



European Cluster Excellence Programme

Information webinar

12 February 2019

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Programme

- Basic information about the call for proposals
- General and specific objectives
- Activities
- Key financial aspects
- Selection process and criteria
- Tips and tricks
- Q&A
- Conclusions

Questions

Send your questions **during the webinar** to:

EASME-COSME-COMMUNICATIONS@ec.europa.eu

After the webinar, send your questions to:

EASME-COSME-CLUSTER-EXCELLENCE@ec.europa.eu

FAQs are published on:

<https://ec.europa.eu/easme/en/cosme/cos-cluster-2018-03-02-european-cluster-excellence-programme>

Basic information about the call for proposals

- **Corrigendum published on 31 January!**
- Budget: EUR 3.6 million (EUR 360 000/partnership)
- **Indicative** timeline:

Stages	Dates
a) Deadline for submitting applications	4 April 2019, 17:00 h Brussels time
b) Evaluation period	April – June 2019
c) Information to applicants	July – October 2019
d) Signature of grant agreements	October – December 2019
e) Starting date of the action	February 2020

- The project's duration should be between 20 months and 24 months.
- Apply on the [Funding and Tenders Portal](#)

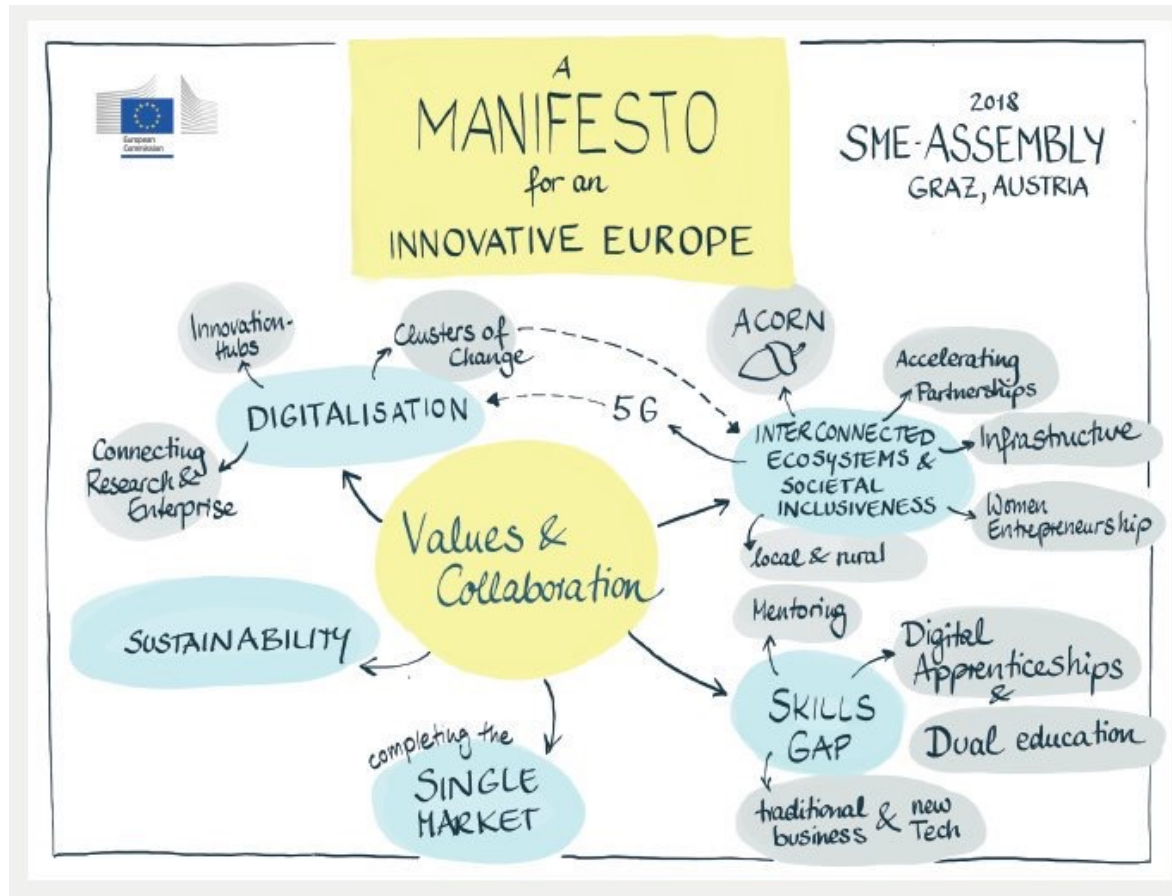
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Stakeholder feed-back – EU Industry Days



