentation.

All 15 applications received moved forward to the next phase of the eligibility check.

B. ELIGIBILITY SCREENING - Technical Criteria (3 July 2025 - 11 July 2025)

Criterion E5.1 Have an active PED initiative in planning, implementation, or operation.

INLE reviewed all application forms and confirmed applications had an active PED initiative.

Conclusion: All 15 applications had an active PED in planning, implementation, or operation.

Criterion E5.2 Test and validate all mandatory tools along with at least one to three of the additional PEDvolution tools of your choice.

INLE reviewed all application forms and confirmed applications would test all mandatory tools and at least one of the three additional PEDvolution tools.

Conclusion: All 15 applications met criterion E5.2.

Criterion E5.3 Provide essential technical data to facilitate tool deployment.

INLE reviewed all application forms and confirmed applications ensured providing essential technical data to facilitate tool deployment.

Conclusion: All 15 applications met criterion E5.3.

Criterion E5.4 Engage local stakeholders in the demonstration process.

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INLE reviewed all application forms and confirmed applications implied engaging local stakeholders in the demonstration process.

Conclusion: All 15 applications met criterion E5.4.

All 15 applications received moved forward to the evaluation phase.

7.2 External Jury Evaluation

Five (5) evaluators were suggested by consortium members (apart from INLE) as experts on PEDs. The principal criteria for the external jury members was a high expertise in PEDs and a voluntary-based participation (no remuneration).

Four evaluators, two male and two female experts originating from Spain, Italy and Turkey, eventually comprised the jury that evaluated applications.

The fifth candidate jury member had to withdraw from the jury due to conflict of interest resulting from the fact that the candidate's affiliation had submitted an application under the PEDvolution Open Call for PEDs.

An Evaluation Agreement, between each evaluator and INLE (project coordinator) ensured that:

- Evaluators were aware of their responsibilities and their role in ensuring a fair, transparent, and merit-based assessment of applicants.
- Evaluators declared any conflict of interest before assessment.
- Evaluators complied to confidentiality and impartiality requirements.
- Their tasks were carried out on a voluntary basis and without any form of remuneration or compensation.

7.2.1 Evaluation Criteria

As outlined in the Guide for Applicants (page 10), eligible applications were assessed based on the following weighted criteria:

EVALUATION CRITERIA

PED Context	20%
PEDvolution Solutions Tick-Box	30%
Solution Specific Questions	30%
Budget Allocation	20%
Total	100%

Each criterion was scored on a scale of 0 to 5:

0 - Fail: The proposal fails to address the criterion or cannot be assessed.

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- 1 - **Poor:** The criterion is inadequately addressed or has serious weaknesses.
- 2 - **Fair:** The proposal broadly addresses the criterion but with significant weaknesses.
- 3 - **Good:** The proposal addresses the criterion with some minor weaknesses.
- 4 - **Very Good:** The proposal addresses the criterion well with only minor issues.
- 5 - **Excellent:** The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion.

Evaluation Procedure

- **Individual Review:** Each proposal was assessed and ranked based on an independent external jury (3-5 members) based on the evaluation criteria.
- **Consensus Meeting:** Reviewers discussed scores and agreed on a final ranking of applications.
- **Ranking and Selection:** Only proposals above a predefined quality threshold (e.g., minimum 3/5 per criterion and overall, 12/15 or average score of 4/5) would be considered for funding as communicated to the applicants through “Annex I_Guide for Applicants”. Therefore, **a proposal is fundable if it achieves at least three out of five in each criterion and at least eighty out of one hundred in the weighted overall score. If two proposals are tied, the tie is resolved, in order, by the higher score in the Solution-Specific Questions criterion, then by the higher score in the PED Context criterion, then by the earlier timestamp of submission.**
- **Final Approval:** The PEDvolution consortium General Assembly took into consideration the ranking of the External Jury and endorsed the final selection.

7.2.2 Evaluation Procedure - Documentation of Actions

Procedure overview

Each proposal was reviewed independently by several jury members using the published criteria; afterwards, the full panel met in a consensus meeting to agree on a single consensus score and ranking for each proposal. Not all jury members had to review every proposal, but every proposal had multiple independent reviews, and conflicted members did not discuss or express their opinion on affected proposals.

Individual Review

All evaluators had signed conflict-of-interest and confidentiality declarations before accessing any file. The group of independent External Jury Members (Evaluators), had up to two weeks to complete their assessment.

The evaluators used a dedicated evaluation form provided by INLE (see Annex I of this deliverable) using the evaluation criteria described in 7.2.1. This template organised their scoring and ranking, based on the suitability and credibility of each PED to host and test the PEDvolution solutions.

