



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Directorate General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship & SMEs

Directorate H: COSME Programme

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

FOSTERING OPPORTUNITIES FOR SME INTERNATIONALISATION BY SUPPORTING SME NETWORKS FOR EXPORT

Call addressed to Enterprise Europe Network partners in the EU

282/G/GRO/PPA/18/10479

GRANT PROGRAMME 2018

The present call for proposals is composed of a set of Grant Submission Documents,
which form an integral part of this call:

- The call for proposals,
- The Guide for Applicants
- The Submission Set

The terms set out in the call for proposals document shall take precedence over those in
the other parts of the Grant Submission Documents.

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INTERESTED PARTIES ARE INVITED TO READ CAREFULLY THE BELOW INSTRUCTIONS, AND TO USE THE QUESTIONNAIRE PROVIDED IN CHAPTER II OF THE GUIDE FOR APPLICANTS IN ORDER TO ENSURE THAT APPLICATIONS ARE COMPLETE WHEN SUBMITTED.

1. CONTEXT

1.1. EU actions to support SMEs

The European Commission recognizes small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) as the backbone of Europe's economy. They represent 99% of all businesses in the EU and are considered as key to ensure economic growth, innovation, job creation, and social integration in the EU. SMEs are also crucial actors to reach the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy¹.

This is why the European Union implements initiatives specially dedicated to SMEs development. The Small Business Act for Europe (SBA), providing a comprehensive SME policy for the EU, is at the very centre of the Commission's actions. It promotes the 'Think Small First' principle, which helps the EU develop SMEs-friendly legislation taking the SMEs' interests into account at a very early stage of policy making.

To contribute to the implementation of the Small Business Act (SBA), the European Commission launched the competitiveness of enterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises (2014-2020) programme² – "COSME". One of the four priorities of COSME is to provide support to European enterprises so that they can benefit from the EU's single market and make the most of opportunities offered by markets outside the EU. It also funds the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) consisting of over 600 offices in more than 60 countries helping SMEs find business and technology partners, understand EU legislation and access EU financing.

To bring Europe back to growth and create new jobs after the economic crisis, the European Commission set out a vision and a number of actions to be taken at both EU and Member States' level in the Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan. It is based on three pillars: 1) entrepreneurial education and training to support growth and business creation; 2) create an Environment where entrepreneurs can flourish and grow, and 3) reignite the culture of entrepreneurship in Europe. COSME backs the implementation of the Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan through a wide range of activities. These include mobility exchanges, research, best practices diffusion and pilot projects in areas such as entrepreneurship education, mentoring or the development of guidance and support services for new and potential entrepreneurs, including young, women and senior entrepreneurs.

The 2011 review of Small Business Act for Europe (SBA) mobilised the European Commission to investigate the new forms of cooperation between companies capable of triggering important synergies that can contribute to strengthening competitiveness and innovation. It led to the announcement that the European Union will promote the new forms of cooperation between companies that enable enterprises to join forces, stimulating a coherent and coordinated approach to achieve a common objective without losing their independence.

The EC Communication on "Small Business Big World, a new partnership to help SMEs seize global opportunities", included a proposal to "encourage and finance the establishment of training programmes for entrepreneurs, SME managers and managers of clusters, business networks and export consortia in order to enable them to steer internationalisation operations."

This pilot project³ initiated by the European Parliament is a further step to help SMEs explore international opportunities in the Single Market and outside the EU.

¹ COM (2010)2020 final of 3 March 2010 "Europe 2020. A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth".

² Regulation (EU) No 1287/2013 of 11 December 2013 (Official Journal of the European Union L 347/33 of 20.12.2013).

³ EP Pilot Project, Commission financing decision C(2018) 848 from 15 February 2018

1.2. Defining SMEs networks

The European Commission monitors and evaluates how SME business support services can be delivered in the most effective way. Studies on clusters and networking organizations published in the "European Competitiveness Report 2012"⁴ and in "Competitiveness and Clusters: Implications for a New European Growth Strategy"⁵, funded under the Seventh Framework Programme, clarified structures and operations of business networks. It also revealed definitions and a distinction between formalised business associations and flexible business aggregations.

Moreover, the study on 'Business Networks' from the EC⁶ investigated new forms of inter-firm collaboration and investigated eight typical cases each with specific objectives, working methods and governance. The study divided these cases into two broad categories: business associations and company aggregations.

Business network associations mainly provide a platform and conditions for cooperation. The actual decision to cooperate or not to achieve certain objectives is left to the association members. On the other hand, the 'company aggregations' business network types are new forms of inter-firm cooperation which are becoming increasingly important, especially among SMEs. These forms of aggregation between companies enable them to join strengths, share information and create synergies to become more innovative and competitive on the domestic market but also and especially outside their home country and international markets.

The case study from Italy (RetImpresa) is an example of inter-firm collaboration facilitating joint activities between SMEs. One of the aims is to formalise these small business networks through a business contract amongst their members. The objective is to bring these networks towards a more structured collaboration, provide them with skills to face globalisation pressure, become more competitive, innovative and perform better in international markets.

With this pilot project the European Commission wants to support the creation of 'company aggregations' business networks via inter-firm collaboration.

For the purpose of this call business networks could be defined as follows:

A business network is a form of inter-firm cooperation that allows companies, located in different regions or countries, to collaborate together on a basis of common development objectives expressed in a cooperation agreement/contract. The companies decide to join their strengths, share information and create synergies to become more innovative and competitive on the domestic and international markets, while keeping their autonomy, not creating a separate legal entity. This cooperation model is suitable for any kind of business activity and sector.⁷

Based on the definition of the business network, the European Commission intends to foster the cross-border cooperation on the ground of a contractual agreement among participating SMEs. It differs from business associations in several ways:

- companies collaborate directly with each other, without an establishment of a separate legal entity – representative and/or a servicing association;
- collaboration is focused on achieving a certain, jointly agreed objective with a defined set of activities (i.e. programme/business plan) to achieve the objective, as well as procedures to measure the progress towards achieving the objective;
- the objective, activities, measurement of progress, are stated in an agreement formalised through a contract with a certain, jointly agreed duration;
- the contract outlines governance – coordination structure, such as decision procedures, definition of parties' rights and obligations; ways to enter/exit the contract;
- the contract leaves flexibility to start a new venture or strategic partnership as long as the contractual arrangements – company's activities stated to reach the common objectives are respected.

⁴ European Commission, *European competitiveness report 2012: Reaping the benefits of globalization*

<https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/c84a32b7-c7e0-4756-9265-a33ec4295198/language-en/format-PDF>

⁵ C. Ketels, *Competitiveness and Clusters: Implications for a New European Growth Strategy*

http://www.foreurope.eu/fileadmin/documents/pdf/Workingpapers/WWWforEurope_WPS_no084_MS48.pdf

⁶ ECORYS, *Business Networks – Final Report*

<http://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/access-to-markets/internationalisation/studies>

⁷ ECORYS, *Business Networks – Final Report*

<http://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/access-to-markets/internationalisation/studies>

Company aggregations have no limits in size, sector or geographical location as long as each of the aggregated members has an added value to the cooperation objectives. For this pilot project the EC aims to support business networks involving SMEs from at least 3 countries; the size of the business networks is typically between 4 and 8 SMEs.

A common strategy and operational objectives with activities to achieve these objectives, as well as procedures to measure the progress is essential for the implementation of the company aggregations. Studies on business networks give some examples of strategic objectives like strengthening of innovation, foreign matchmaking or internationalisation. Strategic objectives are translated into operational objectives and activities.

As an illustration, the internationalisation strategic objectives could be translated into the following operational activities:

- Development of a common internationalisation strategy;
- Participation in events and initiatives that promote internationalisation such as fairs;
- Development of a marketing strategy, i.e. creation of a common brand, and marketing of high quality products abroad;
- Seizing new business opportunities;
- Common post sales assistance abroad;
- Sharing information on different markets;
- Providing training to members of staff employed in the international areas of businesses.

Business networks through company aggregation will help SMEs to scale up and expand their activities outside their home market. However, the study⁸ showed that internationalisation is not an automatic development of company aggregation. Business networks generate benefits for regions or countries strengthening at the same time competitiveness of the companies located in the European Union. However, the cross-border cooperation at the EU level needs to be triggered pro-actively.

1.3. The need to facilitate contacts among SMEs

SMEs are facing real and pressing challenges to survive and grow in an increasingly competitive world. These challenges are coming from the changing business environment and nature of markets, meaning that SMEs in particular need to make tough and quick decisions to survive.

To thrive in today's rapidly changing competitive environment, companies have little option but to innovate and to go international. Businesses that fail to innovate or internationalize run the risk of losing ground to competitors, losing key staff, or simply operating inefficiently. Yet a 2015 Eurobarometer survey⁹ reveals that most SMEs have not undertaken business activities outside their home country or beyond the Single Market in the last three years. Thus there is a pressing need for support in cooperation among SMEs across European Union.

SMEs tend to have limited resources and capabilities to look for (inter)national partners. Difficulties emerging from limited time and lack of knowledge about international markets are mentioned as a top barrier to SME internationalisation in several recent surveys¹⁰. Cooperation, especially on the international level requires much more strenuous work and a different set of skills and knowledge.

Finding an appropriate foreign market partner willing to collaborate is reported to be a significant obstacle to internationalization¹¹. It is mainly due to a lack of reliable information sources and exhaustive market analysis highlighting both risks and benefits. SME often lack specialised staff and a clear division of responsibilities to carry on a proper analysis. They cannot afford to have dedicated staff being aware of foreign market specificities to screen, identify, negotiate and sign potential agreements.

What makes the task even more complex is that the approach has to be shared by both sides. Potential business partners have to agree on the modalities of actions they would like to take together. SMEs need a strong and reliable ally in identification, matching and further preparation of potential business partners. The

⁸ ECORYS, *Business Networks – Final Report*

<http://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/access-to-markets/internationalisation/studies>

⁹ European Commission, *Flash Eurobarometer 421 - TNS Political & Social*, October 2015

¹⁰ OECD, *Top Barriers and Drivers to SME Internationalisation*, 2009

¹¹ Barnes, B.R., Chakrabarti, R., and Paliwadana, D. (2006), *Investigating the export marketing activity of SMEs operating in international healthcare markets*, *Journal of Medical Marketing*, 6 (3), pp. 209–221.

Enterprise Europe Network is well placed to facilitate the contacts between SMEs willing to build business networks and participate in the activities of these networks.

1.4. The need for financial support

SMEs have a significant potential for export, however, relatively few of them have undertaken actual exporting activities¹². The reasons for this are like lack of knowledge and skills, time or managerial capacity. Additionally, SMEs face limitations in their financial capacity to internationalise their activities.

Member States take steps to support SMEs export activities through insurance and/or guarantees and state-controlled international business development bodies. The European Commission complements current actions through the Small Business Act, the COSME programme and the Enterprise Europe Network. This call for proposal aims to unlock the full potential of direct cooperation among SMEs. This pilot project foresees financial support for the business networks being created. This financial support will be provided by the EEN organisations involved to the participating SMEs through 'third parties financial support'.

1.5. The role of Enterprise Europe Network

The Enterprise Europe Network is a European-wide network of public, public-private and private providers of support services to SMEs established under the Competitiveness of Enterprises and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises Programme (COSME). The EEN partners help businesses at all stages of their lifecycle to increase their competitiveness in the Single Market and beyond. The Network provides a wide range of services:

- informs on EU programmes, including advice on EU funding and financing opportunities;
- advises SMEs on EU legislation, helping SMEs to overcome legal obstacles;
- stimulates the SMEs' capacity to innovate through technology and knowledge transfer services, including facilitating SMEs' participation in EU Research Framework Programmes;
- supports better policy-making through targeted feedback to the Commission on existing EU-legislation and organises panel consultations on forthcoming EU legislation.

The Enterprise Europe Network is a true one-stop shop for small businesses. With over 600 offices in more than 60 countries it provides practical answers to specific questions.

The Network members are linked up through powerful databases, sharing their knowledge and sourcing technologies and business partners across all Network countries. More than 3 000 experienced staff can help business identify the potential international business and technology partners to grow and expand abroad. The EEN members have the reach and expertise to find the right partner(s) for manufacture or distribute products, access new markets, find the technology the company needs to drive innovation, cooperate in research and development projects.

The Enterprise Europe Network is well placed to identify European SMEs suitable to establish a business network, match potential partners and provide further assistance and coaching to develop the business network.

The Network may use its existing assets, tools and expertise to foster these business networks, bringing together SMEs with a common interest, facilitate the exchange of good practices, knowledge, transfer of skills and help finding financial resources.

¹² Yeoh P.-L., Jeong I. (1995), *Contingency relationships between entrepreneurship, export channel structure and environment*, European Journal of Marketing, Vol. 29 Issue: 8, pp. 95–115

2. OBJECTIVE OF THE CALL

2.1. Objectives

The purpose of this pilot project is to assist European SMEs to help them develop, further expand or improve their international business by creating SME networks aimed at enhancing SME's capacity to exploit foreign markets for export purposes.

The objective is therefore to increase the capacity of European SMEs to go international by easing cooperation among small groups of firms to improve their competitiveness. Getting together, they can achieve a better performance, increase their visibility and improve their internationalization strategy and performance.

This initiative is therefore meant to implement a pilot project aimed to identify elements, processes, obstacles in the path that SMEs based in different countries need to follow and overcome to start or improve export capacities within their businesses through the setting up of transnational cooperation Networks bringing together potential common interests and fostering potential synergies. Experiences with business collaboration and aggregation on the basis of shared internationalization projects have shown that participating SMEs improved their internationalization readiness and capacity to export to new markets.

The aim is to support small groups of SMEs (typically 4-8) to join forces based on common development objectives. This cooperation should be formalized in an agreement/contract, aimed at committing the SMEs to the implementation of relevant interactions though guaranteeing at the same time their autonomy and freedom of initiative.

SMEs from at least 3 EU Member States should be selected to form these business networks; EEN organisations participating in the pilot project shall promote and facilitate the contacts between candidate SMEs and assist them to achieving concrete, measurable and documentable results in expanding their commercial activities abroad.

Besides, business networks can improve connections between companies based in different countries enhancing their capacity to identify partners for purposes other than strictly linked to selling and buying. For instance, supply chain links can indeed be improved by networking that provides enterprises with better possibilities to identify the right manufacturers, suppliers or retailers (the EEN and Commission activities to foster the international collaboration between clusters are relevant examples in this context).

Another important element to encourage this kind of partnership is that for participants access to finance may become easier. Experience shows that banks will be more willing to provide financing to SMEs with committed and focused cooperation activities, expressed through agreed objectives and concrete actions set out in a business plan¹³.

Therefore small groups of SMEs should be supported to join forces in order to "inter alia":

- Create a common brand;
- Build a profitable e-commerce business to save travel time and costs;
- Share knowledge and information about clients and markets;
- Develop common projects in order to boost their commercial penetration in a specific country or sector (always abroad though);
- Participate in international expositions B2B and other important commercial events (e.g.: fairs);
- Find new business opportunities;
- Support strategic actions to increase sales and improve promotion and marketing initiatives;
- Develop post sale assistance reaching high quality standards and reinforcing the presence in international marketing;
- Share costs related to the possible recruitment of export or other relevant consultancy services.

A large part of the total financial resources of this pilot project should be devoted to the SMEs building the SME networks ('third parties financial support'). The EEN beneficiaries of the grants awarded under this call shall provide support to third parties as described in Section 4.5 of this call for proposals. The support to third

¹³ Ecorys. Italy case Study 2013 page 13

parties can only be provided in the form of grants based on the reimbursement of actual costs incurred by the recipients when implementing the supported activities. Costs related to purchases by the SMEs ('third parties') from the beneficiaries (selected EEN organisations) are not eligible.

Only EEN organisations from EU Member States who have signed a Framework Partnership Agreement may participate in this call.

2.2. Description of tasks

The implementation of tasks for this pilot project will be articulated in five subsequent phases:

WORK PACKAGE 1: Identification/selection of the target groups of SMEs having a potential to successfully participate in an SME network

The target companies should have the potential to start or further expand abroad, exploiting cooperation with other companies. SMEs with international experience or participating in clusters or international partnerships can be also relevant as they tend to be already cooperative, innovative and keen to jointly develop activities in these SME networks. Including SMEs with a solid experience in internationalisation together with those who are less experienced can bring added value and lead to more successful overall networking activities. SMEs that internationalise successfully are in most cases the ones of greater dimensions (more "medium than small"). Micro companies are those who most need and would most benefit from the support that this pilot project can provide and should therefore be considered as well. Participating EEN organisations shall promote and facilitate the contacts between potential SME candidates to form these networks. The networks typically consist of 4-8 SMEs coming from at least 3 Member States (possibly also from other Member States than those where the EEN consortium partners are located). This task includes the activities needed to identify the potential candidate SMEs and to match SMEs with a common interest to form a network. This task also includes all activities needed to select the SMEs ('third parties') that may receive financial support from the beneficiaries (selected EEN organisations) as described in Section 4.5 of this call for proposals. It is the responsibility of the beneficiaries to define the rules for publishing the call for proposal, and for evaluating and selecting the third parties that may receive financial support. A guidance document has been prepared to help beneficiaries organise the awarding of financial support to the SMEs (See Annex).

WORK PACKAGE 2 – Preparing for internationalisation, training and coaching

Training and coaching should be made available taking into account the characteristics of participating SMEs and the purpose, objective and planned activities of the networks being formed.

The selected EEN partners will provide identified SMEs with all information needed to start or develop export activities. In general, training should be aimed at enabling companies to acquire the necessary tools to understand the general dynamics of international markets while organising themselves into operational consortia. The selected organisations will therefore be expected to provide targeted SMEs with the knowledge to understand and deal with export markets and to understand how to successfully market a product or service abroad, capitalizing on their strengths as a network.

Internationalisation processes require complex planning. Therefore EEN experts will be expected to provide selected SME networks with the means to understand and deal with the different steps of the relevant strategic planning.

In modern business, networking and communication skills can be even more important than a product. Making SME networks aware about cultural differences and different business standards is very important for a positive approach to European and global markets. As an example, targeted SME networks may be trained on e-commerce as it has a positive correlation in improving import/export activities. The Internet has in fact made it much easier for SMEs of all sizes to overcome many of the barriers to internationalisation. As another example, the main intellectual property concepts from a business point of view may be introduced to participant SMEs in order for them to be able to identify potential IPR problems.

Relevant training should have as its ultimate goal that of making SMEs involved in the networks aware about the advantages of international cooperation and seek to motivate them and put them into the condition of continuing collaboration beyond the duration of the project supported by the EU Commission and more specifically to take advantage of services made available by the EEN.

The ultimate goal of this preparation phase is to help involved SMEs, for example with the preparation of an international Business plan, and to help develop the activities of the network based on common interests of the participants to increase their export. The network and individual SME being part of it should receive the practical training and coaching needed for them to implement the network activities, they may exploit the opportunities proceeding from the EEN database, Brokerage events and Company missions. Coaching should be organised with a customised approach, meaning that it should be tailored on the needs of the single enterprises and the joint activities as a network. Selected SMEs should be put, through actions supported by this project, in the condition to successfully exploit relevant events and tools leading to the conclusion of business/technology/knowledge transnational agreements.

The training and coaching provided is meant to have a measurable impact for involved SMEs and be sustainable in time. The support provided should aim at equipping the SMEs belonging to the selected networks with the expertise needed to keep on developing international activities way beyond the end of the training made available and the results achieved during the project implementation phase. Coaching may also be needed to help the SME networks to further define their common goals, plan for their common activities and find a balanced way for each participating SME to benefit from the project.

WORK PACKAGE 3: Implementation (setting up of pilot project SME networking activities)

Selected networks of SMEs should be enabled to use all means available to operate their network and connect with potential clients abroad. These clients may be located in the EU or third countries. Therefore, but not exclusively, EEN matchmaking tools (Merlin, brokerage events, company missions, etc.) may be exploited for this purpose. EEN partners should help the SME networks reach out to companies in the target countries, and may provide help by involving organisations in the target countries (whether or not these organisations belong to the EEN). EU business organisations in third countries as well as other EEN organisations, including BCCs in third countries, may be involved to help the SME networks find business opportunities.

The objective of this task is to help SMEs to achieve concrete results. Therefore EEN partners involved will be expected to help targeted groups of companies to achieve and document business/technology/knowledge transfer deals (partnership agreements) or advisory services outcomes that have significant impact for the participating SME's export activities.

The outcomes of this project are meant to be sustainable for the participating companies involved in the networks. Therefore supported initiatives should be only a first step for client SMEs in the process of setting up cooperation that can last in time and ensure a growth in terms of sales and turnover.

WORK PACKAGE 4: Results and policy recommendations

The participating EEN organisations will prepare a report containing:

- an overview of characteristics and achievements of the supported networks;
- experiences from the networks on the export schemes used;
- recommendations for possible improvements ;
- lessons learned and recommendations regarding potential further development of this approach;
- the final outcomes and recommendations should be presented in a workshop, at the end of the project.

WORK PACKAGE 5: Project coordination, management and reporting

This activity ensures effective coordination and collaboration between the beneficiaries, the SMEs being part of the networks and Commission services, and monitors progress and effective and efficient use of resources.

Relevant Commission services should be regularly informed on the progress of this initiative and its final results according to the reporting periods defined in Art. I.4 (every 6 months)

3. TIMETABLE

Scheduled start-up date for the action: 1 November 2018

Maximum duration of action is: 24 months

No applications will be accepted for projects scheduled to run for a longer period than that specified in this call for proposals.

The period of eligibility of costs will start at the earliest on first day of the month following the date when the last party signs the Agreement. If a beneficiary can demonstrate the need to start the action before the agreement is signed, the expenditure may be eligible as from a date before the agreement is signed. Under no circumstances can the eligibility period start before the date of submission of the grant application.

	Stages	Date and time or indicative period
a)	Publication of the call	21 March 2018
b)	Deadline for submitting applications	19 June 2018 17:00 Brussels time
c)	Information to applicants	August 2018
d)	Signature of grant agreement or notification of grant decision	October 2018
e)	Starting date of the action/ work programme	November 2018

4. EU FINANCING

Maximum budget allocated for EU financing under this call: € 1 500 000

Indicative number of projects: 3

Maximum EU financing amount per project: 500 000 €

Maximum EU financing rate of eligible costs: 90 % of the total eligible costs;

Maximum EU financing amount as contribution to EEN beneficiaries eligible costs (excluding the third parties financial support): 250 000 € per project.

The remaining EU financing amount, up to the max. EU financing amount per project of 500.000 €, should be devoted to the SMEs building the SME networks ('third parties financial support').

Maximum amount of EU financial support for third parties: € 25.000 EU co-financing per SME network (to be assigned to the SMEs being part of the network)

The support to third parties can only be provided in the form of grants based on the reimbursement of actual costs incurred by the recipients when implementing the supported activities. **Proposals with an EU co-financing beyond any of the above two maxima will not be eligible.**

The Commission reserves the right to award a grant of less than the amount requested by the applicant. In such a case, applicants will be asked either to increase their co-financing, propose other co-financing means or to decrease the total costs without altering the substance of the proposal. Grants will not be awarded for more than the amount requested.

Publication of the call (on the Commission Internet site and/or in the Official Journal) does not guarantee the availability of funds for the above action.

4.1. GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF EU FUNDING

Non-cumulative award

Each action may give rise to the award of only one grant from the budget to any one beneficiary.

In no circumstances shall the same costs be financed twice by the Union budget.

Applicants have to inform the Commission immediately of any multiple applications and multiple grants relating to the same action. The applicant shall inform about sources and amounts of EU funding received or applied for the same action or for part of the action. Applicants shall indicate if they receive EU funding for their functioning during the financial year in which the action takes place.

Non-retroactivity

No grant may be awarded retrospectively for actions already completed.

A grant may be awarded for an action which has already begun, provided the applicant can demonstrate the need to start the action before the grant agreement is signed. In such cases, costs eligible for financing may not have been incurred prior to the date of submission of the grant application.

Co-financing

Grants shall involve co-financing, which implies that the resources necessary to carry out the action or the work programme shall not be provided entirely by EU contribution. EU financing may not cover 100% of the total costs of the action.

Co-financing of the action or of the work programme may take the form of:

- the beneficiary's own resources;
- income generated by the action or work programme;
- financial contributions from third parties.

Non-profit rule

EU grant may not have the purpose or effect of producing a profit within the framework of the action of the work programme of the beneficiary.

Where a profit is made, the Commission is entitled to recover the percentage of the profit corresponding to the EU contribution to the eligible costs actually incurred. For this purpose, profit shall be defined as a surplus of the receipts over the eligible costs incurred, when the request for payment of the balance is made.

Balanced budget

The estimated budget of the action or work programme is to be attached to the application form. It must have revenue and expenditure in balance.

The budget must be drawn up in euros.

Applicants, who foresee that costs will not be incurred in euros, are invited to use the exchange rate published on the Infor-euro website available at http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts_grants/info_contracts/inforeuro/inforeuro_en.cfm.

4.2. ELIGIBLE COSTS

In order to be eligible for funding, costs should be actually incurred by the beneficiary and meet the following criteria:

- they are incurred during the duration of the action or work programme, as indicated in the grant agreement, with the exception of costs relating to the request for payment of the balance and the corresponding supporting documents (audit certificates);
- they are indicated in the estimated budget of the action or work programme;
- they are necessary for the implementation of the action or of the work programme, in accordance with the description of the action, attached to the grant agreement;
- they are identifiable and verifiable, in particular being recorded in the accounting records of the beneficiary and determined according to the applicable accounting standards of the country where the beneficiary is established and according to the usual cost accounting practices of the beneficiary;
- they comply with the requirements of applicable tax and social legislation;
- they are reasonable, justified, and comply with the principle of sound financial management, in particular regarding economy and efficiency.

The beneficiary's internal accounting and auditing procedures must permit direct reconciliation of the costs and revenue declared in respect of the action/project with the corresponding accounting statements and supporting documents.

Please note that the exact scope of the eligibility of costs is defined by the grant agreement, which will be signed with the successful applicants.

4.2.1. Eligible direct costs

Direct costs of the action are those specific costs which are directly linked to the implementation of the action and can therefore be attributed directly to it. They shall not include any eligible indirect costs.

The following categories of costs can be considered as eligible direct costs:

- the costs of personnel working under an employment contract with the beneficiary or an equivalent appointing act and assigned to the action, comprising actual salaries plus social security contributions and other statutory costs included in the remuneration, provided that these costs are in line with the beneficiary's usual policy on remuneration. Those costs may also include additional remunerations, including payments on the basis of supplementary contracts regardless of the nature of those contracts, provided that they are paid in a consistent manner whenever the same kind of work or expertise is required, independently from the source of funding used;
- salary costs of the personnel of national administrations to the extent that they relate to the cost of activities which the relevant public authority would not carry out if the project concerned were not undertaken;
- costs of travel and related subsistence allowances, provided that these costs are in line with the beneficiary's usual practices on travel;

- the depreciation costs of equipment or other assets (new or second-hand) as recorded in the accounting statements of the beneficiary, provided that the asset has been purchased in accordance with the conditions applicable to implementation contracts and that it is written off in accordance with the international accounting standards and the usual accounting practices of the beneficiary;
- costs of consumables and supplies, provided that they are purchased in accordance with the conditions applicable to implementation contracts;
- costs arising directly from requirements imposed by the grant agreement (dissemination of information, specific evaluation of the action, audits, translations, reproduction), including the costs of requested financial guarantees, provided that the corresponding services are purchased in accordance with the conditions applicable to implementation contracts;
- costs entailed by subcontracts, concluded for the externalisation of specific tasks or activities which form part of the action or work programme as described in the proposal, provided that the conditions with the conditions applicable to implementation contracts are met;
- costs of financial support to third parties, in accordance with the conditions set by the grant agreement for such financing;
- duties, taxes and charges paid by the beneficiary, provided that they are included in eligible direct costs, and unless specified otherwise in the Agreement.
Non-deductible VAT is eligible;
- costs relating to a pre-financing guarantee lodged by the beneficiary of the grant, where that guarantee is a condition for the payment of a pre-financing;
- costs relating to external audits where such audits are required in support of the requests for payments.

4.2.2. Eligible indirect costs

A flat-rate amount of 7% of the total eligible direct costs of the action is eligible under indirect costs, representing the beneficiary's general administrative costs which can be regarded as chargeable to the action/project.

Indirect costs may not include costs entered under another budget heading.

Indirect costs are not eligible for beneficiaries that receive an operating grant from the European Commission.

4.2.3. Non-eligible costs

In addition to any other costs which do not fulfill the conditions set out in Article II.19.1, the following costs shall not be considered eligible:

- return on capital;
- debt and debt service charges;
- provisions for losses or debts;
- interest owed;
- doubtful debts;
- exchange losses;
- costs of transfers from the Commission charged by the bank of a beneficiary;
- costs declared by the beneficiary in the framework of another action receiving a grant financed from the Union budget (including grants awarded by a Member State and financed from the Union budget and grants awarded by other bodies than the Commission for the purpose of implementing the Union budget);
- in particular, indirect costs shall not be eligible under a grant for an action awarded to a beneficiary which already receives an operating grant financed from the Union budget during the period in question;

- contributions in kind from third parties;
- excessive or reckless expenditure;
- deductible VAT;
- participation by any staff of the institutions in actions receiving grants;
- any other costs which have been specified as ineligible in the call for proposal.

In addition to the above, the Commission can refuse to finance certain costs included in the proposal. The beneficiary can decide to maintain and finance these costs out of his own resources, but they will not be taken into account as eligible costs.

4.3. CO-FINANCING AND JOINT AND SEVERAL RESPONSIBILITY

The beneficiary has to supply evidence of the co-financing provided. It can be provided either by way of own resources, or in the form of financial transfers from third parties.

In case of a joint application, all partners shall agree upon appropriate arrangements between themselves for the proper performance of the action.

In particular, the beneficiaries are jointly and severally liable for repaying any debt under the grant agreement up to the maximum amount of the grant. The beneficiaries are also jointly and severally liable for interest on late payment, when applicable.

The final grant agreement shall be signed by each applicant. Alternatively it shall be signed by the appointed co-ordinator, provided that a power of attorney has been conferred to this entity (Annex IV of the draft grant agreement).

4.4. IMPLEMENTATION CONTRACTS/SUBCONTRACTING

Where the implementation of the action or the work programme requires the use of contracts (implementation contracts), the beneficiary must ensure that the contract is awarded to the bid offering best value for money or the lowest price (as appropriate), avoiding conflicts of interests and retain the documentation for the event of an audit.

Entities acting in their capacity of contracting authorities shall abide by the applicable national public procurement rules, in the meaning of Directive 2014/24/EU on the coordination of procedures for the award of public work contracts, public supply contracts and public service contracts or contracting entities in the meaning of Directive 2014/25/EU coordinating the procurement procedures of entities operating in the water, energy, transport and postal services sectors.

Sub-contracting for the purpose of the action

Sub-contracting refers to contracts concluded for the externalisation of specific tasks or activities which form part of the action or work programme as described in the proposal. Such contracts must satisfy the conditions applicable to any implementation contract and, in addition, the following conditions:

- Subcontracting may only cover the implementation of a limited part of the action up to 50 % of the eligible costs;
- It must be justified having regard to the nature of the action and what is necessary for its implementation;
- The proposal should clearly identify the subcontracted activities.

Subcontracting does not in any way limit the responsibility of beneficiaries for the implementation of the action. Please note that the beneficiary(ies) should have the necessary capacity to perform the project. Only tasks that are not core business can be sub-contracted to consultants.

It is not necessary to have already selected subcontractors at the time the proposal is submitted. However, cost of contractors not selected in accordance with the applicable rules for procurement will not be eligible.

4.5. FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO THIRD PARTIES

The applications shall envisage provision of financial support to third parties. In such case the applications must include:

- an exhaustive list of the types of activities for which a third party may receive financial support. The types of activities for which third party financing may be envisaged are the following:
 - Creating a common brand;
 - Sharing costs related to the possible recruitment of export or other relevant consultancy services;
 - Participation in international expositions, B2B and other important commercial events (e.g.: fairs), finding new business opportunities;
 - Building a profitable e-commerce business to save travel time and costs;
 - Developing common projects in order to boost their commercial penetration in a specific country or sector (always abroad though);
 - Support strategic actions to increase sales and improve promotion and marketing initiatives;
- the definition of the persons or categories of persons which may receive financial support (e.g. the SME target group);
- the criteria for awarding financial support;
- the maximum amount to be granted to each third party and the criteria for determining it.

The support to third parties can only be provided in the form of grants based on the reimbursement of actual costs incurred by the recipients when implementing the supported activities.

The amount of EU financial support for third parties must not exceed 25.000 € (maximum EU co-financing amount) per SME network (to be assigned to the SMEs being part of the network). The EU co-financing rate is up to 90% of the eligible costs.

Costs related to purchases by the SMEs ('third parties) from the beneficiaries (selected EEN organisations) are not eligible.

4.6. FINAL GRANT AND PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS

The draft grant agreement annexed to this call for proposals specifies the calculation of the final grant and the payment arrangements.

Your attention is in particular drawn to the General Conditions of the grant agreement, where the eligibility of costs is described. Detailed explanations and a description how costs should be budgeted and reported can be found in the Guide for Applicants.

EU grant may not have the purpose or effect of producing a profit within the framework of the action of the work programme of the beneficiary. Where a profit is made, the Commission is entitled to recover the percentage of the profit corresponding to the EU contribution to the eligible costs actually incurred. For this purpose, profit is defined as a surplus of the receipts over the eligible costs incurred by the beneficiary, when the request is made for payment of the balance. Where such a surplus occurs, the Commission is entitled to

recover the percentage of the profit corresponding to the EU contribution to the eligible costs actually incurred by the beneficiary.

The Commission may require the beneficiary to lodge a guarantee for grants exceeding € 60 000, based on a risk analysis.

In the event that the applicant's financial capacity is not satisfactory, a pre-financing guarantee for up to the same amount as the pre-financing may be requested in order to limit the financial risks linked to the pre-financing payment.

The financial guarantee, in euro, shall be provided by an approved bank or financial institution established in one of the Member State of the European Union. When the beneficiary is established in a third country, the authorising officer responsible may agree that a bank or financial institution established in that third country may provide the guarantee if he considers that the bank or financial institution offers equivalent security and characteristics as those offered by a bank or financial institution established in a Member State. Amounts blocked in bank accounts shall not be accepted as financial guarantees.

The guarantee may be replaced by a joint and several guarantee by a third party or by a joint guarantee of the beneficiaries of an action who are parties to the same grant agreement.

5. ELIGIBILITY

APPLICATIONS MUST COMPLY WITH ALL OF THE ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA SET OUT IN THIS SECTION.

5.1. ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

- a) Applicants eligible to submit a proposal are Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) partner organisations within the European Union that have signed a framework partnership agreement for the Enterprise Europe Network.
- b) The consortium (i.e. the coordinator plus its partners) must be composed of EEN partners from at least three (3) EU Member States.
- c) Several applicants, submitting a joint proposal should choose within their midst a lead organisation, referred to as the coordinator. The coordinator and other applicants must satisfy the same eligibility criteria.
- d) Applications must be submitted by a legal person.
- e) The participation of the same partner in more than one proposal is not permitted; proposals with a member that participates in more than one consortium submitting a project proposal are not eligible and will be excluded from the call. Therefore applicants are encouraged to take the necessary measures to ensure that their partners will not participate in more than one proposal.

 For British applicants: Please be aware that eligibility criteria must be complied with for the entire duration of the grant. If the United Kingdom withdraws from the EU during the grant period without concluding an agreement with the EU ensuring in particular that British applicants continue to be eligible, you will cease to receive EU funding (while continuing, where possible, to participate) or be required to leave the project on the basis of Article II.17.3.1 of the grant agreement.

Supporting documents

Subject to the eligibility criteria indicated above, the applicants should provide the following supporting documents to establish their eligibility:

- **private entity:** extract from the official journal, copy of articles of association, extract of trade or association register, certificate of liability to VAT (if, as in certain countries, the trade register number and VAT number are identical, only one of these documents is required);
- **public entity:** copy of the resolution or decision establishing the public company, or other official document establishing the public-law entity;
- **consortium:** in addition to the supporting documents referring to their legal status, consortium members will submit letters confirming their participation to the project;
- **natural persons:** photocopy of identity card and/or passport;
- **entities without legal personality:** documents providing evidence that their representative(s) have the capacity to undertake legal obligations on their behalf.

5.2. ADMISSIBLE AND ELIGIBLE PROPOSALS

Applications must comply with the following conditions in order to be eligible for a grant:

- Applications must be sent no later than the deadline for submitting applications referred to in section 9.
- Applications must be submitted in writing, using the application form and the electronic submission system, as indicated in the Guide for Applicants.
- Applications must be drafted in one of the EU official Languages. If your proposal is not in English, a translation of the full proposal would be of assistance to the evaluators. An English translation of an abstract may be included in the proposal (see Guide for Applicants).
- Proposals must be submitted in conformity with the call specifications.
- Only projects that are strictly non-profit-making and/or whose immediate objective is non-commercial shall be eligible.
- Applications must respect the maximum rate for EU co-financing.
- Applications must respect the maximum amount for EU co-financing.
- Applications must respect the maximum duration of projects.
- Applications must respect the requirements set for the start date.
- Applications may not include contributions in kind as part of their co-financing.

In this context, will be rejected any project directly or indirectly contrary to EU policy or against public health, human rights, citizen's security or freedom of expression.

