TRY-OUT CALL CAP4LAND 2026

Strengthening Defence Capabilities & Belgium's Technological Sovereignty

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2.1. Defence Innovation Context

In an increasingly uncertain geopolitical environment, marked by the rise of hybrid threats and the imperative to strengthen European strategic autonomy, Belgium has identified the need to reinforce its national defence industrial base. The ability to develop, demonstrate, and industrialise sovereign technological capabilities in the land domain is a strategic priority for both Belgian Defence and the wider European defence ecosystem.

Scientific and technological research in the field of security and defence is central to maintaining Belgium's military and technological edge. The Ministry of Defence actively seeks to develop and strengthen the links between Defence, national research institutions, and industry, with the objective of increasing its contribution to research and technology.

2.2. Role of the RHID

The Royal Higher Institute for Defence (RHID) is responsible for the development and implementation of the Ministry of Defence's policy on scientific and technological research. Acting as a strategic coordinator and honest broker, RHID promotes the growth of Belgian research and innovation in the field of defence and security and facilitates the participation of Belgian actors in national and international research programmes.

Within the CAP4LAND framework, RHID holds responsibility for the strategic orientations of the call: it validates the priorities and thematic areas proposed, sets the applicable selection criteria, and exercises, on behalf of Defence, responsibility for the final evaluation and selection of projects to be funded.

2.3. CAP4LAND — Building a Land Defence Innovation Ecosystem

CAP4LAND is mandated by RHID and operated by Pôle MecaTech, the transversal technology cluster for mechatronics and advanced manufacturing. It is designed to catalyse collaborative innovation between industry, research institutions, and Defence around priority land technologies — moving beyond isolated development projects towards a structured, scalable, and demand-driven ecosystem.

The programme addresses the growing need to align Belgian industrial capabilities with Defence operational requirements. This year, 2026, is a launch year aimed at bringing together the terrestrial ecosystem around a try-out call for projects.

CAP4LAND is articulated around two complementary tracks:

- **The CAP Project** supports collaborative R&D consortia developing and industrialising high-maturity technologies (TRL 6–7) in four priority thematic areas.
- **The CAP Impact for Defence** individually supports manufacturing SMEs in accelerating their operational excellence and their integration into land defence supply chains, with the aim of positioning them as structuring industrial actors within the Belgian defence ecosystem.

The total CAP4LAND budget for the 2026 try-out call amounts to €6,000,000 in public funding, allocated as follows: €5,500,000 to the CAP Project track and €500,000 to the CAP Impact for Defence track.

These two instruments are complementary: where CAP Project finances collaborative innovation at the frontier of technological maturity, CAP Impact for Defence strengthens the industrial fabric that underpins it.

2.4. Role of Pôle MecaTech as Programme Operator

Pôle MecaTech is mandated by RHID to operationally manage the CAP4LAND call. This includes organising and animating the call, informing and supporting applicants in structuring their proposals, and — for the Projects Track — conducting the maturation and labelling phase prior to Defence evaluation.

MecaTech acts as ecosystem integrator: ensuring coherence between research, industrial development, and operational needs; lowering entry barriers for SMEs and technology providers; and connecting innovation activities to long-term defence and security priorities.

2.5. Success Fee – Pôle MecaTech

Pôle MecaTech acts as the operator of the CAP4LAND call on behalf of IRSD. This role goes well beyond administrative call management: PMT supports project applicants upstream (strategic framing, consortium structuring, alignment with Defence priorities), throughout the submission process (review, compliance, interface with IRSD), and across the full project lifecycle (monitoring, reporting, valorisation of results).

The success fee represents the contribution of selected partners to the costs of animating the CAP4LAND ecosystem — an ecosystem from which they directly benefit through access to PMT's industrial and academic network, sectoral events, cross-project synergies, and expertise in mechatronics and defence technologies.

In line with other cluster operators of RHID calls, PMT collects this fee only upon successful selection, aligning its interests with those of the project partners.

Modalities: The success fee is invoiced individually to each industrial partner in the consortium, based on the RHID subsidy granted to that partner (3% of the amount received per partner). It is not eligible for RHID funding and is therefore borne directly by each industrial partner concerned.

Invoicing is spread over the project duration in equal annual instalments. For a two-year project, two invoices of 1.5% of the granted subsidy will be issued — the first upon signature of the RHID contract, the second at the start of the second project year.

3. CAP PROJECT

3.1. Objectives

The Projects Track of CAP4LAND aims to support, through a competitive call for proposals, collaborative projects for the advanced development and industrialisation of technologies with high potential for land defence. The measure finances projects positioned at TRL 5 to 6 at the time of submission, targeting TRL 6 to 7 at project completion, including system integration, qualification, validation under representative operational conditions, and preparation for Defence production and deployment. The primary objective is to strengthen Belgian technological sovereignty and its defence industrial base. Submitted projects must fall within one of the three priority thematic areas defined by the programme, a dual-use dimension adds value but is not a requirement

3.2. Expectation deliverable and ecosystem contribution

3.2.1. Core Expectations for the Final Deliverable

A CAP4LAND Projects Track submission is expected to deliver at least:

- A functional demonstrator or industrialised solution validated in representative operational or near-operational conditions (TRL 6–7).
- A clearly defined, operationally relevant use case for land defence
- Documented technical and operational performance, including lessons learned, limitations, and conditions for further development or scaling.
- A substantiated valorisation pathway towards Defence deployment, supply chain integration, or European-level scale-up.

3.2.2. Demonstration and Defence Engagement

Selected projects are expected to actively engage with Defence stakeholders throughout the project lifecycle:

- At least one demonstration or review session with RHID and/or Land Forces representatives is mandatory during the project.
- Where feasible, demonstrators should be tested or validated in operational exercises or representative Defence environments.
- Projects are encouraged to participate in relevant MecaTech ecosystem events and cross-project knowledge sharing sessions.

3.2.3. MecaTech support

Pôle MecaTech supports CAP Project consortia throughout their full lifecycle by acting as an ecosystem orchestrator: before the project, it aligns ideas with the land defence priority roadmap, mobilises and connects partners, and supports consortium building and proposal shaping; during the project, it facilitates coordination, stakeholder engagement, cross-project synergies, and structured interactions with Defence; and after the project, it ensures valorisation and upscaling of results by promoting outcomes, supporting market and operational uptake, and feeding lessons learned back into the CAP4LAND research and innovation agenda to strengthen the long-term Belgian land defence ecosystem.

3.3. Eligibility Criteria for project partners

3.3.1. Eligibility Conditions

This call is open to Belgian private companies. To be eligible, a project must meet all of the following conditions:

- The consortium comprises at least two independent partners within the meaning of Commission Recommendation 2003/361/EC, including at least one SME with an operational establishment in Belgium.
- The project coordinator is a company with an operational establishment in Belgium.
- The individual budget of any partner or group of related partners does not exceed 70% of the total project budget.
- Partners are not in financial difficulty at the time of submission.
- Partners are up to date with their obligations to ONSS and VAT and have no outstanding debts to the Belgian State.
- The project does not benefit and has not benefited from public support for the same activities (no double funding).
- The project falls within one of the priority thematic areas defined in section 3.4.4.
- The project is positioned at a TRL between 5 and 6 at the time of submission, with a target of TRL 6 to 7 at project completion. The project includes a structured work plan with clearly defined objectives, milestones, deliverables, and risks.
- The proposal is written in English.
- Each partner has completed the company honourability & vulnerability declaration and ethics forms provided by RHID.

3.3.2. Required Documents for Companies

The following documents are mandatory for a valid application. Failing to deliver these documents will result in exclusion of the proposal.

Companies must have submitted accurate and current information on their beneficial owners to the UBO (Ultimate Beneficial Owner) register of the FPS Finances. The UBO extract must be provided by email to projets@polemecatech.be before the Letter of Intent deadline.

A Company Honourability & Vulnerability declaration must be sent by email to projets@polemecatech.be before the submission deadline.

A security verification consent form must be completed by the natural persons listed on the UBO form and sent at a later stage in the application process (procedure will be communicated).

3.4. Call information

3.4.1. Documentation related to this call

The following documents are available on the MecaTech website:

- Letter of Intent template
- Final proposal template
- Budget file
- Gantt chart template
- Ethics self-assessment form
- Company Honourability & Vulnerability self-assessment declaration
- Security verification consent form
- Evaluation matrix

- Complaints form
- FAQ

3.4.2. Indicative calendar

Step	Date	Via
Letter of Intent deadline	14 June 2026 (23:59)	Email to projets@polemecatech.be
LoI Evaluation	22 June 2026	MecaTech / RHID
MecaTech maturation phase	29 June → 19 August 2026	MecaTech
MecaTech Board labelling session	2 or 3 September	MecaTech
Final submission to Defence	11 September 2026	MecaTech
Communication of results	End of September 2026	Email

Selected projects shall have a maximum duration of 24 months from the effective project start date.

3.4.3. Budget

The total budget available for CAP Project under the try-out call 2026 is **€5,500,000**. Applicants should demonstrate the most efficient use of public resources. The number of funded projects will depend on the evaluation of proposals; the best-ranked proposals passing the quality threshold will be funded.

Projects are expected to run for a maximum of **24 months**. The budget presented must cover the full project duration

3.4.4. Priority Thematic Areas

Submitted projects must fall within one of the three following priority thematic areas. A project may address several thematic areas in a complementary manner.

- **All Arms Air Defence** : detection & neutralization, provide every Land formation irrespective of it's mission a basic capability to defend against incoming unmanned aerial munitions
- **Unmanned ground vehicles**: provide Land Forces with small UGV in every domain, develop add-on applications for small, medium and large UGV, transform legacy vehicles into unmanned support systems
- **Resilient exploitation of tactical data** : provide forward deployed Land Forces with data storage and exploitation capabilities locally, secure transmission to a reach back level that will exploit the data at the operational level and finally provide a solution to transmit useful data as soon as possible for rapid development purposes to industrial partners

3.4.5. Project partnership

3.4.5.1. Partnership Composition

Partnerships between industry are mandatory. Private (non-profit) research institutes are not eligible as a partner. A submitted proposal must contain at least one SME. Only private companies with an operational establishment in Belgium are eligible. Each partner can act as project coordinator.

3.4.5.2. Roles and Responsibilities

Project partners jointly share obligations and responsibilities during the implementation of the project. A coordinator must be appointed in each proposal.

3.4.5.2.1. Role of the Coordinator

The coordinator is responsible for overall project management and coordination. The coordinator is the contact person for MecaTech and RHID, and must transfer all relevant information to the other project partners. Specifically, the coordinator shall:

- Coordinate all activities carried out within the framework of the project
- Coordinate internal meetings between consortium members
- Coordinate the production of required project reports as described in section 6.4
- Coordinate the synthesis and communication of research results
- Convene meetings of the project Steering Committee and write meeting minutes
- Inform MecaTech and RHID of any problems that might hinder project implementation

3.4.5.2.2. Subcontractors

The project may require specific or punctual expertise, which can be delivered in the form of subcontracting. It is the responsibility of the project team to ensure that the rules and practices of the subcontractor, and in particular the ownership and valorisation of research results, publications and communications, are compatible with the rules governing the call. The project team takes full responsibility for the final result of the subcontracted work.

Subcontractors must be registered in Belgium. Subcontractors that are companies, ASBL/VZW and foundations must submit accurate and current information on their beneficial owners to the UBO (Ultimate Beneficial Owner) register of the FPS Finances and deliver an extract of the UBO register to the MecaTech Secretariat.

In case the subcontractor needs access to classified information, the subcontractor must also obtain a security clearance.

3.4.6. Research Ethics

All projects must take the Code of Ethics for Scientific Research in Belgium into account. It is the responsibility of applicants to consult the relevant Ethical Board for their organisation before submitting a proposal. Applicants are required to complete an ethics self-assessment when preparing the proposal. The form is available on the MecaTech website.

3.4.7. Budget rules

This call is subject to European legislation on State Funding (Art. 107(1) TFEU and the General Block Exemption Regulation — RGEC, Regulation EU No 651/2014).

Aid intensities per partner type:

Partner type	Maximum aid intensity
Large enterprise	40%
Medium-sized enterprise	50%
Small enterprise	60%

Eligible expenditure categories:

- Personnel costs: researchers, engineers and technicians directly involved in the project
- Instrument and equipment costs, to the extent and for the duration of their use in the project
- Prototype and demonstrator costs
- Subcontracting costs (max. 25% of the partner's total budget
- Additional overheads directly attributable to the project

Staff cost ceilings per profile:

- Staff: monthly ceilings per profile (€5,700 for technician, €8,000 for master's degree, €8,700 for engineering master's degree, €10,500 for PhD)
- General operating costs: 15% of staff costs for the coordinator, 10% for the other partners (generated automatically)
- Specific operating costs: detailed list, justified by invoices
- Overheads: fixed 10% on staff + operating costs (generated automatically)
- Equipment: list of investments, justified by invoices
- Subcontracting: maximum 25% of the budget of the partner concerned

3.4.8. Consortium Agreement

A consortium agreement signed by all partners must be submitted as part of the final proposal. This agreement is a mandatory condition for access to the Defence evaluation stage. No project may be submitted without a signed consortium agreement.

The consortium agreement must cover at minimum:

- The distribution of intellectual property generated by the project (foreground)
- The terms of valorisation and exploitation of results
- Confidentiality provisions applicable in the context of defence-related projects
- Access rights to background knowledge

Compliance of the consortium agreement with European State aid regulations remains the responsibility of the industrial partners.

3.4.9. Gender Equality

MecaTech and RHID strongly encourage applicants to ensure gender mainstreaming in the implementation of the project, both in the choice of researchers and, where relevant, by integrating the gender dimension into the research itself.

3.5. Submission Procedure

The CAPProject submission process takes place in six successive steps. Each step conditions access to the following one. Applicants are strongly encouraged to contact MecaTech before submitting a Letter of Intent to discuss their project idea and its alignment with the CAP4LAND priorities.

3.5.1. Overview

Step	Deadline
Letter of Intent (LoI)	14 June 2026 (23:59)
LoI Evaluation (internal)	22 June
MecaTech maturation phase	29 June → 19 August 2026
Submission to MecaTech	19 August 2026
MecaTech Board labelling	2 or 3 September
Final submission to Defence	11 September 2026
Contracting	End of September 2026

3.5.2. Step 1 — Letter of Intent (LoI)

The Letter of Intent is a short 2-to-4-page dossier allowing MecaTech and RHID to assess the relevance and direction of projects before engaging applicants in a full maturation phase.

Applicants must use the LoI template available on the CAP4LAND website. The template structures the required information and must be followed strictly.
The LoI must mandatorily include:

- The priority thematic area addressed (All Arms Air Defence, Unmanned Ground Vehicles, Resilient Exploitation of Tactical Data)
- Current TRL and TRL targeted at project completion
- Indicative consortium composition and role of each partner
- Description of the operational need addressed and the proposed technological solution
- Indicative budget and main deliverable targeted
- Initial indication of the dual-use character (Defence applications AND civilian applications)

The LoI must be submitted by email to projets@polemecatech.be no later than 14 June 2026 (23:59), with subject line: "CAP4LAND — Letter of Intent — [Consortium Name]". Any dossier received after this deadline or not respecting the required format will be declared inadmissible without possibility of appeal. An acknowledgement of receipt will be sent by MecaTech within 2 working days of receipt.
Applicants whose LoI is not deemed admissible are notified by MecaTech with justification and are not invited to continue the process.

3.5.3. Step 2 — Pre-Evaluation

Following the LoI deadline, RHID and MecaTech will jointly evaluate all admissible Letters of Intent on 22 June 2026. This evaluation aims to assess the strategic relevance and feasibility of each proposal and results in a go/no-go decision per candidacy. Applicants will be notified of the outcome within 5 working days. Applicants receiving a no-go decision are notified with justification and are not invited to continue the process.

3.5.4. Step 3 — MecaTech Maturation Phase

Applicants who receive a GO following the LoI evaluation enter the maturation phase. MecaTech provides structured support to project leads, carried out in coordination with Land Forces and RHID.
This support covers:

- Structuring the work plan, milestones, and deliverables
- Building and justifying the budget
- Identifying and managing technical and operational risks
- Intellectual property and confidentiality considerations
- Alignment with Defence operational requirements

3.5.5. Step 4 — MecaTech Board Labelling

The final dossier must be submitted by email to projets@polemecatech.be no later than **19 August 2026 (23:59)**, with subject line: "CAP4LAND — Final Dossier — [Consortium Name]", in preparation for the MecaTech Board of Directors labelling session scheduled on **2 or 3 September 2026.**

Labelling by the MecaTech Board of Directors is a mandatory condition for access to the Defence evaluation stage. No project may be submitted to Defence without having previously obtained the MecaTech label. The Board may render three types of decision:

- Label granted: the project is admissible for submission to Defence
- Label granted under conditions: specific adjustments are required before submission, as specified by the Board
- Label refused: the project does not meet the required quality and robustness standards

Applicants are notified of the Board's decision within 2 working days following the session. Applicants receiving a negative decision are notified with justification.

3.5.6. Step 5 — Final Submission to Defence

Labelled dossiers are transmitted by MecaTech to Defence no later than 11 September 2026. MecaTech manages the submission secretariat, verifying the compliance and completeness of dossiers. The evaluation jury is composed of representatives of RHID and the Land Force. MecaTech acts as rapporteur and observer.

The final submission dossier must mandatorily include:

- Complete project proposal in accordance with the CAP4LAND submission template
- Detailed work plan with milestones and deliverables
- Detailed and justified budget per partner, including the personnel table
- Signed consortium agreement
- Valorisation plan with realistic 3-year perspectives
- Documentation of cyber, supply chain, and confidentiality / IP aspects
- Honourability and ethics forms, updated if necessary

3.5.7. Step 6 — Contracting

Selected projects are notified by MecaTech no later than end of September 2026. Contracting between partners and funders takes place no later than the 15th of October.

The contract covers:

- Project milestones and deliverables
- Reporting modalities
- Provisions relating to confidentiality and intellectual property
- Budget and payment schedule

The effective project start takes place after signature of the contract.

3.6. Evaluation Procedure and Criteria

3.6.1. Governance Logic

The selection procedure rests on a two-level complementary logic. Pôle MecaTech intervenes first as guarantor of the quality, coherence, and robustness of submitted dossiers. Defence intervenes second as the final selection authority, on the basis of dossiers that have previously obtained the MecaTech label. This sequence ensures that Defence receives only structured and fully instructed dossiers, limiting the evaluation workload and maximising the quality of funded projects.

3.6.2. Jury Composition

The selection procedure involves representatives of RHID, Land Force, and Pôle MecaTech, in roles defined for each evaluation stage.

3.6.3. Defence evaluation criteria

Labelled dossiers are evaluated by Defence on the basis of the following grid. MecaTech provides a qualitative motivated opinion (label granted / under conditions / refused) accompanying each transmitted dossier but does not assign a score. The final ranking and selection are the exclusive responsibility of Defence.

#	Criterion	Weight
1	Strategic relevance: alignment of the project with CAP4LAND priority thematic areas and the operational needs of Land Defence.	30%
2	Technological maturity and feasibility: coherence of TRL level, robustness of the technical plan, identification and management of risks.	25%
3	Consortium quality: complementarity of partners, robustness of the partnership.	20%
4	Industrial valorisation capacity: realism of the valorisation plan, expected impact on the Defence value chain.	20%
6	Financial soundness and budget adequacy: justification of expenditure, coherent distribution between partners, capacity to complete the project.	5%

3.7. Contractual Obligations for Selected Projects

The contractual framework applicable to selected projects — including convention structure, reporting obligations, Steering Committee composition, and general conditions — will be defined by RHID and communicated to selected consortia upon notification of results. The applicable general conditions will be published on the MecaTech website prior to the final submission deadline.

3.8. Data, Results, Intellectual Property and Security

3.8.1. General Conditions

Ownership of existing information and data (background) remains with the original owner. As a principle, the Foreground — results produced by the project — shall be the property of the partner carrying out the work generating that foreground. The principles for the use of joint foreground must be determined by the project partners in the Consortium Agreement. For all aspects regarding the use of data, intellectual ownership, and valorisation of results, the conditions of the General Conditions (Annex II of the contract) apply.

3.8.2. Classified Information and Security Requirements

Projects aiming at developing or using classified information will not be funded under CAP4LAND. However, certain activities undertaken within the framework of projects may generate classified information. This section concerns the protective measures to be taken to preserve the confidentiality of security-sensitive information.

A classification is given to documents to prevent their improper use which could damage, among other things, the fulfilment of the tasks of Defence, the external security and international relations of the State, and the scientific and economic potential of the country.

Classification levels applicable under Belgian law (Law of 20 December 2024):

- TRES SECRET / ZEER GEHEIM: assigned if improper use could cause extremely serious damage to Belgian interests. Topics under this category cannot be part of the project.

- SECRET / GEHEIM: assigned if improper use could cause serious damage to Belgian interests. May apply to specific work packages subject to RHID approval.
- CONFIDENTIEL / VERTROUWELIJK: assigned if improper use could harm any of the interests listed in the law.
- DIFFUSION RESTREINTE / BEPERKTE VERSPREIDING: limited distribution marking, without legal consequences.

Applicants should identify in the proposal the classification needs for work packages involving:

- Threat assessments (estimation of the likelihood of a malicious act against an asset)
- Vulnerability assessments (description of gaps or weaknesses which can be exploited)
- Specifications (exact guidelines on design, composition, manufacture, or operation)
- Capability assessments (description of the ability of an asset or system to fulfil its intended role)

The applicable security framework for the action must be in place at the latest before the signature of the contract and will be considered as an annex to the contract. More information can be found on the website of the National Security Authority (Nationale Veiligheidsoverheid – Autorité Nationale de Sécurité) https://www.nvoans.be/

Persons involved in a project must be nationals of a country of the European Union, the European Free Trade Association, or a NATO member state. Persons involved in a project may be subject to a verification. Only after a positive verification can a person be recruited to the project.

4. CAP Impact for Defence

4.1. Objectives

CAP Impact for Defence pursues three strategic objectives.
First, it aims to strengthen technological and industrial sovereignty by consolidating the supply chains necessary for land defence programmes.
Second, it seeks to structure the industrial defence supply chain by identifying SMEs capable of producing critical components, subsystems, or industrial services.
Third, it aims to accelerate the industrialisation and ramp-up of Belgian manufacturing companies, enabling them to meet future production needs.
In this context, CAP Impact for Defence acts as a lever for industrial transformation: identifying the obstacles that could limit companies' ability to respond to future production needs, and providing concrete solutions to address them.

4.2. Programme Logic

Unlike many innovation support schemes, CAP Impact for Defence follows a distinct logic.
It does not support research or technological development projects (TRL < 8), but accompanies companies with a proven industrial base and high-potential technological capabilities aligned with land defence needs.
The objective is to identify the obstacles that could limit a company's ability to respond to the ramp-up expected in defence value chains. Such obstacles may include:

- Production capacity utilisation
- Level and repeatability of industrial quality
- Compliance with and length of production and supply lead times
- Level of flexibility and responsiveness
- Problem-solving capabilities and standardisation of improvements
- Innovation capacity and innovation management
- Industrial organisation
- Process robustness
- Supply chain security
- Industrial security, including cybersecurity

CAP Impact for Defence therefore aims to identify these industrial fragility points — often referred to as pain points — and to support companies in resolving them.

4.3. Priority Value Chains

The programme is based on the identification of priority industrial value chains, corresponding to systems and subsystems deemed critical for land defence capabilities. These value chains are identified on the basis of information collected from the industrial ecosystem (Captains of Industry) and Defence stakeholders.
Manufacturing SMEs active in priority value chains will benefit from priority in the selection process. The fact that an SME is not currently active in the defence sector is not an exclusion factor, as Defence's intention is to develop dual-use companies — active in both defence and civilian sectors.
SMEs active in other segments of the defence supply chain may also apply.
In general, this call targets the following technological domains:

1. **Mechanical and material transformation**: metal fabrication and welding, precision machining, surface treatment and coatings, plastic and composite manufacturing

2. **Mechatronics and motion**: electric motors and actuation, power transmission components, stabilisation and motion control
3. **Electronics and electrical**: embedded electronics and PCB assemblies, high performance computing hardware, power electronics, energy storage systems, wiring and electrical integration
4. **RF and electromagnetic**: RF and microwave components, radar and RF systems, antennas
5. **Sensors and optronics**: optical and electro-optical sensors, laser and photonics components, navigation and positioning sensors, general purpose sensors
6. **Software and digital**: AI and computer vision software, sensor fusion and control software, electronic waveform software
7. **Thermal and protection**: thermal management systems, sealing and environmental protection, shock and vibration protection
8. **Interfaces and system integration**: human machine interfaces, communication systems

This call prioritises the following value chains:

- **All Arms Air Defence**
- **Unmanned ground vehicles**
- **Resilient exploitation of tactical data**

Any information provided by the applicant demonstrating activities in these priority value chains and technological domains represents an advantage. However, companies active in other thematic areas may also be considered if deemed relevant by Defence.

4.4. Eligible Companies

CAP Impact for Defence is open to Belgian manufacturing SMEs with an operational establishment in Belgium, defined as Belgium-based small or medium-sized enterprises active in manufacturing activities within a production facility.

Targeted companies employ fewer than 250 people and have either an annual turnover not exceeding €50 million, or a balance sheet total not exceeding €43 million, as this segment offers the highest leverage effect from public support.

Companies must carry out an industrial activity of production, transformation, or manufacturing. Eligible industrial sectors include notably:

- Industrial mechanics
- Electromechanics
- Electronics
- Industrial systems
- Robotics
- Advanced manufacturing
- Digital technologies applied to industry

The following sectors are not targeted by this programme: textiles, chemistry, biotechnology, construction, and wood.

4.5. Defence Involvement, Industrial Maturity and Collaborative Approach

Applicant companies must demonstrate their current or future involvement in defence-related value chains as described in section 4.3.

Companies already active in defence programmes must specify the systems, subsystems, or components to which they contribute.
Companies not yet active in defence must demonstrate how their industrial capabilities could meet the needs of these value chains.
An important element of the selection process concerns the company's ability to independently identify the industrial obstacles that could limit its capacity to meet defence needs. The ability of a company to analyse its own weaknesses is an important indicator of industrial maturity. It also demonstrates the company's motivation to engage in rapid industrial transformation — a key factor in the current context of defence production ramp-up.
Finally, demonstrated experience of collaborative activities with other companies — via consortia or other arrangements, at national or European level — is an additional asset.

4.6. Nature of the Support

Selected companies will benefit from structured industrial support based on the CAP Impact for Defence methodology, developed by Pôle MecaTech.
This support comprises 50 days of industrial expertise, divided into three phases:

- Phase 1 — Roadmap: An in-depth diagnostic to establish an industrial roadmap and identify the main levers for improvement.
- Phase 2 — Foundations: Implementation of the foundations necessary for the company's industrial transformation.
- Phase 3 — Performance: Focus on sustainable improvement of industrial performance.

The support may cover notably:

- Production capacity ramp-up
- Operational excellence improvement
- Supply chain qualification and security
- Industrial security, including cybersecurity

4.7. Financing and Legal Framework

The value of the proposed support is estimated at €75,000, corresponding to fifty days of on-site industrial expertise and common activities related to call management.
10 companies will be selected in 2026.
The contribution requested from companies is €25,000, representing 30% of the total support cost. The remaining financing is covered by the programme.
Payment modalities may be spread across the three phases of the programme:

- €10,000 excl. VAT at the start of Phase 1 — Roadmap
- €10,000 excl. VAT at the start of Phase 2 — Foundations
- €5,000 at the close of Phase 3 — Performance

The aid is subject to de minimis rules, pursuant to Commission Regulation (EU) 2023/2831 of 13 December 2023 on the application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) to de minimis aid. This regulation governs the granting of small amounts of aid not exceeding €300,000 over a three-year period, to companies active in the majority of economic sectors. It does not apply to sectors covered by sector-specific de minimis regulations (agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture, SGEI).

4.8. Programme Outcomes

Upon completion of the CAP Impact for Defence support, companies will be assessed against a framework called "Cap4Land Readiness".

This assessment is based on four key industrial dimensions:

- Resilience
- Agility
- Robustness
- Efficiency

These dimensions allow an appreciation of the company's ability to contribute reliably to a critical industrial supply chain.

Companies will be positioned according to the following readiness levels:

- Emerging: The company has industrial capabilities but needs to strengthen its robustness.
- Operational: The company is able to produce reliably within the defence supply chain.
- Mission Ready: The company can rapidly ramp up and support critical programmes.

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4.9. Program Governance

CAP Impact for Defence is organised by Pôle MecaTech, in its role as ecosystem manager for land defence-related industries.

The selection process will be conducted by a jury composed of representatives from the following institutions:

- Pôle MecaTech
- RHID
- Land Force (Belgian Army)
- General Directorate of Material Resources of Defence — DGMR (optional)

Industrial diagnostics will be carried out by experienced MecaTech experts, in collaboration with defence domain experts.

4.10. Process selection

The application must be submitted [via email to accompagnement@polemecatech.be / via the online form available at: URL] no later than 5 July 2026 (23:59), with subject line: "CAP4LAND — Application CAP Impact — [Company Name]". Any dossier received after this deadline or not respecting the required format will be declared inadmissible without possibility of appeal. An acknowledgement of receipt will be sent by MecaTech within 2 working days of receipt.

Applicants whose application is not deemed admissible are notified by MecaTech with justification and are not invited to continue the process.

Applicants must complete the self-declarative questionnaire available [here / at the following link: URL] and submit it together with their application.

Applications will be reviewed by the jury in July 2026. The pre-selection of 10 SMEs by the jury is scheduled for mid-July 2026.

Pre-selected companies will then be subject to on-site visits from July to September 2026, allowing the jury to verify the elements presented in the application against the observed industrial reality and to explore specific points in greater depth.

The final selection will concern ten SMEs, with the possibility of identifying reserve companies for future waves of the programme.

Final selection deadline: October 2026

Programme start: November 2026, or upon signature of contracts with Defence

4.11. Evaluation Criteria

Applications submitted under CAP Impact for Defence will be assessed by a jury composed of representatives of the institutions involved in the programme, on the basis of a self-declarative questionnaire provided with this document.
The selection process is based on two categories of criteria: exclusion criteria, which automatically disqualify an application, and selection criteria, which positively assess the relevance and solidity of the dossier.

4.11.1. Exclusion Criteria

The following situations result in the automatic inadmissibility of an application, regardless of the company's industrial quality:

- Companies whose effective control is exercised by non-European entities or shareholders, or whose ownership structure does not guarantee European sovereignty over sensitive activities and data.
- Companies or their managers subject to significant litigation, proven failures to meet social obligations — notably regarding ONSS contributions — or any other element calling into question their probity.
- Companies presenting a weakened financial situation or financial performance indicators incompatible with the completion of a support programme and the prospect of industrial ramp-up.

4.11.2. Selection Criteria

4.11.2.1. Strategic alignment with defence value chains

This criterion assesses the extent to which the company is relevant to the current and future needs of land defence value chains. The following will be analysed:

- Alignment with the priority technological domains and value chains identified in section 4.3
- Current involvement in defence programmes, or credible short-term integration potential
- Position in the value chain (supplier tier, industrial role, product typology)
- Relationships with OEMs or integrators (existing or in development)
- Potential contribution to strengthening industrial sovereignty and supply chain resilience

4.11.2.2. Industrial excellence and technological leadership

This criterion assesses the company's ability to deliver high-level industrial performance and to position itself as a reference actor in its field. The following will be evaluated:

- Level of technological and industrial mastery, including differentiating know-how
- Quality of industrial achievements and recognition by customers and partners
- Solidity of current industrial capabilities (equipment, production organisation, skills)
- Ability to produce with high levels of quality, reliability, and repeatability
- Credibility to support productions at TRL 8–9

4.11.2.3. Organisational maturity and transformation capacity

This criterion assesses the company's ability to manage its performance, transform rapidly, and meet the industrial requirements of a ramp-up context. The following will be analysed:

- Overall management quality, including organisational, human, and financial dimensions
- Existence of industrial management tools (indicators, performance monitoring)
- Presence of an industrial roadmap and capacity ramp-up plan

- Ability to independently identify industrial fragility points (capacity, quality, lead times, organisation, supply chain, security)
- Level of preparedness for defence-specific requirements, notably regarding security, certification, cybersecurity, and information management
- Motivation to engage in industrial transformation, including management commitment and mobilisation of internal resources

4.11.2.4. Potential programme impact and collaborative dimension

This criterion assesses the leverage effect of CAP Impact for Defence and the company's ability to operate within an ecosystem logic. The following will be evaluated:

- Potential impact of the support on the company's industrial performance (capacity, lead times, quality, resilience)
- Ability of the programme to remove structural blocking points identified by the company
- Potential contribution to the overall robustness of value chains
- Experience of industrial collaboration, notably in consortium projects or national/European partnerships
- Ability to integrate into cooperation logics specific to defence value chains

Each jury member will individually assess applications on the basis of these criteria. Evaluations will then be pooled and discussed during a selection jury session, leading to a first selection of companies and the identification of reserve candidates.
Pre-selected companies will be notified and will be subject to an on-site visit of half a day to one day, allowing the jury to verify declarative elements against observed industrial reality and to explore specific points in greater depth.
Following this phase, a final jury meeting will validate the definitive selection of companies retained in the programme.

5. Complaints

MecaTech and RHID place great importance on the quality of their service. Complaints about the administrative handling of this call and/or the content of the call and resulting contracts will be handled as follows:

- Once a complaint is filed, an acknowledgement of receipt will be sent.
- The complaint will be forwarded to the relevant departments and processed within one month.
- A response will be sent by email.
- The complaint will be treated with strict confidentiality.

The complaint form is available on the MecaTech website.

If dissatisfied with the initial response, applicants may contact the Federal Ombudsman / Médiateur fédéral, rue de Louvain 48 bte 6, 1000 Brussels (email: contact@mediateurfederal.be).

6. Contact

For any questions related to this call, please contact: projets@polemecatech.be