External Jury Members each received 11 applications to evaluate, so that each of the applications received three evaluations. The third evaluation aimed at normalising any discrepancies that can result from having only two. As a rule, evaluators were not assigned applications from their own country of origin to avoid potential conflicts of interest.

Out of the 15 applications, four met all of the **predefined thresholds** (minimum 3/5 per evaluation criterion and an overall score of at least 12/15 or average score of 4/5). The results of the individual

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review phase, together with access to all applications, were communicated to the External Jury members to allow for preparation for the Consensus Meeting.

7.2.3 Consensus meeting among External Jury members

A consensus meeting took place on the 28th of November 2025 to review and discuss scores resulting from the individual evaluations of all 15 applications and agree on a final ranking. Any evaluator with a conflict did not participate in the related discussion and did not vote on that item. INLE participated only as secretariat, without voting rights.

The evaluation process was concluded with the preparation of the Consensus Meeting Report. This document consolidated the results of the individual evaluations, the reviewers' discussions, and the agreed final ranking of applications. Its purpose was to provide a transparent record of how the External Jury reached consensus and to serve as the formal input for the General Assembly endorsement step. The report was communicated to all project consortium members ahead of the General Assembly meeting.

7.3 Endorsement by the General Assembly

On the 2nd of December 2025, the General Assembly was asked to endorse the ranked recommendation informed by the External Jury's input for compliance and portfolio coherence. The General Assembly would not reopen technical scores unless a material procedural error was established, in order to preserve the independence of external experts and align with competitive-call practice under Financial Support to Third Parties. Such a material procedural error was not established and the General Assembly unanimously endorsed the ranked recommendation.

7.4 Applicant notification

On the 8th of December 2025, all applicants were formally notified of the outcome of their applications. Each notification was accompanied by a formal decision letter and a proposal evaluation summary report, including the score breakdown, comments from the External Jury evaluations and the results of the predefined quality threshold checks.

As specified in the Guide for Applicants, applicants were granted a five-business-days period to request redress, limited to procedural errors. No redress requests were submitted.

7.5 Legal verification and contracting

Following the expiration of the redress period, the three highest-ranked applications proceeded to the legal verification stage. For this purpose, applicants were required to submit documentation related to their legal status and bank account details.

Specifically, applicants were requested to provide the following documentation within five business days (deadline: 19 December 2025):

- Signed Identification Form (dated in December 2025). If not signed by the bank, an account ownership confirmation was required.

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- Signed Declaration of Honour (dated in December 2025 and duly signed)
- Extract from the Business/Company Register, dated in December 2025, showing legal status and registration details
- Proof of Legal Representation (recent official document confirming the authorised signatory of the organisation)
- Financial statements for the last two closed financial years (signed/stamped balance sheet and profit & loss accounts)

All three applicants submitted the requested documentation within the specified deadline and successfully passed the legal verification checks. The three highest-ranked applications are currently in the sub-Grant Agreement signature phase.

Upon signature of the sub-Grant Agreement, the details of the three funded applicants will be announced through the project's official communication and dissemination channels.

8 ONBOARDING PHASE FOR AWARDED PEDS

As soon as the Sub-Grant Agreement is signed, the awarded PEDs will enter the Onboarding Phase, during which all knowledge and information sharing as well as planning activities will be carried out to prepare for the Demonstration Phase.

Onboarding activities will include kick-off meetings, technical integration, baseline data/metrics/KPI collection, capacity-building workshops and peer-learning sessions. More specifically:

1. Familiarisation with Tools and Resources:

- Attend onboarding/capacity-building sessions to understand the PEDvolution tools (e.g., PED Energy Manager, Digital Twin, Interoperability Platform). Review technical and financial support resources provided by the consortium.
- Participate in initial coordination meetings with solution providers and existing PEDs.

2. Baseline Data Collection:

- Gather and validate pre-project energy, emissions, and community engagement baseline data.
- Conduct site-specific audits to determine existing infrastructure and potential constraints.
- Share collected data with the consortium for initial assessments.
- Develop a timeline for implementing proposed solutions.

3. Co-Development Planning:

- Collaborate with the consortium to finalise the demonstration phase plan.
- Define specific project goals, including energy efficiency targets, renewable energy integration, and community engagement.

Onboarding activities are planned to take place between January and March 2026. The initial onboarding activities, scheduled for late January and early February 2026, include: (i) a kick-off meeting focused on **Familiarisation with Tools and Resources**, followed by (ii) three dedicated workshops, one for each awarded PED, initiating **Baseline Data Collection** and **Co-Development Planning**.