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Stakeholder feed-back – SME Assembly



<https://blogs.ec.europa.eu/promotingenterprise/files/2018/11/2018-SME-Assembly-Manifesto.pdf>

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General and specific objectives

Strengthen cluster management excellence and strategic interregional partnering to foster cluster capacity building and SME competitiveness

- ⇒ **Strategic Cluster Collaboration within and beyond regions**
 - ⇒ **Change Agents: specialised and customised business support services to SMEs**
1. Development of cluster managers' **skills & learning**
 2. Support **cluster strategy** development (at cluster and partnership levels)
 3. Organise twinning, collaboration, networking and learning activities and cooperation projects
 4. Implement „**ClusterXchange**“ pilot scheme (short-term visits with lump sum payments)
 5. Outreach and awareness-raising activities

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Overview

European Strategic Cluster Partnerships for Excellence (ESCP-4x)		
Development of cluster management skills, cluster strategy and learning (Mandatory activity)	Development of partnership strategy (Optional activity)	Implementation of joint activities , such as B2B and C2C collaboration (Optional activity)
Implementation of ' ClusterXchange ' pilot scheme (Mandatory activity) => cluster organisations, SMEs and scaling-up support organisations, e.g. technology centres, research institutes, fab labs, (digital) innovation hubs, creative hubs, resource-efficiency service providers, incubators and accelerators of a cluster. Target: 50 exchanges per partnership, 50% involving SMEs		
Outreach and awareness-raising activities (Mandatory activity) Awareness-raising of the cluster and partnership activities and their impact within the regions and beyond, including outreach and engagement of the target group of the ClusterXchange scheme.		

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1. Development of cluster managers' skills, cluster strategy and learning (mandatory)

Enhancing Cluster Managers' **skills** towards added-value SME support services (mandatory)

- Examples:
- Benchmarking
 - cluster manager training
 - targeted trainings on specific subjects
 - coaching and mentoring

Developing comprehensive **cluster strategies** for the individual clusters of the partnership

- Examples:
- consultation/collaboration with regional authorities
 - Analyses (cluster innovation/growth potential, value-chain, cross-sectoral and trends)

=> Digitalisation, the Circular Economy, Resource-Efficiency, decarbonisation, the creative Economy,...

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2. Developing a comprehensive strategy for the partnership (optional)

⇒ to strengthen interregional collaboration across European Value Chains

⇒ Builds upon individual cluster strategies, their regional context and priorities

- Examples:
- Mid-term strategy (development and implementation roadmap)
 - Value-chain and market analyses based on SME members' needs
 - Monitoring system for impact indicators

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3. Organising twinning, networking and learning activities and implementing joint collaboration activities (optional)

- Cross-cluster learning, exchange of knowledge and expertise
- Within and across partnerships
- Implementation of individual cluster and partnership strategies

Examples:

- Peer learning, knowledge sharing, learning workshops
- Joint events and study visits
- Matchmaking (C2C, B2B, C2B)
- Platform for knowledge sharing and expertise
- Strategic collaboration with scaling-up support organisations

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Cluster Excellence 2015 Projects

- Inspiration from 5 projects: 26 partners from 11 countries



"Building connections with other clusters and exchange on good practices is one of the best advices that we can give to a cluster which strives to improve its management."

Ms Katherina Ulrich, Project Coordinator of INNO-DROP



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Cluster Excellence 2015 Projects - Key Performance Indicators

Indicator	achieved
1. Number of new and improved services to cluster SMEs	38
2. Number of trained cluster managers	51
3. Number of project related surveys into cluster members	51
4. Number of cluster, value chains and market analyses	30
5. Number of coaching or mentoring actions	10

- **Total budget 999.564€**
- **Max co-funding per project: 214.000€**
- **Average number of partners per project: 5**
- **18 study visits**
- **23 trainings/workshops**
- **37 cluster organisations and/ or business networks having been involved in the activities**
- **970 SMEs directly involved**

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Cluster Excellence 2015 Projects - Lessons Learnt