6. EXCLUSION CRITERIA

6.1. EXCLUSION FROM PARTICIPATION

An entity will be excluded from participating in the call for proposals procedure if:

(a) it is bankrupt, subject to insolvency or winding-up procedures, where its assets are being administered by a liquidator or by a court, where it is in an arrangement with creditors, where its business activities are suspended, or where it is in any analogous situation arising from a similar procedure provided for under national laws or regulations;

(b) it has been established by a final judgment or a final administrative decision that the entity is in breach of its obligations relating to the payment of taxes or social security contributions in accordance with the law of the country in which it is established, with those of the country in which the contracting authority is located or those of the country of the performance of the contract;

(c) it has been established by a final judgment or a final administrative decision that the entity is guilty of grave professional misconduct by having violated applicable laws or regulations or ethical standards of the profession to which the applicant belongs, or by having engaged in any wrongful conduct which has an impact on its professional credibility where such conduct denotes wrongful intent or gross negligence, including, in particular, any of the following:

(i) fraudulently or negligently misrepresenting information required for the verification of the absence of grounds for exclusion or the fulfilment of selection criteria or in the performance of a contract;

(ii) entering into agreement with other entity with the aim of distorting competition;

(iii) violating intellectual property rights;

(iv) attempting to influence the decision-making process of the contracting authority during the award procedure;

(v) attempting to obtain confidential information that may confer upon it undue advantages in the award procedure;

(d) it has been established by a final judgment that the entity is guilty of any of the following:

(i) fraud, within the meaning of Article 1 of the Convention on the protection of the European Communities' financial interests, drawn up by the Council Act of 26 July 1995;

(ii) corruption, as defined in Article 3 of the Convention on the fight against corruption involving officials of the European Communities or officials of Member States of the European Union, drawn up by the Council Act of 26 May 1997, and in Article 2(1) of Council Framework Decision 2003/568/JHA, as well as corruption as defined in the law of the country where the contracting authority is located, the country in which the applicant is established or the country of the performance of the contract;

(iii) participation in a criminal organisation, as defined in Article 2 of Council Framework Decision 2008/841/JHA;

(iv) money laundering or terrorist financing, as defined in Article 1 of Directive 2005/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council;

(v) terrorist-related offences or offences linked to terrorist activities, as defined in Articles 1 and 3 of Council Framework Decision 2002/475/JHA, respectively, or inciting, aiding, abetting or attempting to commit such offences, as referred to in Article 4 of that Decision;

(vi) child labour or other forms of trafficking in human beings as defined in Article 2 of Directive 2011/36/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council;

(e) the entity has shown significant deficiencies in complying with main obligations in the performance of a contract financed by the budget, which has led to its early termination or to the application of liquidated damages or other contractual penalties, or which has been discovered following checks, audits or investigations by an authorising officer, OLAF or the Court of Auditors;

(f) it has been established by a final judgment or final administrative decision that the entity has committed an irregularity within the meaning of Article 1(2) of Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 2988/95;

g) for the situations of grave professional misconduct, fraud, corruption, other criminal offences, significant deficiencies in the performance of the contract or irregularity, the applicant is subject to:

(i) facts established in the context of audits or investigations carried out by the Court of Auditors, OLAF or internal audit, or any other check, audit or control performed under the responsibility of an authorising officer of an EU institution, of a European office or of an EU agency or body;

(ii) non-final administrative decisions which may include disciplinary measures taken by the competent supervisory body responsible for the verification of the application of standards of professional ethics;

(iii) decisions of the ECB, the EIB, the European Investment Fund or international organisations;

(iv) decisions of the Commission relating to the infringement of the Union's competition rules or of a national competent authority relating to the infringement of Union or national competition law.

(v) decisions of exclusion by an authorising officer of an EU institution, of a European office or of an EU agency or body.

6.2. EXCLUSION FROM AWARD

Grants will not be awarded to applicant who, in the course of the grant award procedure:

(a) is in a situation of exclusion established in accordance with Article 106 FR;

(b) has misrepresented the information required as a condition for participating in the grant award procedure or has failed to supply that information;

(c) was previously involved in the preparation of procurement documents where this entails a distortion of competition that cannot be remedied otherwise.

6.3. SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Applicants must sign a declaration on their honour certifying that they are not in one of the situations referred to by filling in the "Exclusion Criteria Form" (form B4).

Administrative and financial penalties may be imposed on applicants, or affiliated entities where applicable, who are guilty of misrepresentation.

By using the "Exclusion Criteria Form" applicants shall declare on their honour that they are not in one of the situations referred to in Articles 106 and 107 of the Regulation (EC, Euratom) n° 966/2012 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union (Financial Regulation, as amended).

Please note that administrative and financial penalties may be imposed by the Commission on applicants who are excluded in relation to points a) to g) of the form in question.

For grants with a value exceeding € 60 000, the Commission may require further evidence, as indicated in article 143 Rules of Application.

7. SELECTION

7.1. FINANCIAL CAPACITY

Applicants must have stable and sufficient sources of funding to maintain their activity throughout the period during which the action is being carried out or the year for which the grant is awarded and to participate in its funding. The applicants' financial capacity will be assessed on the basis of the following supporting documents to be submitted with the application:

For grants of a total value < EUR 60 000:

- a declaration on honour.

For grants of a total value ≥ EUR 60 000, in addition:

- a declaration on honour and,
- form B/5 provided for in the submission set, filled in with the relevant statutory accounting figures. Other documents may be submitted if needed (see IV.4 Guide to applicants).

For grants for an action ≥ EUR 750 000 or operating grants ≥ EUR 100 000, in addition:

- an audit report produced by an approved external auditor certifying the accounts for the last financial year available.

In the event of an application grouping several applicants (consortium), the above threshold regarding audit reports applies per applicant.

7.2. OPERATIONAL CAPACITY

Applicants must show they have the **operational (technical and management) capacity** to complete the operation to be supported and must **demonstrate their capacity to manage scale activity** corresponding to the size of the project for which the grant is requested. In particular, the **team responsible** for the project/operation must have **adequate professional qualifications and experience**.

In this respect, applicants have to submit:

- a declaration on their honour,
- the following supporting documents:
 - *curriculum vitae or description of the profile of the people primarily responsible for managing and implementing the operation;*
 - *an exhaustive lists of previous projects and activities performed and connected to the policy fields indicated in the call.*

The selection procedure is described in further detail in the Guide for Applicants.

8. AWARD

An evaluation of the quality of proposals, including the proposed budget, will be carried out in accordance with the evaluation criteria set out in annex 3 to this call for proposals.

The evaluation procedure is described in further detail in the Guide for Applicants.

9. SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

Please note that only electronic submissions are allowed for this call.

Please consult the Guide for Applicants for the modalities of preparing the proposal.

Submission of a grant application implies acceptance of the conditions of the grant agreement, attached to this call

The deadline for submission of proposals is:

19/06/2018 [17.00:00 Brussels local time]

10. CONTACTS

Contacts between the contracting authority and potential applicants can only take place in certain circumstances and under the following conditions only:

Before the final date for submission of proposals,

- At the request of the applicant, the Commission may provide additional information solely for the purpose of clarifying the nature of the call.
- Any requests for additional information must be made in writing only to the coordinates stated below.
- The Commission may, on its own initiative, inform interested parties of any error, inaccuracy, omission or other clerical error in the text of the call for proposals.
- Any additional information including that referred to above will be published on the Internet in concordance with the various call for proposals documents.

After the deadline for submission of proposals:

- If clarification is requested or if obvious clerical errors in the proposal need to be corrected, the Commission will contact the applicant provided the terms of the proposal are not modified as a result.
- If the authorising officer finds that those proposals, which have been listed for award needs limited adaptations to their proposal. In such case, these applicants will receive a formal letter setting out the requested modifications. Any such modifications must stay within the limits of the request. This phase will not lead to a re-evaluation of the proposals, but a proposal might be rejected if the applicant does not wish to comply with the modifications requested.

Contact coordinates for the call:

European Commission

Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs Directorate-General

Unit H2 Enterprise Europe Network and Internationalisation of SMEs

E-mail address: grow-cfp-10479-NESME@ec.europa.eu

Office address:

DG for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs

Directorate H: COSME Programme

Office BREY 06/284, B-1049 Brussels, Belgium

11. DATA PROTECTION

The reply to any call for proposals involves the recording and processing of personal data (such as name, address and CV). Such data will be processed pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data by the Community institutions and bodies and on the free movement of such data. Unless indicated otherwise, the questions and any personal data requested are required to evaluate the application in accordance with the specifications of the call for proposal will be processed solely for that purpose by the European Commission, unit GROW.H2: Enterprise Europe Network and Internationalisation of SMEs.

Details concerning the processing of personal data are available on the privacy statement at:

http://ec.europa.eu/dataprotectionofficer/privacystatement_publicprocurement_en.pdf.

Personal data may be registered in the Early Detection and Exclusion System (EDES) if the applicant is in one of the situations mentioned in Article 106 of the Financial Regulation. For more information, see the Privacy Statement on:

http://ec.europa.eu/budget/explained/management/protecting/protect_en.cfm).

12. PUBLICITY

Beneficiaries must clearly acknowledge the European Union's contribution in all publications or in conjunction with activities for which the grant is used.

In this respect, beneficiaries are required to give prominence to the name and emblem of the European Commission on all their publications, posters, programmes and other products realised under the co-financed project.

To do this they must use the text, the emblem and the disclaimer available at http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/communication/services/visual_identity.

If this requirement is not fully complied with, the beneficiary's grant may be reduced in accordance with the provisions of the grant agreement or grant decision.

With the exception of scholarships paid to natural persons and other direct support paid to natural persons in most need, all information relating to grants awarded in the course of a financial year shall be published on an Internet site of the European Union institutions no later than the 30 June of the year following the financial year in which the grants were awarded.

The Commission will publish the following information:

- name of the beneficiary;
- address of the beneficiary (legal persons) or reference to the region (natural persons);

- subject of the grant;
- amount awarded.

Upon a reasoned and duly substantiated request by the beneficiary, the publication shall be waived if such disclosure risks threatening the rights and freedoms of individuals concerned as protected by the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union or harm the commercial interests of the beneficiaries.

13. ANNEX 1 SUBMISSION SET

The Submission Set is composed of:

- Form B1- B2 Budgetary Forms;
- Form B3 - Co-financing statement form;
- Form B4 - Exclusion form;
- Form B5 - Financial Statement Form;
- Form B6 - Description of the project;
- Form B7 - Curriculum Vitae;
- Form B8 - Professional references;
- Form B9 - Miscellaneous.

And is available in the eSubmission tool "SEP" – see link in call page.

The Submission Set can be downloaded from the following page: <http://ec.europa.eu/growth/contracts-grants/calls-for-proposals/>

14. ANNEX 2 GUIDE FOR APPLICANTS

The Guide for Applicants can be downloaded from the following page:

<http://ec.europa.eu/growth/contracts-grants/calls-for-proposals/>

15. ANNEX 3 EVALUATION CRITERIA

When assessing the below evaluation criteria, the evaluation committee generally pays attention to the elements indicated below each criterion. Please note that these elements, which are indicative and non-exhaustive, are given on the basis of transparency and in order to help applicants to improve their applications.

EVALUATION CRITERIA AND KEY ELEMENTS LIKELY TO BE ASSESSED BY THE EVALUATION COMMITTEE	MAX. SCORE
1. Relevance	25
<i>How relevant is the proposal to the objectives of the published call and the way in which it includes the expected activities?</i>	
<i>How clearly defined and strategically chosen is the target group of SMEs being part of the SME networks?</i>	
<i>How relevant is the proposal to the needs of the SME networks to develop their activities outside their home country?</i>	
<i>How relevant are the proposed activities to facilitate networking within the SME networks and to help them reach out to (export) business partners?</i>	
2. Visibility	20
<i>To what extent will the Community involvement in the project or activity be publicised?</i>	
<i>How will the consortium raise the visibility of the project towards the different stakeholders?</i>	
3. Impact	20
<i>To what extent is the project likely to have a tangible impact on the target group of SMEs?</i>	
<i>To what extent is the financial support to third parties contributing to an effective implementation of the action?</i>	
<i>To what extent does the proposal contain potential multiplier effects? (Including possibilities for replication and extension of project outcomes, dissemination of information.)</i>	
<i>To what extent will the proposal stimulate the transnational exchange of good practices?</i>	
<i>To what extent does the proposal contain objectively verifiable indicators for project outcomes?</i>	
<i>To what extent does the proposal reach out to relevant stakeholders and existing support structures (such as EEN), to use and integrate existing tools/practices and generate long term effects?</i>	
4. Quality	20
<i>How coherent is the overall project design? (Including preparedness for evaluation.)</i>	
<i>How coherent, appropriate and practical are the activities proposed?</i>	
<i>To what extent does the proposal contain specific elements of added value, such as innovative approaches, models for good practice, promotion of gender equality and equal opportunities?</i>	
<i>How clear and feasible is the plan of action for the implementation of the project?</i>	

<i>How well is the methodology defined to recruit SMEs and provide them with dedicated services?</i>	
5. Budget and Cost-effectiveness	15
<i>To what extent is the budget clear and detailed? Does the breakdown of the budget, category by category, offer a way of ensuring that the amount of the grant awarded is the minimum necessary for the operation to be completed?</i>	
<i>Do the probable results stand in a reasonable relationship to the amount of the grant?</i>	
<i>To what extent are there no better ways of achieving the expected results?</i>	
<i>To what extent is the proposed expenditure necessary for the implementation of the project?</i>	
Maximum total score	100

If a total score lower than 70 points or a score lower than 50% for any of the above five criteria is obtained, the proposal will not be evaluated further.

16. ANNEX 4 - AGREEMENT

- [Multi-beneficiary Grant agreement for action](#)