Tentative dates for these activities have been agreed with the PEDvolution consortium members. Invitations will be issued to the successful applicants as soon as the sub-Grant Agreements are signed.

9 CONCLUSIONS

The PEDvolution project conducted a fair and transparent selection process for its Open Call for Positive Energy Districts (PEDs). A comprehensive set of technical, legal, and financial compliance requirements for candidate PEDs was agreed upon with the PEDvolution consortium and reflected in both the Open Call documentation and the evaluation process, ensuring that the most suitable applicants were selected.

The Open Call remained open for two months, during which 15 applications were submitted from various EU Member States and Associated Countries. All 15 applications successfully passed the internal screening and were subsequently assigned to independent external experts for evaluation, following predefined criteria and a structured evaluation form. Four applications were above the predefined quality threshold. The final ranking of applications was unanimously endorsed by the project's General Assembly.

All applicants were formally notified of the evaluation outcomes with a formal decision letter and a proposal evaluation summary report, including the score breakdown, comments from the External Jury evaluations and the results of the predefined quality threshold checks.

The three highest-ranked applicants subsequently completed the legal verification process successfully and are currently in the sub-Grant Agreement signature phase. Once the agreements are signed, the funded applicants will be announced through the project's official communication channels and the onboarding activities that include kick-off meetings, technical integration, baseline data/metrics/KPI collection, capacity-building workshops and peer-learning sessions, will commence.

ANNEX I: EXTERNAL JURY - EVALUATION FORM

External Jury-Evaluation of Applications – PEDvolution Open Call		
Purpose:	To enable objective, thorough, and consistent evaluation and ranking of applications submitted to the PEDvolution Open Call, supporting transparent and evidence-based selection of Positive Energy District demonstrators.	
Jury Member (Evaluator's) Name:		
Date of Review:		
Application under evaluation: (select from list)		
I. PED Context (Weight: 20%) (see Application Form document)		
Item	Check (Yes/No/Maybe)	Comments
1. Does the application describe a Positive Energy District (PED) that fits PEDvolution's definition: "Positive Energy Districts are energy-efficient, energy-flexible urban areas or groups of interconnected buildings designed to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions and generate an annual positive energy balance?"		
2. Are the boundaries, scale, and existing energy assets clearly described?		
3. Does the PED context align with the project goals: enhancing energy efficiency, sector integration, renewable energy use, community engagement, and smart grid interoperability?		
4. Does the applicant show readiness to engage in data sharing, baseline data collection, and performance monitoring?		
II. PEDvolution Solutions Tick-Box (Weight: 30%) (see Application Form document)		
Item	Check (Yes/No/Maybe)	Comments
5. Does the selection of mandatory tools align with the PED's technical infrastructure and strategic goals?		
6. Does the selection of optional tools align with the PED's technical infrastructure and strategic goals?		
7. Are the proposed solutions feasible within the PED's operational and technical environment?		
III. Solution Specific Questions (Weight: 30%) (see Application Form document)		
Item	Check (Yes/No/Maybe)	Comments
8. Does the applicant adequately address detailed questions about the deployment and expected impact of each selected solution?		
9. Are data availability, infrastructure readiness (e.g., sensors, smart meters, controllable assets), and interoperability with existing systems clearly described?		
10. Is there a plan for stakeholder engagement and community involvement, particularly for the Social Innovation Tool?		
IV. Budget Allocation (Weight: 20%) (see Budget Form document)		
Item	Check (Yes/No/Maybe)	Comments
11. Is the budget sufficiently detailed (broken down) and clearly explained?		
12. Is the budget realistic for the planned activities?		
13. Does the budget cover the necessary technical upgrades or installations required to deploy PEDvolution solutions?		
Final Scoring Calculation		
Criterion	Weight	Score
I. PED Context	20%	
II. PEDvolution Solutions Tick-Box	30%	
III. Solution Specific Questions	30%	
IV. Budget Allocation	20%	
Total	100%	0
Final Remarks/Comments (if applicable)		

Weighting criteria:

Criterion	Weighting
PED Context	20%
PEDvolution Solutions Tick-Box	30%

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Solution Specific Questions	30%
Budget Allocation	20%

Each criterion is scored on a scale of 0 to 5:

- 0 - Fail:** The proposal fails to address the criterion or cannot be assessed.
- 1 - Poor:** The criterion is inadequately addressed or has serious weaknesses.
- 2 - Fair:** The proposal broadly addresses the criterion but with significant weaknesses.
- 3 - Good:** The proposal addresses the criterion with some minor weaknesses.
- 4 - Very Good:** The proposal addresses the criterion well with only minor issues.
- 5 - Excellent:** The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion.