



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (EASME)

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

**Encouraging community building around the issue of
women entrepreneurship – Management and running of
the WEgate platform**

COS-WEGATE-2018-5-01

COSME Support Measure for 2018

Table of Contents

1.	INTRODUCTION AND POLICY CONTEXT.....	4
	1.1 General policy context.....	4
	1.2 Specific policy context.....	5
2.	OBJECTIVE(S) – THEME(S) – ACTIVITIES – OUTPUTS.....	11
	2.1 General and specific objectives.....	11
	2.2 Eligible activities.....	12
	2.3 General expected results (for outputs or deliverables).....	14
	2.4 General indicators.....	14
	2.5 General requirements.....	15
3.	TIMETABLE.....	16
4.	BUDGET AVAILABLE AND FUNDING OF PROJECTS.....	17
5.	ADMISSIBILITY REQUIREMENTS.....	17
6.	ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA.....	17
	6.1 Eligible applicants.....	17
	6.2 Eligible consortia.....	19
	6.3 Supporting documents.....	19
	6.4 Implementation period.....	19
7.	EXCLUSION CRITERIA.....	19
	7.1 Exclusion.....	19
	7.2 Remedial measures.....	21
	7.3 Rejection from the call for proposals.....	21
	7.4 Supporting documents.....	21
8.	SELECTION CRITERIA.....	22
	8.1 Financial capacity.....	22
9.	AWARD CRITERIA.....	23
10.	LEGAL COMMITMENTS.....	25
11.	ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW PROCEDURES.....	26
12.	FINANCIAL PROVISIONS.....	26
	12.1 General principles.....	26
	12.2 Funding forms.....	28
	12.3 Payment arrangements.....	33
	12.4 Pre-financing guarantee.....	34

13. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS:	34
14. PUBLICITY	35
14.1 By the beneficiaries.....	35
14.2 By EASME	35
15. DATA PROTECTION.....	36
16. PROCEDURE FOR THE SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS	36
17. ANNEXES:.....	37

1. INTRODUCTION AND POLICY CONTEXT

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) play a crucial role in reaching the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy¹. Whereas they are considered as crucial engines for growth and job creation, their competitiveness is affected by a limited exploitation of international opportunities and innovation prospects in the Single Market and beyond.

In this context, the Programme for the competitiveness of enterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises (2014-2020)², (COSME), aims to promote growth and to strengthen the competitiveness and sustainability of enterprises in the European Union (EU).

The Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises³ (hereinafter referred to as "EASME" or the "Agency") is entrusted by the European Commission (EC) with the implementation, *inter alia*, of parts of the COSME programme.

In this respect, this call for proposals, managed by EASME, implements parts of the Support Measures of the COSME Work Programme 2018, as last amended on 7 December 2018⁴.

1.1. General policy context

Achieving gender parity is a key element of the Sustainable Development Goals⁵ launched in 2015. The Goals recognise the need to take many more steps to ensure that women across the globe can fulfil their potential. Investing in women is one key way to ensure that their ambitions become a reality.

The European Commission *strategic engagement for gender equality 2016-2019*⁶ is the framework for the European Commission's future work towards full gender equality.

¹ COM (2010)2020 final of 3 March 2010 "Europe 2020. A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth". <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2010:2020:FIN:EN:PDF>.

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

³ EASME was set up by Commission Implementing Decision 2013/771/EU of 17 December 2013 establishing the Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises and repealing Decisions 2004/20/EC and 2007/372/EC (Official Journal of the European Union L 341/73 of 18.12.2013).

⁴ Commission implementing Decision (C(2018) 8237 final) of 7.12.2018 amending Implementing Decision C(2018)578 for Support Measures of the COSME Programme for the year 2018.

⁵ The EU approach to Sustainable Development goals (SDG): https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/international-strategies/sustainable-development-goals/eu-approach-sustainable-development_en. The UN's 2030 Agenda, adopted by world leaders in 2015, represents the new global sustainable development framework and sets 17 Sustainable Development Goals. The SDGs balance the three dimensions of sustainable development: the economic, social and environmental.

⁶ European Commission Strategic engagement for gender equality (2016-2019): https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/gender-equality-strategy_en#thestrategicengagementforgenderequality.

The strategic engagement sets out objectives in each of these priority areas and identifies more than 30 concrete actions. It reaffirms commitment to gender mainstreaming: a gender equality perspective will be integrated into all EU policies as well as into EU funding programmes.

The strategic engagement focuses on five priority areas, one of which is to increase female labour market participation and the economic independence of women and men. Therefore, there is a need to develop policies and good practices to develop an effective ecosystem to support women entrepreneurship.

To bring Europe back to growth and create new jobs, we need more entrepreneurs. The Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan⁷ is the European Commission's answer to challenges brought by the gravest economic crisis in the last 50 years. It is a blueprint for action to unleash Europe's entrepreneurial potential, remove existing obstacles and revolutionize the culture of entrepreneurship in the EU. It aims to ease the creation of new businesses and to create a much more supportive environment for existing entrepreneurs to thrive and grow.

Policy makers shall support female entrepreneurs by promoting a positive attitude and female role models, offering training courses and mentoring, facilitating access to finance, and ensuring that their policies help women to participate in the labour market.

Policy makers shall explore the gender gap in entrepreneurship, the differences between male- and female-owned businesses, and the unique challenges that female entrepreneurs face when it comes to starting a business.

1.2. Specific policy context

1.2.1 Women entrepreneurs in Europe

In 2015, women outnumbered men in the EU by approximately 12 million people (260.2 million women to 248.2 million men) (Eurostat, 2016). While there has been a sharp increase in women's labour market participation over the last 50 years, women are still less likely to be active than men. At the EU-level in 2015, 78.3% of men were active in the labour market, whereas only 66.8% of women were. This gap, however, varies substantially across EU Member States. The gap was the greatest in Malta (27 percentage points, p.p.), Italy (20 p.p.) and Romania (18.6 p.p.), but was virtually non-existent in Finland (2.8 p.p.), Lithuania (3.3 p.p.) and Sweden (3.6 p.p.).

According to the OECD/EC *Missing Entrepreneurs 2017 Report*⁸, there were 9.6 million self-employed women in the EU in 2016, representing 9.9% of working women, as opposed to 17.5% men in self-employment. Between 2012 and 2016, 2.8% of women in the EU were owners of a business or trying to set up a business, as opposed to 5.3% of men; 4.3% of women were established business owners, as opposed to 8.4% men.

For the same period, while women entrepreneurs are as likely as men to offer new products and services to the market, women tend to operate smaller businesses: less than 25% of self-employed women in the EU had at least one other employee, whereas approximately 33% of men did (in 2016).

On average, self-employed women work more hours per week than women who work as employees and those self-employed with employees tend to work more than those without (47.3 hours vs. 43.9 hours).

⁷ « The Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan » https://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/promoting-entrepreneurship/action-plan_nl.

⁸ https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/employment/the-missing-entrepreneurs-2017_9789264283602-en.

Women's confidence in their skills and knowledge to start a business is lower than men: for the same period, only 34.1% of women in the EU felt they could start a business, relative to half of men (49.9%); 52.2% of women reported fear of failure, relative to 43.3% men⁹.

Key messages from the "Policy Brief of Women's Entrepreneurship" OECD, 2018¹⁰:

- Women are under-represented among the population of entrepreneurs. They tend to operate smaller and less dynamic businesses than men, and are more likely to operate in non-capital intensive sectors including personal services, which often have lower potential for generating a high and sustainable income.
- Women entrepreneurs tend to have different motivations and intentions in entrepreneurship than men. Some women appear to be more likely to go into self-employment to better manage their work-life balance and others start businesses to avoid the "glass ceiling" in employment. While it is important for individuals to have a range of choices in the labour market, women tend to have latent entrepreneurial potential that is not realised. Policy makers need to unlock this potential, recognising that women are a heterogeneous group with many differences in their motivations, intentions and projects.
- The challenges that women identify in starting a business include discouraging social and cultural attitudes, lower levels of entrepreneurship skills, greater difficulty in accessing start-up financing, smaller and less effective entrepreneurial networks and policy frameworks that discourage women's entrepreneurship. Traditional instruments such as training and grants are used to address these barriers but these approaches need to be expanded because they have not had a full reach into the population.
- Several new policy approaches to supporting women in entrepreneurship are starting to emerge. Many countries are exploring the potential of using public procurement to open up market opportunities for women and providing more support for growth-oriented women entrepreneurs with dedicated business incubator and business accelerator programmes and the creation of an infrastructure for risk capital.
- The broad institutional conditions also need to be improved. One aspect is culture. Entrepreneurs are strongly influenced by role models and social context. It is therefore important to promote women entrepreneurs as role models and ensure that the education system is gender-neutral and does not discourage women from going into STEM fields (i.e. science, technology, engineering and mathematics). Finally, more targeted actions can be taken to ensure that family policies, social policies and tax policies do not discriminate against entrepreneurship by women.

Extract 1: Measuring women's entrepreneurship activities "Policy Brief of Women's Entrepreneurship" OECD, 2018¹¹:

Self-employment is one of the measures used in economic analysis to proxy entrepreneurial activity. In labour force surveys, self-employed are defined as those persons who own and work in their own business, as employers or own-account workers, unless they are also in paid employment which is their main activity, in that case they are considered to be employees.¹²

⁹ <http://www.oecd.org/industry/the-missing-entrepreneurs-2017-9789264283602-en.htm>.

¹⁰ Policy Brief on Women's Entrepreneurship, 14 June 2018, David Halabisky
https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/economics/policy-brief-on-women-s-entrepreneurship_dd2d79e7-en.

¹¹ Policy Brief on Women's Entrepreneurship, 14 June 2018, David Halabisky
https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/economics/policy-brief-on-women-s-entrepreneurship_dd2d79e7-en.

¹² <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Glossary:Self-employed>

In some countries, incorporated self-employed (owner/manager of incorporated businesses) are counted as employees rather than as self-employed (OECD, 2012).¹³ It is important to acknowledge that self-employment data does not capture the true extent of entrepreneurial activity, including that by women (FSB, 2016).¹⁴ Not all the self-employed are necessarily entrepreneurs. Many individuals who work as freelancers for only one client may report themselves to labour force surveys as self-employed rather than as employees although under some views working for a single client would not be considered as entrepreneurship. Equally many self-employed may not be counted as such if they have another primary occupation (i.e. “hybrid entrepreneurs”).

One well-known entrepreneurship survey, conducted by a consortium of academic institutions and consulting companies, is the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor. This survey asks people about whether they have taken steps to launch a business, whether they own and operate a “new” business (i.e. up to 42 months old), whether they own an “established” business (i.e. more than 42 months old) or whether they have closed down a business. This can provide useful information about the gender gap in the proportion of women and men who are entrepreneurs.

The OECD-Eurostat Entrepreneurship Indicators Programme, which aims at developing policy-relevant and internationally comparable measures of entrepreneurship and its determinants, has contributed to improve understanding on gender differences in entrepreneurship (OECD, 2012). The programme has shown that relevant evidence on women’s entrepreneurship can be produced with indicators organised along three main axes: i) business demography indicators for women and men owned enterprises; ii) characteristics of women and men entrepreneurs; and iii) determinants of women’s entrepreneurship, also based on secondary data sources on the business and policy environment.

Access to finance remains a great challenge for female entrepreneurs. In March 2017, the OECD reported that women are less likely than men to report that they can access the financing needed to start a business in all countries except for the United States, Mexico, Greece and Indonesia, where men and women are equally likely to report to have access to finance (see figure below)¹⁵. This gender gap can be associated with women having lower levels of experience, operating in highly competitive and low-growth sectors, as well as gender-biased credit scoring and gender stereotyping in investment evaluations. Women are also often hindered by less access to basic financial services (e.g. checking and savings accounts).

Consequently, women entrepreneurs are more reliant on self-financing. Furthermore, self-employed women are more likely than self-employed men to be discouraged borrowers, i.e. people who do not apply for loans because they believe that the loans are not appropriate or that their application will not be successful.

Public policy can facilitate access to finance for women and address market failures, including information asymmetries and financing gaps. The most common approaches are to offer grants, loan guarantees and microfinance. There is also a growing trend in public policy to improve access to risk capital for women entrepreneurs with growth-oriented businesses. Approaches include attracting more women investors and advisors into venture capital and business angel networks and forming women-led networks to invest in women-owned enterprises. There is also a small number of initiatives that invest in women-led ventures in exchange for an equity stake.

¹³ OECD (2012), “Measuring women entrepreneurship”, in *Entrepreneurship at a Glance 2012*, OECD publishing, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/entrepreneur_aag-2012-en.

¹⁴ FSB (2016). *Women in Enterprise: The Untapped Potential*, <http://www.fsb.org.uk/docs/default-source/fsb-org-uk/fsb-women-inenterprise-the-untapped-potentialfeb2bb4fa86562a286ff0000dc48fe.pdf?sfvrsn=0>

¹⁵ Gender Gap in perceived access to entrepreneurial financing” Source: OECD (2016), *Entrepreneurship at a Glance 2016*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

An additional hurdle, female entrepreneurs are significantly less represented in R&D intensive and high-tech sectors. In the EU, it was estimated that only between 5 and 15 % of high-tech businesses are owned by women (McClelland et al. 2005). Female entrepreneurs are also less represented among fast growing start-ups and SMEs. In fact, empirical data show that only around 15% of high-tech start-ups of the EU in 2012 were founded by female entrepreneurs. This gap becomes even more striking when considering the sources of funding for young, innovative companies. According to an Axios analysis of PitchBook data in 2017, women make up just about 9% of decision-makers in US venture firms, with little indication of the European scene being more female friendly. Academic research has repeatedly shown that a skewed gender distribution of investment committees and other formalized decision-making bodies is likely to promote skewed investment outcomes.

1.2.2 Support Actions for Women Entrepreneurship at EU level:

Public policy support for women's entrepreneurship dates back to the 1970s as a response to the growing numbers of women entering the labour market. Since this time, women's entrepreneurship policies and programmes have become common in both developed and developing countries. While much progress has been made in helping women overcome barriers to business creation and self-employment, women continue to face barriers, calling for continued public policy action. Within the European Union, this trend is clearly articulated in the Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan¹⁶, which calls for awareness raising, entrepreneurship training, improved access to financing, stronger networks and support in reconciling business and family life.¹⁷

Considering the scenario above introduced, the European Commission has taken several actions to promote women's economic empowerment and women entrepreneurship. Indeed, pro-active policies ensuring women's full contribution to the labour market can create sizable economic returns for our economies and societies.

Based on the needs expressed by existing and aspiring women entrepreneurs during meetings and workshops, the European Commission has developed initiatives that aim to encourage networking, community building and exchanges of good practices, promote inspiring role models and awareness raising, as well as offer mentoring and training.

a) The European e-platform for women entrepreneurship WEgate¹⁸

In order to support women who would like to start or expand their business, the European Commission created in 2016 an on-line, Europe-wide platform called WEgate. Since September 2016, this platform serves as a hub for connecting women entrepreneurs with local, national and European support organizations, thus facilitating their access to mentoring and business networks across Europe.

WEgate offers information, such as where to get help and access to finance or business networks, as well as training, learning opportunities and mentoring programmes. To inspire women, the platform displays case studies and success stories, and relevant news and events are advertised to raise awareness. WEgate also includes links to national and local organizations and other platforms supporting women entrepreneurs. It includes a WEgate Directory, which is a database with profiles of users registered through an online form. Further, registered users can opt for receiving the WEgate newsletter and e-mail alerts.

¹⁶ « The Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan » https://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/promoting-entrepreneurship/action-plan_nl.

¹⁷ *ibidem*

¹⁸ <https://www.wegate.eu>

In addition, a communication and outreach campaign is running in the first half of 2019. The focus is on five target countries: Finland, Germany, Italy, Poland and Romania. The objective is not only to make the e-platform more widely known but also to engage support organisations to provide editorial content for WEgate and help promote the platform. WEgate also maintains a public video channel.¹⁹

Through an ongoing service contract²⁰, the European Commission is working on improving the e-platform by targeting a larger audience and addressing business support organisations engaged with women entrepreneurs. Consequently, the WEgate e-platform is currently subject to a rationalisation that will improve its content, structure and design, including a planned reduction of its navigation and content languages to English, French and German.

The rationalised WEgate is planned to be online in the first semester of 2019. The applicant is requested to visit the WEgate e-platform regularly before the deadline of the present call for proposals.

A technical sheet about WEgate is in annex 5.

b) The European network to promote Women's Entrepreneurship (WES)²¹

The WES is a policy network with members from 31 European countries, including the EU-28, Iceland, Norway and Turkey, representing national governments. They are responsible for promoting and supporting female entrepreneurship at national level. WES members provide advice, support, information and contacts regarding existing support measures for female entrepreneurs. They also help identify good practices.

c) The European network of Female Entrepreneurship Ambassadors²²

Female Entrepreneurship Ambassadors are successful entrepreneurs campaigning to inspire women of all ages to become entrepreneurs. The Ambassadors help to raise the confidence necessary for setting up and creating successful businesses. They also inspire other women to become entrepreneurs by telling their own stories. This network, which was supported by European Commission's grants up to 2013, is made up of around 320 entrepreneurs in 22 European countries who act as ambassadors across Europe. There is also a national contact point in each country.

d) The Enterprise Europe Network (EEN)

With funding of the COSME programme, the European Commission is supporting the creation of European-wide networks by organizing several workshops on women entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education. The goal is to encourage a peer-learning process between relevant stakeholders and a transfer of good practices across European countries.

The Enterprise Europe Network²³ has a Women Entrepreneurship Sector Group²⁴ that gathers 21 partner organizations in 14 countries. The group connects to the Network's business and innovation

¹⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCpenk0VJHJw-hlZODLfgK0Q>

²⁰ This service contract ends on 18 July 2019.

²¹ https://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/promoting-entrepreneurship/we-work-for/women/support-networks_en.

²² https://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/promoting-entrepreneurship/we-work-for/women/support-networks_en.

²³ The Enterprise Europe Network helps businesses innovate and grow on an international scale. It is the world's largest support network for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) with international ambitions. The Network is active in more than 60 countries worldwide. It brings together 3,000 experts from more than 600 member

support activities, but also provides concrete support services to women entrepreneurs, such as business partnering, seeking cooperation with local women entrepreneurs' networks and access to EU funding. The Enterprise Europe Network help them internationalise, innovate and provide customized advice on EU legislation or EU funding. The Network is running an online campaign called "Ready to Grow" that will feature successful women entrepreneurs.²⁵

The Enterprise Europe Network Women Entrepreneurship Sector Group incorporates all the elements that strengthen the reasons why community building is a crucial element, playing a catalysing role for women entrepreneurs to encourage networking, community building and exchanges of good practices, promote inspiring role models and awareness raising, as well as offer mentoring and training.

In 2018, the Women Entrepreneurship Sector Group launched a communication and outreach strategy targeting local and national stakeholders supporting women entrepreneurship. It aims to establish partnerships with these stakeholders.

As a result, enhancing the cooperation with women's networks and investors allows the Enterprise Europe Network Women Entrepreneurship Sector Group to tap into the right target community of women-led companies and women ventures.

e) **The European Community of Women Business Angels for Women Entrepreneurs**

The European Commission is also working to encourage the emergence of more women business angels in the EU and increase access to alternative sources of funding for women entrepreneurs, by setting up a "European Community of Women Business Angels and women entrepreneurs".

The four ongoing Women Business Angels pilot projects²⁶ cover 14 EU countries and will run until mid 2019. Their goal is to raise the awareness of business angels, train women who would like to become business angels and help women entrepreneurs to present their business ideas to potential investors. As part of these projects, information was collected on the ground on the obstacles to female angel investment and presented in a study²⁷.

In a number of South and East European Member States , the concept of business angel investment was not sufficiently known and thus the first priority became raising awareness in general also among male investors.

organisations – all renowned for their excellence in business support. Member organisations include: i) technology poles ; ii) innovation support organisations ; iii) universities and research institutes ; iv) regional development organisations ; v) chambers of commerce and industry. <https://een.ec.europa.eu/>.

²⁴ <https://een.ec.europa.eu/about/sector-groups/woman-entrepreneurship>.
<https://www.facebook.com/EEN-Women-Entrepreneurship-Sector-Group-178564092786520/>.

²⁵ https://twitter.com/EEN_EU; <https://www.facebook.com/EnterpriseEuropeNetworkEU>

²⁶ Projects' websites:

Lean In the EU Women Business Angels Community – LEANIN EU WBAs:
<http://www.leanin-wba.eu/>

South Eastern Europe Women Business Angels Network - S.E.E.W.B.A.N:
<https://seewban.eu/#section-home>

Women Business Angels for Women Entrepreneurs - WA4E:
<http://wa4e.businessangelseurope.com/SitePages/default.aspx>

CrossEUWBA (Women Business Angels):
<http://www.crosseuwba.eu/>

²⁷ <http://wa4e.businessangelseurope.com/News/Pagine/Publication-of-results-of-extensive-survey-on-women-business-angels-.aspx>.

f) Enhancing the participation of women entrepreneurs in the Horizon 2020 SME instrument.

Two projects aiming at enhancing the participation of women entrepreneurs in the Horizon 2020 SME Instrument were launched in October 2017 and will last for 2 years²⁸. They cover 9 EU countries (Belgium, Bulgaria, Germany, Greece, Spain, Croatia, Italy, Lithuania and Sweden) and are being implemented by 10 organisations of the Europe Enterprise Network. The objectives are to raise awareness on the potential of the SME Instrument for women entrepreneurs as well as to provide the latter with information, advice and mentoring to support their successful participation. In addition, identified women entrepreneurs (WE) are encouraged to participate in all EEN activities to help them internationalise, innovate and customized advice on EU legislation or EU funding.

g) The EIB study on Access to finance implications of the gender gap in research and innovation.

The main objective of the study is to analyse key access-to-finance challenges for women-driven companies such as female founder or female chief executives, as well as key access-to-market challenges for female investors active in strategic sectors for innovation in the EU, based on market data and existing studies.

On the basis of this study, it has become imperative to encourage more stakeholders to use WEgate to share information about successful initiatives effectively supporting women entrepreneurs on the ground. Further, there is a need for more collaboration and networking between stakeholders active in supporting women entrepreneurship across Europe.

The European Commission is aware that the content of the WEgate e-platform has to be adapted to the needs of the stakeholders. The ideal solution is to engage the stakeholders in the management and update of the WEgate e-platform, as well as in its promotion across Europe.

The European Commission's intention is to transform WEgate into a real connecting hub linking women entrepreneurs with support organizations all over Europe. Consequently, to develop this platform further, the Commission intends to hand over the WEgate platform and all its functionalities to the successful grant applicants, so that the platform is developed into a tool to foster women entrepreneurship directly by those concerned.

2. OBJECTIVE(S) – THEME(S) – ACTIVITIES – OUTPUTS

2.1 General and specific objectives

The general objective of this call for proposals is to enhance women entrepreneurship in Europe by:

- (i) Facilitating networking and sharing good practices between actors such as intermediary stakeholders, in order to improve the support effectively delivered to women entrepreneurs and

²⁸ Projects' websites:

WE GROW: <http://womenentrepreneurs.eu/>

EMPOWA: <http://www.empowa.eu/>

to motivate more women to start their own business or to support the development of their business across Europe. For the purpose of this call for proposal, “stakeholders” are defined as (list non exhaustive):

- Associations, public bodies and private organisations, sectoral or generalist, actively promoting women entrepreneurship at European, national, regional and local level in the COSME countries, including training centres, universities, incubators, authorities represented in the European network to promote women's entrepreneurship - WES), and organisations supporting the access to finance for women entrepreneurs, such as Business Angels organisations or banks or other entities supporting women entrepreneurship and related initiatives, EU initiatives with an interest for women entrepreneurs, such as the EEN sector group on women entrepreneurship.
- (ii) Entrusting stakeholders themselves with the management, update and promotion of the WEgate e-platform.

The specific objectives of this call for proposals are:

- (i) To develop a "European women entrepreneurship community of practice" (“the Community”), which will complement and build on past, current and already planned initiatives in this area (i.e. inter alia those mentioned in section 1.2. of this call for proposals)
- (ii) To engage more stakeholders actively supporting women entrepreneurs - rather than women entrepreneurs themselves - with an emphasis on face-to-face exchanges and networking, in complement to online connexions.

2.2 Eligible activities

In line with the objectives mentioned above, the present call for proposals will support the following type of activities:

- (a) **Organisation of meetings/events** gathering public authorities, women entrepreneurs and all other relevant “stakeholders” interested to share experience; the organization of a launch event is required, to be followed by yearly events open to the widest possible “Community” of stakeholders.
- (b) **Organisation of “Peer learning workshops”** allowing stakeholders and women entrepreneurs active in EU Member States and COSME signatory countries to get a practical understanding of successful initiatives conducted in other countries (study visits)²⁹. The organisation of workshops involving at least three member states will be considered as an advantage.
- (c) **Communication activities**, consisting of a comprehensive strategy and outreach activities targeting relevant stakeholders and women entrepreneurs, including through a social media launch campaign, with a minimum of one topical campaign per year, as well as promotion and awareness raising of EU initiatives and programmes to encourage women entrepreneurs’ participation in these programmes. Other activities will be considered as an advantage, such as: organizing matchmaking activities for mentoring, creating a branding

²⁹ Successful initiatives could be identified with the support of the European Training Foundation, which is developing a specific project for this. <https://www.etf.europa.eu/en>.

around WEgate to raise the website's profile (i.e., through connected initiatives such as WEtour, WEschool etc), reaching out to all age groups, particularly to high school and university students, in order to raise awareness of female entrepreneurship and encourage the development of entrepreneurial skills.

- (d) **Community building activities for** women entrepreneurship at European level, including developing new contacts and linking up with Enterprise Europe Network member organizations and sector groups.
- (e) **Project management activities required for coordination with EASME**, including a kick-off meeting in Brussels planned within 10 days from the signature of the grant agreement, followed by an inception report and project meetings, on the spot and/or by remote means of communication to monitor the progress made by the projects. Additional opportunities for interactions (in written or via meetings – direct or at distance) with the European Commission and EASME can be considered in order to facilitate political guidance by the European Commission and effective desk monitoring by EASME. Applicant consortia are free to propose further more specific deliverables and/or results relevant to the objectives of this call for proposals.
- (f) **The management and continuation of the WEgate e-platform to be used as the common online tool, in particular to help** participants in the "Community" to get together and to disseminate information on relevant initiatives launched at EU and national levels (such as for example, peer-learning workshops, study visits and other events). Keeping the blog and the forum alive and ensuring a reasonable response time to questions and comments.

For the eligible activities under (f) the following will have to be taken into account:

- i. The hosting, maintenance, upgrade and update of the WEgate e-platform will entail:
 - o WEgate and its system must be well secured to ensure confidentiality and protection of data, including the protection of personal data. There shall be no regressions regarding the current state of the e-platform.
 - o Any important security upgrades of Drupal (or patches) or the LAMP stack must be applied and technical documentation shall be kept up to date (see annex 5).
 - o The website shall be subject to intellectual property rights and personal data protection rules according to the applicable EU and national legislation in force.
 - o Accessibility of the e-platform shall be ensured after the end of the grant agreement for at least 12 months.
- ii. The current features of the website are continued: managing the database of the WE gate directory of registered users; providing a one-stop-shop for the users' questions, including a FAQ section; offering a feedback function; producing regular statistics data;

Applicants are free to propose additional types of activities, if duly justified as fulfilling the objectives of this call for proposals.

Proposals shall also outline the methodology, which will be used to measure the impacts of the overall action and to ensure its multiplier effects, with a particular attention to setting up and evaluating qualitative and quantitative indicators on the performance of the WEgate e-platform.

2.3 General expected results (for outputs or deliverables)

The project proposal shall target the following general expected results:

- A relevant number of meetings/events gathering public authorities, women entrepreneurs and all other relevant “Stakeholders” interested to share experience, including a yearly event to be open to the “Community”. The proposal shall indicate the number of meetings/events planned to be organised and justify the choice.
- A relevant number of Peer learning workshops allowing women entrepreneurs, public bodies and all other types of stakeholders active in different countries to get a practical understanding of successful initiatives conducted in other countries. The proposal shall indicate the number of workshops planned to be organised and justify the choice.
- A WEgate e-platform fully operational, managed and updated.
- Considerable linkage and synergy effects between the activities mentioned in 2.2 and the SME support networks, as well as events and activities supporting entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education. A sound communication and outreach activity plan effectively implemented.
- Action impacts measured
- Effective management and quality control and evaluation.

The applicant is free to add other, more specific, results relevant to the project proposal. This can take the form amongst others of concrete deliverables in line with the expected results and impacts.

2.4 General indicators

Applicants must ensure that the project outcomes and impacts are presented against all the following indicators:

- Impact indicators (audiences' behavioural change) in order to compare the WEgate activity and recommendations over time.
- Result indicators (audience remembering messages and intention of action):
 - Number of replies and satisfaction level of the users of the WEgate e-platform (based on feedback functions on WEgate and surveys) and analysis of the recommendations
 - Number of organisations having effectively contributed to WEgate (e.g. by sending articles or by promoting the platform within their membership) at the end of the project
 - Number of good practices published on WEgate e-platform
 - Satisfaction level of participants to the meetings/events on quality, relevance and added value
 - Satisfaction level of participants to the peer learning workshops on quality, relevance and added value
- Output indicators (outreach towards audience):

- Timely and quality updates of the WEgate e-platform (i.e. coverage of all major events and appropriate topics)
- Number of visitors of the WEgate e-platform
- Intensity/frequency of visits of the different sections of WEgate e-platform
- Number of registered users (including by category, sector, country...)
- Social media indicators
- Media indicators (number of articles, mentions at TV, radio, magazines, events, etc)
- Number of participants to the meetings/events (per year and in total))
- Number of participants to the peer learning workshops (per year and in total))

Moreover, specific outcome SMART indicators have to be defined for each project proposal, depending on the concrete results/outcomes foreseen for the specific project.

The awarded project must report on these indicators and integrate them into their project's monitoring scoreboard.

2.5. General requirements

2.5.1 Requirements for the preparation of the proposals

The project proposal must:

- **Be clear.** Applicants are requested to divide the actions into work packages, having clear objectives, a clear description of the work, deliverables, milestones, and expected results measured by performance indicators. To do so, partners must fill in the template "Description of Work", provided together with this call for proposals.
- **Be coherent.** The proposal needs to clearly elaborate – among others - on the following aspects:
 - a) Shortcomings and specific needs to be addressed;
 - b) Identification of the target group(s) and its justification/rationale;
 - c) Logical link between identified needs, specific objectives, proposed actions and expected results;
 - d) Complementarity of the project with other actions being carried out (if any) by the applicants.
- **Be supported by a concise and realistic action plan.** The proposal needs to briefly elaborate – among others - on the following aspects:
 - a) Status quo (SWOT or similar) analysis of the current situation;
 - b) Analysis of alternative solutions to address the identified needs and their cost-effectiveness;

- c) Description of and reasons for the chosen solution as proposed in the project proposal;
- d) Estimation of costs and revenues and financial effectiveness, for the chosen solution in the medium term and a business plan after the EU co-financing period ends;
- e) The extent to which the outputs are likely to lead to clear and tangible results;
- f) Estimated impact of the proposed actions on target groups and on the local economies (indicators, data sources, tools and methodologies to measure short and medium-long term benefits/impact of proposed actions);
- g) Any evidence of transformative or spill over effects, including the extent to which additional value is or may be created by the chosen solution's adoption more widely across Europe.

- **Be technically and financially sustainable.** The project proposal needs to identify the management structure and explain how this will enable the project to meet its goals. It has to also identify the staff to be involved and the distribution of tasks between partners and staff members.

The project needs to develop a medium-to-long-term communication/promotion strategy. Therefore, the project proposal shall clearly refer to how the action will be further developed after the end of the co-financing period, both technically and financially.

- **Generate real measurable results and long-term impacts.** The expected results of the project have to be clearly outlined (both short-term and medium-long-terms results) and they must be quantifiable and measurable. The proposal needs to indicate how the results can be measured (i.e. which indicators and sources can be used to measure the results, also after the end of the project).

The work packages need to also contain a final evaluation of results clearly demonstrating whether and how the relevant results (as well as other results specific to the proposal) have been achieved.

3. TIMETABLE

Stages	Dates
a) Deadline for submitting applications	05/09/2019 17:00 h Brussels time
b) Evaluation period*	06/09/2019 – 30/09/2019
c) Information to applicants*	18/10/2019
d) Signature of grant agreements*	10/12/2019
e) Starting date of the action*	01/01/2019

* indicative.

4. BUDGET AVAILABLE AND FUNDING OF PROJECTS

The total budget earmarked for the co-financing of projects is estimated at **EUR 850 000** .

The maximum grant per project will be EUR 850 000 .

EASME expects to fund **one proposal**.

The grant is limited to a maximum reimbursement rate of **90% of eligible costs**.

EASME reserves the right not to distribute all the funds available.

5. ADMISSIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

The following requirements must be complied with:

- Applications must be submitted no later than the deadline for submitting applications referred to in section 3;
- Applications must be submitted in writing, using the electronic system specified in section 16;
- Applications must be drafted in one of the EU official languages³⁰.

Failure to comply with those requirements will lead to the rejection of the application.

Incomplete applications may be considered inadmissible. This refers to the requested administrative data, the proposal description and requested grant amount, and any supporting documents specified in this call for proposals.

6. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

6.1 Eligible applicants

a) Type of applicants

Applicants can be either legal entities or natural persons as mentioned in point 6.2 below.

Applicants can be only entities forming a consortium.

Legal entities may include both profit-making or non-for-profit legal entities as well as fully or partly public or private bodies. In the case of private bodies, they must be properly constituted and registered under national law.

³⁰ An executive summary in English is required in case the application is not drafted in this language.

Here is below a non-exhaustive list of types of eligible legal entities:

- public and private entities responsible for or active in the fields of enterprise, business support and related issues;
- chambers of commerce and industry, chambers of (handi)crafts or similar bodies;
- business support organisations;
- business associations and business support networks;
- public and private entities providing business support services;
- public and private entities providing support services related to women entrepreneurship
- international organisations;
- universities or educational institutions;
- research centres;
- profit making entities;

Natural persons are eligible as set out in point 6.2.2 b. below.

b) geographical eligibility

Only applications from legal entities,, established in or natural persons established/being nationals of the following countries are eligible:

- EU Member States;
- Countries participating in the COSME programme pursuant to Article 6 of the COSME Regulation³¹.
- **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 34.3.1(b) of the grant agreement.

³¹ The following groups of countries are eligible for participation in COSME according to Article 6 COSME Regulation:

- a. European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries which are members of the European Economic Area (EEA), in accordance with the conditions laid down in the EEA Agreement, and other European countries when agreements and procedures so allow;
- b. acceding countries, candidate countries and potential candidates in accordance with the general principles and general terms and conditions for the participation of those countries in the Union's programmes established in the respective Framework Agreements and Association Council Decisions, or similar arrangements;
- c. countries falling within the scope of the European neighbourhood policies, when agreements and procedures so allow and in accordance with the general principles and general terms and conditions for the participation of those countries in the Union's programmes established in the respective Framework Agreements, Protocols to Association Agreements and Association Council Decisions.

The updated list of eligible third countries is available on the following webpage: http://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/cosme/index_en.htm. Proposals from applicants in Article 6 countries may be selected provided that, on the date of award, agreements have been signed setting out the arrangements for the participation of those countries in the programme.

6.2 Eligible consortia

6.2.1 The consortium must gather a **minimum of 3** and a **maximum of 4 consortium members (partners)** being different legal entities and covering at least **2 eligible countries** as listed under section 6.1;

6.2.2 The consortium must be composed of at least:

- a. a **not-for-profit entity** active in the area of entrepreneurship and established as a legal entity since at least three years; this entity will act **as the coordinator** of the consortium; profit-oriented entities can therefore only apply as partners; and
- b. a partner providing the academic knowledge necessary for the implementation of the activities described in this call for proposals; this partner can be a natural or legal person.

6.2.3 Linked third parties, i.e. legal entities having a legal or capital link with applicants, which is neither limited to the action nor established for the sole purpose of its implementation, may take part in the action **as applicants** in order to declare eligible costs.

6.3 Supporting documents

Applicants must demonstrate that they fully respect the eligibility criteria set out in this call for proposals. Adequate supporting documents have to be provided with the application. Moreover, the proposal has to clearly indicate the name of the applicants fulfilling the above-mentioned eligibility criteria. Natural persons must likewise provide a copy of their national ID.

6.4 Implementation period

The maximum duration of projects is **36 months**.

Applications for projects scheduled to run for a longer period than that specified in this call for proposals will not be accepted.

7. EXCLUSION CRITERIA

7.1 Exclusion

The authorising officer shall exclude an applicant from participating in call for proposals procedures where:

- (a) the applicant is bankrupt, subject to insolvency or winding-up procedures, its assets are being administered by a liquidator or by a court, it is in an arrangement with creditors, its business activities are suspended, or it is in any analogous situation arising from a similar procedure provided for under EU or national laws or regulations;
- (b) it has been established by a final judgment or a final administrative decision that the applicant is in breach of its obligations relating to the payment of taxes or social security contributions in accordance with the applicable law;
- (c) it has been established by a final judgment or a final administrative decision that the applicant 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 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 eligibility or selection criteria or in the performance of a contract, a grant agreement or a grant decision;
 - (ii) entering into agreement with other applicants with the aim of distorting competition;
 - (iii) violating intellectual property rights;
 - (iv) attempting to influence the decision-making process of the Agency 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 applicant is guilty of any of the following:
- (i) fraud, within the meaning of Article 3 of Directive (EU) 2017/1371 of the European Parliament and of the Council and 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 4(2) of Directive (EU) 2017/1371 or 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, or conduct referred to in Article 2(1) of Council Framework Decision 2003/568/JHA, or corruption as defined in the applicable law;
 - (iii) conduct related to a criminal organisation, as referred to in Article 2 of Council Framework Decision 2008/841/JHA;
 - (iv) money laundering or terrorist financing within the meaning of Article 1(3), (4) and (5) of Directive (EU) 2015/849 of the European Parliament and of the Council;
 - (v) terrorist 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 offences concerning trafficking in human beings as referred to in Article 2 of Directive 2011/36/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council;
- (e) the applicant has shown significant deficiencies in complying with main obligations in the performance of a contract, a grant agreement or a grant decision financed by the Union's 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 applicant has committed an irregularity within the meaning of Article 1(2) of Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 2988/95;
- (g) It has been established by a final judgement or final administrative decision that the applicant has created an entity in a different jurisdiction with the intent to circumvent fiscal, social or any other legal obligations of mandatory application in the jurisdiction of its registered office, central administration or principal place of business;
- (h) it has been established by a final judgement or final administrative decision that an entity has been created with the intent referred to in point (g);
- (i) for the situations referred to in points (c) to (h) above, the applicant is subject to:
- (i) facts established in the context of audits or investigations carried out by European Public Prosecutor's Office after its establishment, the Court of Auditors, the European Anti-Fraud Office or the internal auditor, 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 judgments or 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) facts referred to in decisions of persons or entities being entrusted with EU budget implementation tasks;
- (iv) information transmitted by Member States implementing Union funds;
- (v) decisions of the Commission relating to the infringement of Union competition law or of a national competent authority relating to the infringement of Union or national competition law; or
- (vi) decisions of exclusion by an authorising officer of an EU institution, of a European office or of an EU agency or body.

7.2 Remedial measures

If an applicant declares one of the situations of exclusion listed above (see section 7.1), it must indicate the measures it has taken to remedy the exclusion situation, thus demonstrating its reliability. This may include e.g. technical, organisational and personnel measures to correct the conduct and prevent further occurrence, compensation of damage or payment of fines or of any taxes or social security contributions. The relevant documentary evidence which illustrates the remedial measures taken must be provided in annex to the declaration. This does not apply for situations referred in point (d) of section 7.1.

7.3 Rejection from the call for proposals

The authorising officer shall not award a grant to an applicant who:

- (a) is in an exclusion situation established in accordance with section 7.1; or
- (b) has misrepresented the information required as a condition for participating in the procedure or has failed to supply that information; or
- (c) was previously involved in the preparation of documents used in the award procedure where this entails a breach of the principle of equal treatment, including distortion of competition, that cannot be remedied otherwise.

Administrative sanctions (exclusion) may be imposed on applicants or linked third parties where applicable, if any of the declarations or information provided as a condition for participating in this procedure prove to be false.

7.4 Supporting documents

Applicants must provide a **declaration on their honour** certifying that they are not in one of the situations referred to in Articles 136(1) and 141 of the EU Financial Regulation (FR)³² by filling in the relevant form attached to the application form accompanying this call for proposals.

³² See Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 July 2018 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union, amending Regulations (EU) No 1296/2013, (EU) No

8. SELECTION CRITERIA

8.1 *Financial capacity*

Applicants must have stable and sufficient sources of funding to maintain their activity throughout the duration of the grant and to participate in its funding. The applicants' financial capacity will be assessed on the basis of the following supporting documents:

a) Low value grants (\leq EUR 60 000):

- a declaration on their honour.

b) Grants \geq EUR 60 000:

- a declaration on their honour and,

EITHER

- the profit and loss account, the balance sheet for the last financial year for which the accounts were closed;
- for newly created entities, the business plan might replace the above documents.

OR

- the table provided for in the application form, filled in with the relevant statutory accounting figures, in order to calculate the ratios as detailed in the form.

c) Grants for an action \geq EUR 750 000, in addition:

(i) the information and supporting documents mentioned in point b) above, and

(ii) an **audit report** produced by an approved external auditor certifying the accounts for the last two financial years available, where such an audit report is available or whenever a statutory report is required by law.

If the audit report is not available AND a statutory report is not required by law, a self-declaration signed by the applicant's authorised representative certifying the validity of its accounts for the last two financial year[s] available must be provided.

In the event of an application grouping several applicants (consortium), the above thresholds apply to each applicant.

The above-listed documents will have to be provided at later stage, via the electronic submission tool and only upon request of EASME.

On the basis of the documents submitted, if the authorising officer considers that financial capacity is weak, s/he may:

1301/2013, (EU) No 1303/2013, (EU) No 1304/2013, (EU) No 1309/2013, (EU) No 1316/2013, (EU) No 223/2014, (EU) No 283/2014, and Decision No 541/2014/EU and repealing Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012, (OJ L 193/30.07.2018, p.1).

- request further information;
- decide not to give pre-financing;
- decide to give pre-financing paid in instalments;
- decide to give pre-financing covered by a bank guarantee (see section 12.3 below);
- where applicable, require the joint and several financial liability of all the co-beneficiaries³³;

If the authorising officer considered that the financial capacity is insufficient, s/he will reject the application.

8.2 Operational capacity

Applicants must have the professional competencies as well as appropriate qualifications necessary to complete the proposed action.

The core team must include expertise on female entrepreneurship, on e-platform management, and on communication and outreach.

In this respect, applicants have to submit a declaration on their honour, and the following supporting documents:

- curriculum vitae (CV), preferably in European CV format <http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu> or description of the profile of the main persons primarily responsible for managing and implementing the different activities of the action. The CV must be accompanied, where appropriate, (like in the field of research and education) by a list of relevant publications/projects managed);
- a summary table indicating the persons that will make up the core team responsible for the project with their qualifications and competences. A template is included in the application forms;
- the organisations' activity reports or any other similar document;
- a list of previous projects and activities performed and connected to the policy field of the call for proposals - or to the actions to be carried out – in the last three (3) years, also demonstrating the capacity to connect to SME support networks, such as the EEN;
- a list indicating at least three years of experience by the project coordinator in managing and implementing pan-European projects co-financed by the European Commission;
- a description of the technical equipment, tools or facilities and patents at the disposal of the applicant in relation to the proposal.

9. AWARD CRITERIA

Eligible applications will be assessed on the basis of the following criteria:

³³ The beneficiaries are advised to foresee this situation also in the consortium agreement (see Article 25 of the model Grant agreement).

Criteria	Max. score
<p>Relevance of the actions in view of the objectives of the call (<i>meeting objectives of the call; appropriate results; appropriate partnership; competences and European dimension</i>)</p> <p><i>What is the importance of the proposed action in relation to EU policies and priorities identified in the call?</i></p> <p><i>To what extent are the actions proposed by the applicant strategically chosen to meet the objectives of this call?</i></p> <p><i>How relevant is the project proposed in view of the objectives of the call?</i></p> <p><i>How well does the project fit with the expectations/needs of the identified target group?</i></p> <p><i>How strategically chosen are the project partners (relevance of the partners to the project)?</i></p> <p><i>To what extent do the proposed activities, composition of the partnership and the selected target group(s) demonstrate a European added value?</i></p> <p><i>Is there any complementarity between the proposed project and other actions being taken at European level?</i></p> <p><i>How connected are you to the EEN member organizations and sector groups?</i></p>	25
<p>Quality of the proposed actions and team (<i>clear and feasible description of actions; appropriate allocation of resources, including management</i>)</p> <p><i>How clear, coherent and ambitious is the work plan?</i></p> <p><i>How appropriate, practical and innovative are the activities proposed (including the internal plan of action/work packages)?</i></p> <p><i>To what extent is the work plan clearly defined in terms of schedule, milestones and deliverables?</i></p> <p><i>Is there a logical link between identified needs, specific objectives, proposed actions and expected results? Is this link well described and justified?</i></p> <p><i>How suitable is the contribution of each partner to the activities proposed?</i></p> <p><i>Is the level of effort (hours and budget) appropriate, per work package and per task and per partner considering their skills and responsibilities?</i></p> <p><i>To what extent can the methodology and management set up be effective and ensure the high quality of the action proposed?</i></p>	30
<p>Impact on target audience (<i>appropriate impact indicators; dissemination; project continuation</i>)</p> <p><i>Is the proposal suggesting clear, realistic and practical impact indicators?</i></p>	30

<p><i>To what extent does the project contribute to creating a real, measurable impact on the sectors concerned?</i></p> <p><i>To what extent is the project likely to have a tangible impact on the target groups?</i></p> <p><i>How effective, innovative and convincing are the promotional and communication activities? Does the proposal contain a comprehensive communication strategy?</i></p> <p><i>Are the expected multiplying effects reasonable, including on strengthening cooperation with SME support networks? To what extent does the proposal include elements of follow-up and transferability (including lessons learnt and good practices) at EU level?</i></p> <p><i>Are concrete measures planned in order to ensure that the project can be continued after the termination of EU funding?</i></p>	
<p>Cost-effectiveness (<i>coherence, detail and clarity between actions proposed and budgeted resources</i>)</p> <p><i>To what extent the detailed budget is coherent with the work plan of the proposal?</i></p> <p><i>To what extent is the budget clear and detailed, as well as effective, to implement the action? Does the breakdown of the budget, category by category, offer a way of ensuring that the amount of the grant awarded is reasonable in relation to the expected results?</i></p> <p><i>To what extent is the proposed expenditure necessary for the implementation of the project?</i></p> <p><i>Do the expected results stand in a reasonable relationship to the amount of the grant? Does the budget seem justified when compared to the expected impact?</i></p>	15
<p>TOTAL</p>	100

In order to be considered for funding, proposals will need to have passed an overall threshold of 70% in terms of total score. In addition, thresholds of 50% will be applied to each individual award criterion described above in order to ensure a consistent minimum quality for all award criteria. Proposals will be ranked according to their total score.

10. LEGAL COMMITMENTS

In the event of a grant awarded by EASME, a grant agreement drawn up in euro and detailing the conditions and level of funding, will be sent to the applicant, as well as the information on the procedure to formalise the agreement of the parties.

Please note that the award of a grant does not establish an entitlement for subsequent years.

The authorising officer may draw a reserve list of proposals that have passed the above thresholds. In the event that the original budget of the action is increased or that selected proposal(s) fail to

conclude the grant agreement, a grant may be awarded to proposals from the reserve list, following their order on the ranking list in accordance with the scores obtained.

11. ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW PROCEDURES

Unsuccessful applicants may request the review of the admissibility and eligibility procedure and the evaluation procedure with regard to their proposal as specified in section V of the Guide for applicants.

12. FINANCIAL PROVISIONS

12.1 General principles

a) Non-cumulative award

An action may only receive one grant from the EU budget.

In no circumstances shall the same costs be financed twice by the Union budget. To ensure this, applicants shall indicate the sources and amounts of Union funding received or applied for the same action or part of the action or for its functioning during the same financial year as well as any other funding received or applied for the same action.

b) Non-retroactivity

No grant may be awarded retrospectively for actions already completed.

A grant may be awarded for an action which has already begun only where 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.

c) Co-financing

Co-financing means that the applicant must ensure that the resources which are necessary to carry out the action may not be entirely provided by the EU grant. Co-financing may take the form of:

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

Co-financing may also take the form of in-kind contributions from third parties, i.e. non-financial resources made available free of charge by third parties to the beneficiary or to the consortium. The corresponding costs of third parties are not eligible under the grant, e.g. providing a meeting room or equipment for free, etc. In-kind contributions shall be presented separately in the estimated budget to reflect the total resources allocated to the action. Their approximate value shall be indicated in the estimated budget and shall not be subject to subsequent changes.

d) Balanced budget

The estimated budget of the action 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 for whom costs will not be incurred in euros, should use the exchange rate published on the Info-euro website available at: http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts_grants/info_contracts/inforeuro/inforeuro_en.cfm.

e) Implementation contracts/subcontracting

Where the implementation of the action requires the award of procurement contracts (implementation contracts), the beneficiary must award the contract 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.

In the event of procurement exceeding EUR 60 000, the beneficiary must abide by special rules as referred in the grant agreement annexed to the call. Moreover the beneficiary is expected to clearly document the tendering procedure and retain the documentation for the event of an audit.

Entities acting in their capacity of contracting authorities in the meaning of Directive 2014/24/EU³⁴ or contracting entities in the meaning of Directive 2014/25/EU³⁵ must comply with the applicable national public procurement rules. The beneficiary is expected to clearly document the tendering procedure and retain the documentation for the event of an audit.

Beneficiaries may subcontract tasks forming part of the action as described in the proposal. If they do so, they must ensure that, in addition to the above-mentioned conditions of best value for money and absence of conflicts of interests, the following conditions are also complied with:

- (i) subcontracting does not cover core tasks of the action;
- (ii) recourse to subcontracting is justified because of the nature of the action and what is necessary for its implementation;
- (iii) the estimated costs of the subcontracting are clearly identifiable in the estimated budget;
- (iv) any recourse to subcontracting, if not provided for in description of the action, is communicated by the beneficiary and approved by the Agency. The Agency may grant approval:
 - (i) before any recourse to subcontracting, if the beneficiaries requests an amendment
 - (ii) after recourse to subcontracting if the subcontracting:
 - is specifically justified in the interim or final technical report and

³⁴ Directive 2014/24/EU of the European Parliament and the Council of 26 February 2014 on public procurement and repealing Directive 2004/18/EC (OJ L 94/65 of 28.3.2014).

³⁵ Directive 2014/25/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 February 2014 on procurement by entities operating in the water, energy, transport and postal services sectors and repealing Directive 2004/17/EC (OJ L 94/243 of 28.3.2014).

- does not entail changes to the grant agreement which would call into question the decision awarding the grant or be contrary to the equal treatment of applicants;
 - (v) the beneficiaries ensure that certain conditions applicable to beneficiaries, enumerated in the grant agreement (e.g. visibility, confidentiality, etc.), are also applicable to the subcontractors.
- f) Financial support to third parties.

Applications may not envisage provision of financial support to third parties.

12.2 Funding forms

Grants are calculated on the basis of a detailed estimated budget indicating clearly the costs that are eligible for EU funding. The grant amount may neither exceed the eligible costs nor the amount requested. Amounts are indicated in euros.

➤ Maximum EU contribution requested

The EU contribution is limited to a maximum co-financing rate of eligible costs indicated in section 5. Consequently, part of the total eligible expenses entered in the estimative budget must be financed from sources other than the EU grant (see section 12.1c).

➤ Eligible costs

'Eligible costs' shall meet all the following criteria:

- ✓ they are incurred by the beneficiary;
- ✓ they are incurred during the duration of the action, with the exception of costs relating to final reports and audit certificates;

The period of eligibility of costs will start as specified in the grant agreement. If a beneficiary can demonstrate the need to start the action before the agreement is signed, expenditure may be authorised before the grant is awarded. Under no circumstances can the eligibility period start before the date of submission of the grant application (see section 12.1 b).

- ✓ they are indicated in the estimated budget of the action;
- ✓ they are necessary for the implementation of the action which is the subject of the grant;
- ✓ 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 requirements 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.

In addition for **unit costs**:

- ✓ the number of actual units must comply with the following conditions:
 - the units must be actually used or produced during the duration of the action;
 - the units must be necessary for implementing the action or produced by it, and
 - the number of units must be identifiable and verifiable, in particular supported by records and documentation.

Further details are included in the model grant agreement.

Eligible costs may be direct or indirect.

Eligible direct costs

The eligible direct costs for the action are those costs which, with due regard for the conditions of eligibility set out above, are identifiable as specific costs directly linked to the performance of the action and which can therefore be booked to it directly, such as :

A. Direct personnel costs

Types of eligible personnel costs

A.1 Personnel costs are eligible if they are related to personnel working for the beneficiary under an employment contract (or equivalent appointing act) and assigned to the action ('**costs for employees (or equivalent)**'). They must be limited to salaries (including during parental leave), social security contributions, taxes and other costs included in the **remuneration**, if they arise from national law or the employment contract (or equivalent appointing act).

They may also include **additional remuneration** for personnel assigned to the action (including payments on the basis of supplementary contracts regardless of their nature), if:

- (a) it is part of the beneficiary's usual remuneration practices and is paid in a consistent manner whenever the same kind of work or expertise is required;
- (b) the criteria used to calculate the supplementary payments are objective and generally applied by the beneficiary, regardless of the source of funding used.

A.2 The **costs for natural persons working under a direct contract** with the beneficiary other than an employment contract or **seconded by a third party against payment** are eligible personnel costs, if:

- (a) the person works under conditions similar to those of an employee (in particular regarding the way the work is organised, the tasks that are performed and the premises where they are performed);
- (b) the result of the work carried out belongs to the beneficiary, and
- (c) the costs are not significantly different from those for personnel performing similar tasks under an employment contract with the beneficiary.

The costs of the personnel of **national administrations** are eligible 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;

A.3 Costs of owners of beneficiaries that are small and medium-sized enterprises (**'SME owners'**), who are working on the action and who do not receive a salary are eligible personnel costs, if they correspond to the amount per unit set out in Annex 2a of the model grant agreement multiplied by the number of actual hours worked on the action.

A.4 Costs of 'beneficiaries that are natural persons' not receiving a salary are eligible personnel costs, if they correspond to the amount per unit set out in Annex 2a of the model grant agreement multiplied by the number of actual hours worked on the action.

Further details of the calculation of personal costs included in the model grant agreement.

B. Direct costs of subcontracting (including related duties, taxes and charges, such as non-deductible value added tax (VAT) paid by beneficiaries that are not public bodies acting as public authority) are eligible if the conditions set out in the grant agreement are met.

C. Direct costs of providing financial support to third parties are not applicable.

D. Other direct costs

D.1 Travel costs and related subsistence allowances (including related duties, taxes and charges, such as non-deductible value added tax (VAT) paid by beneficiaries that are not public bodies acting as public authority) are eligible if they are in line with the beneficiary's usual practices on travel.

D.1.2 Travel costs of participants to the peer learning workshops (women entrepreneurs or from public bodies and other types of entities mentioned in the first sentence of paragraph 3) will be part of the eligible costs.

D.2 The **depreciation costs of equipment, infrastructure or other assets** (new or second-hand) as recorded in the beneficiary's accounts are eligible, if they were purchased in accordance with the conditions set out in the grant agreement and written off in accordance with international accounting standards and the beneficiary's usual accounting practices.