Training actions:

- Training requires **planning** and **flexibility**
- **Study visits, case-studies and tailored** on-site training are very valuable
- **Interactions and networking** are important to **learn from others**
- **Communication skills** are essential in cluster management

European Strategic Cluster Partnerships for Excellence (ESCP-4x)

Development of **cluster management skills, cluster strategy and learning**
(Mandatory activity)

Development of **partnership strategy**
(Optional activity)

Implementation of **joint activities**, such as B2B and C2C collaboration
(Optional activity)

Implementation of **'ClusterXchange' pilot scheme**
(Mandatory activity)

=> cluster organisations, SMEs and scaling-up support organisations, e.g. technology centres, research institutes, fab labs, (digital) innovation hubs, creative hubs, resource-efficiency service providers, incubators and accelerators of a cluster.

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Awareness-raising of the cluster and partnership activities and their impact within the regions and beyond, including outreach and engagement of the target group of the ClusterXchange scheme.

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4. Implementation of the ClusterXchange pilot scheme (mandatory) - Objectives

Facilitate 50+ short-term exchanges for

- Cluster excellence capacity-building
- Cross-cluster networking and learning
- Strategic interregional collaboration/connections between ecosystems (identifying partners and enhance market access)

⇒ Promoting **growth opportunities** and **industrial transformation**

- On-the-job training
- Sharing experiences

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4. Implementation of the ClusterXchange pilot scheme (mandatory) - Target

Specificities:

50 Exchanges per partnership

- **50%** must involve **SMEs**

⇒ **25 exchanges/partnership**

- **25%** must involve **non ESCP-4x members** (i.e. going beyond the beneficiaries and region covered)

⇒ **13 exchanges/partnership**

Short-term exchanges = 3 days to a month

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4. Implementation of the ClusterXchange pilot scheme (2) – Who?

Implementation: mandatory role of the European Strategic Cluster Partnerships

Host and visiting organisations: cluster members such as:

- Cluster organisations staff
- SME representatives
- Scaling-up support organisations staff

Support: provided by the future contractor of the future European Cluster Collaboration Platform.

- Support office
- Communication at programme level
- IT tool

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4. Implementation of the ClusterXchange pilot scheme (3) - How

Steps:

Promotion of the scheme and...

1. **Self-registration** by potential applicants on future European Cluster Collaboration Platform
2. **Assessment** of request by ESCP-4x (attribution and eligibility check and acknowledgement)
3. **Matching** process – finding a partner via catalogue, IT tool or other
4. **Preparing** the exchange – preparatory work
5. Shaping the exchange – the **agreement**: on dates, objectives, roadmap and action plan of the stay
6. **Validation** in IT tool by ESCP-4x
7. Signature of a **Commitment** to Quality by all parties involved
8. Start of **stay abroad**
9. **Financial assistance paid** after the stay abroad

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Implementation of the ClusterXchange pilot scheme (4) – general rules

- Participation as **visiting** organisation: **1x only per organisation**
- **Prioritisation** of exchanges, **matching** between requests:
 - Participant target (50% SME)
 - Periods and duration
 - Sector of interest
 - Geographical preference
 - reversed exchanges
- **Travel time excluded but** arrival on Day 1 and Departure on last day ok if working time is respected (local practice)
- **Lump Sum:** Max. €1100 per visiting organisation, varies per host country (see Annex 1 of Quality Manual)
 - ⇒ **100%** if at least 5 days and more than 200 km distance
 - ⇒ **50%** if 3 or 4 days or less than 200 km distance or both

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5. Outreach and awareness-raising activities (mandatory)

To raise awareness about the developed cluster/partnership strategies

- information about the project activities
- opportunities of ClusterXchange

- Examples:
- Awareness-raising events
 - Use of the future ECCP
 - Dissemination, outreach and communication plan
 - Social Media strategy
 - involvement of local regional authorities

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Project indicators (1)

1. Number of **educational visits** and **key networking activities**.
2. Number of cluster organisations engaged in **benchmarking**, accreditation, labelling.
3. Number of **staff benefitting** from training activities.
4. Number of **joint projects/cooperation agreements** where relevant.
5. Number of **exchanges** through the **ClusterXchange** pilot scheme.
6. Number of cluster **strategies**, implementation **roadmaps** developed or updated.

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Project indicators (2)

7. Number of new or updated **mission and vision statements** for the cluster.
 8. Number of **workshops and meetings** with cluster members.
 9. Number of **strategic analyses** produced (e.g. cluster innovation and growth potential, value chain analysis, European and global, smart specialisation analysis).
 10. Number of **cross-sectors analyses** including industrial transformation trends, relating to digitisation, servitisation, creativity and resource-efficiency/Circular economy, SMEs and other cluster members surveys.
- + other indicators to be proposed by applicants

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Key financial aspects

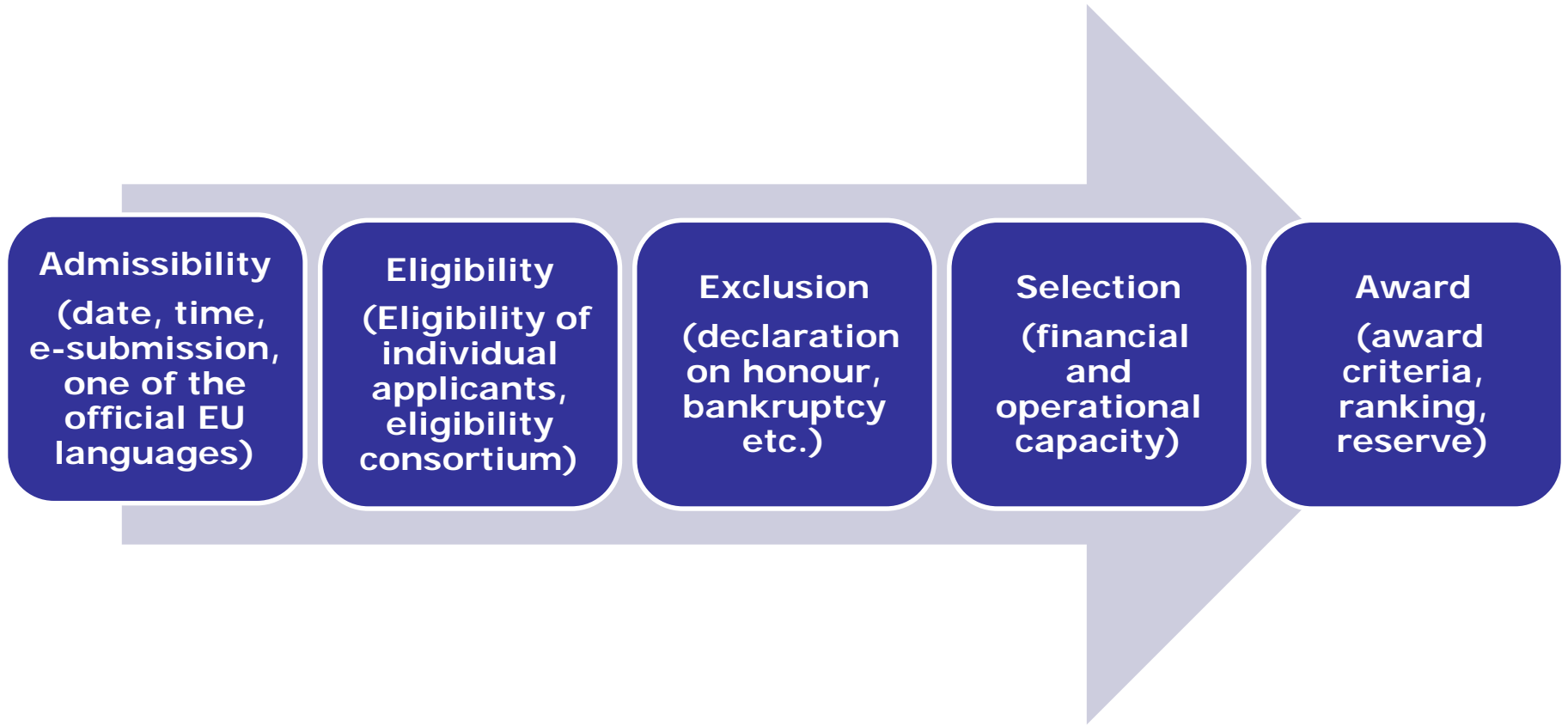
- *Budget: EUR 3.6 million (max. EUR 360 000 per partnership)*
- *Up to 12 partnerships*

Funding	Amount or percentage
EU contribution to eligible project costs (all eligible costs except for financial support to third parties) (per partner)	Max. 75% co-financing rate
EU contribution to financial assistance to visiting organisations in ClusterXchange pilot scheme (financial support to third parties)	Up to 100% co-financing rate
Financial assistance to third parties (i.e. visiting organisations in ClusterXchange pilot scheme)	Max. EUR 1100 per visiting organisation in the ClusterXchange pilot scheme (in the form of a scale of unit costs)

- *Lump-sums are defined in the Quality Manual*

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Selection Process



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Eligibility Criteria

Eligibility of applicants

1. *established in EU Member States and countries participating in the COSME programme*
2. *be registered or have requested to be registered on the European Cluster Collaboration Platform*
3. *be a **cluster organisation or a business network organisation** involved in supporting the enhancement of collaboration, networking and learning in innovation clusters to **stimulate innovative activities**:*

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Eligibility Criteria (cont.)

- *by promoting or channelling specialised and customised business support services especially to SMEs*
- *and/or promoting the sharing of facilities and exchange of knowledge and expertise, in compliance with the coverage of **'innovation clusters'** as described in the sections 1.2 and 1.3 and Annex I of the "EU Framework for State Aid for Research and Development and Innovation.*

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Eligibility Criteria (cont.)

Eligible consortia

- *composed of at least three different legal entities*
- *established in a minimum of three different EU Member States or countries participating in the COSME programme*
- *including at least one consortium member representing an organisation established in a region classified as 'less developed' or 'in transition', according to the mapping proposed for Structural Funds eligibility for the period 2014-2020*

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Pay special attention!

Consortia must verify and declare through their coordinator that none of their members participates in another proposal within this call for proposals. If such a case is detected by the funding body, it will **lead to the exclusion of the organisation concerned from all respective proposals.**

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Eligibility Criteria (example)

- *Consortium of 5 partners (1 coming from less developed region).*
- *The partner from less developed region is found in another proposal within this call for proposals.*
- *The partner from less developed region is excluded.*
- *The consortium mentioned above is reduced to 4 partners but does not include a partner from the less developed region.*
- **The consortium is not eligible.**

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Award Criteria

Criteria	Maximum Score
Relevance	30
Quality	30
Impact	20
Budget and cost-effectiveness	20

- Minimum score: overall score of 70% + 50% of each criterion.
- The Evaluation Committee will be assisted by external evaluators.
- For details please check the award criteria in the Call text (section 9).

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TIPS AND TRICKS

Electronic submission...

...via the Funding & Tenders portal

Part A

- (1) General information - including a short abstract of the proposal and declarations on behalf of the consortium partners;*
- (2) Administrative data of participating organisations;*
- (3) Budget for the proposal (per partner: total estimated eligible costs/€ and Requested Grant/€).*

Part B

Templates available:

- Description of Action (Technical Annex 1),*
- Budget template – (Technical Annex 2)*

Upload only PDFs!

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Tips and tricks



Read thoroughly the call for proposals. Check the templates.



Use the Quality Manual but DO NOT 'copy paste'. Use it to get inspired and to further familiarise yourself with the ClusterXchange pilot scheme.



Check the [FAQs](#): often they hide useful information.



Check the completeness of your proposal (all parts of the detailed budget template ... from all partners)! ***Each partner can only participate in 1 (!) project proposal.***



Clearly describe the division of tasks and responsibilities between partners in the project proposal. Check language knowledge of your partners—communication is key.

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Tips and tricks (cont.)



Do not forget to include the lump sums for the financial support to third parties in your budget (under “Financial Support to Third Parties”, separately for each partner)!



Your budget should be detailed and should correspond to the deliverables/descriptions in the project proposal.



The budget should be cost-effective. Items referred to in the budget should be **necessary for execution** of the project.



Sufficient management costs for the overall coordination of the Partnership should not be underestimated.



Do not subcontract “core activities”.



Do not submit your proposal at the last moment!

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Find your partners and team up!

- *Partner search on the ECCP*
- *Partner search on F&T Portal*
- *Partner requests on F&T Portal*

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Questions and Answers

Further information

- [*Dedicated EASME website*](#)
- [*Dedicated F&T Portal website*](#)

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Thank you for your attention!