The **costs of renting or leasing** equipment, infrastructure or other assets (including related duties, taxes and charges, such as non-deductible value added tax (VAT) paid by beneficiaries that are not public bodies acting as public authority) are also eligible, if they do not exceed the depreciation costs of similar equipment, infrastructure or assets and do not include any financing fees.

The only portion of the costs that will be taken into account is that which corresponds to the duration of the action and rate of actual use for the purposes of the action.

D.3 Costs of other goods and services (including related duties, taxes and charges, such as non-deductible value added tax (VAT) paid by beneficiaries that are not public bodies acting as public authority) are eligible, if they are purchased specifically for the action and in accordance with the conditions set out in the grant agreement.

Such goods and services include, for instance, consumables and supplies, dissemination, protection of results, certificates on the financial statements (if they are required by the Agreement), translations and publications.

E. Eligible indirect costs (overheads)

Indirect costs are costs that are not directly linked to the action implementation and therefore cannot be attributed directly to it.

Indirect costs are eligible if they are declared on the basis of the flat-rate of 7% of the eligible direct costs.

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

Applicants's attention is drawn to the fact that in the case of beneficiaries receiving an operating grant³⁶ financed by the EU or Euratom budget, they cannot declare indirect costs for the period covered by the operating grant, unless they can demonstrate that the operating grant does not cover any costs of the action. In order to demonstrate this, in principle, the beneficiary should:

- a. use *analytical cost accounting that allows to separate all costs (including overheads) attributable to the operating grant and the action grant*. For that purpose the beneficiary should use *reliable accounting codes and allocation keys* ensuring that *the allocation of the costs is done in a fair, objective and realistic way*.
- b. *record separately*:
 - all costs incurred for the operating grants (i.e. personnel, general running costs and other operating costs linked to the part of its usual annual activities), and
 - all costs incurred for the action grants (including the actual indirect costs linked to the action)

If the operating grant covers the entire usual annual activity and budget of the beneficiary, the latter is not entitled to receive any indirect costs under the action grant.

➤ **Ineligible costs**

- (a) costs related to return on capital;
- (b) debt and debt service charges;
- (c) provisions for future losses or debts ;
- (d) interest owed;
- (e) doubtful debts;
- (f) currency exchange losses;
- (g) bank costs charged by the beneficiary's bank for transfers from the Agency;
- (h) excessive or reckless expenditure;
- (i) deductible VAT;
- (j) costs incurred during suspension of the implementation of the action;
- (k) in-kind contributions provided by third parties;
- (l) costs declared under another EU or Euratom grant (including grants awarded by a Member State and financed by the EU or Euratom budget and grants awarded by bodies other than the Agency for the purpose of implementing the EU or Euratom budget); in particular, indirect costs if the beneficiary is already receiving an operating grant financed by the EU or Euratom budget in the same period, unless they can demonstrate that the operating grant does not cover any costs of the action.

³⁶ For the definition, see Article 180(2)(b) of the EU Financial Regulation: '**operating grant**' means financial contribution, to the functioning of a body which has an objective forming part of, and supporting, an Union policy, by means of a financial contribution to its work programme.

- (m) costs for staff of a national (or local) administration, for activities that are part of the administration's normal activities (i.e. not undertaken only because of the grant);
- (n) costs (especially travel and subsistence costs) for staff or representatives of EU institutions, bodies or agencies.

Further details are included in the model grant agreement.

➤ **Calculation of the final grant amount**

The final amount of the grant to be awarded to the beneficiary is established after completion of the action, upon approval of the request for payment containing the following documents:

- a final report providing details of the implementation and results of the action;
- the final financial statement must detail all eligible costs (actual costs, unit costs and flat-rate costs);
- a certificate on the financial statements of the action for each beneficiary, if
 - it requests an EU contribution of EUR 325 000 or more as reimbursement of actual costs and
 - the maximum EU contribution indicated, for that beneficiary in the estimated budget (see Annex 2) as reimbursement of actual costs is EUR 750 000 or more.

In the event of non-execution or clearly inadequate execution of an activity planned in the work programme annexed to the grant agreement, the final grant will be reduced accordingly.

EU grants may not have the purpose or effect of producing a profit within the framework of the action. **Profit shall be defined as a surplus, calculated at the payment of the balance, of receipts over the eligible costs of the action**, where receipts are limited to the Union grant and the revenue generated by that action. In this respect, where a profit is made, the EASME shall be entitled to recover the percentage of the profit corresponding to the Union contribution to the eligible costs actually incurred by the beneficiary to carry out the action.

The '**final grant amount**' depends on the actual extent to which the action is implemented in accordance with the Grant Agreement.

This amount is calculated by the Agency at the payment of the balance in the following steps:

Step 1 — Application of the reimbursement rate to the eligible costs declared by the beneficiaries and approved by the Agency.

Step 2 — Limit to the maximum grant amount.

Step 3 — Reduction due to the no-profit rule as the grant must not produce a profit³⁷:

'Profit' means the surplus of the amount obtained following Steps 1 and 2 plus the 'action's total receipts' (being the consolidated total receipts generated during its duration), over the 'action's total eligible costs' (being the consolidated total eligible costs approved by the Agency).

The following are considered 'receipts':

- (a) income generated by the action;

³⁷ Not applicable for low value grants.

(b) financial contributions given by third parties to the beneficiary [or to a linked third party], specifically to be used for costs that are eligible under the action.

The following are however not considered 'receipts':

(a) financial contributions by third parties, if they may be used to cover costs other than the eligible costs;

(b) financial contributions by third parties with no obligation to repay any amount unused at the end of the action period.

If there is a 'profit', it will be deducted in proportion to the final rate of reimbursement of the eligible actual costs approved by the Agency (as compared to the amount calculated following Steps 1 and 2).

Step 4 — Reduction due to substantial errors, irregularities or fraud or serious breach of obligations (calculated in proportion to the seriousness of the errors, irregularities or fraud or breach of obligations) from the maximum grant amount.

The final grant amount will be the lower of the following two:

- the amount obtained following Steps 1 to 3 or
- the reduced grant amount following Step 4.

Further details are included in the model grant agreement.

12.3 Payment arrangements

Pre-financing payment

A pre-financing payment corresponding to 50% of the grant amount will be transferred to the beneficiary within 30 days of the date when the last of the two parties signs the agreement, provided all requested guarantees have been received. The prefinancing will be cleared at the payment of the balance.

Interim payment

One interim payment corresponding to 40% of the grant amount shall be paid to the beneficiary.

The interim payment is intended to cover the beneficiary's expenditure on the basis of a request for payment when the action has been partly carried out. For the purpose of determining the amount due as interim payment, the reimbursement rate to be applied to the eligible costs approved by EASME shall be the rate indicated in section 4.

The total amount of pre-financing and interim payment shall not exceed 90% of the maximum grant amount.

Final payment

EASME will establish the amount of the final payment to be made to the beneficiary on the basis of the calculation of the final grant amount (see section 12.2 above). If the total of earlier payments is higher than the final grant amount, after clearing the prefinancing payment, the beneficiary will be required to reimburse the amount paid in excess by EASME through a recovery order.

12.4 Pre-financing guarantee

In the event that the applicant's financial capacity is not satisfactory, a pre-financing guarantee for an amount not exceeding the amount of the pre-financing and shall be valid for a period sufficiently long to allow it to be activated, 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 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.

The guarantee shall be released when the pre-financing is deducted from interim payments or payments of the balance to the beneficiary, in accordance with the conditions laid down in the grant agreement.

13. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS:

Beneficiaries will be requested to submit the following reports:

- 1 inception report no later than 15 working days after the kick off meeting, not linked to a payment request. This initial report, which shall describe in detail the proposed approach, may be based on the minutes of the kick-off meeting. Applicants should foresee it as part of the project's deliverables;
- 2 technical progress reports covering month 1 to 6 and month 7 to month 12 months, not linked to a request for payment;
- 1 interim technical and financial report covering month 1 to month 18, linked to a request for interim payment;
- 1 technical progress report covering month 19 to month 27, not linked to a request for payment
- 1 final technical and financial report, linked to the request for the payment of the balance and to be submitted to the EASME and the European Commission.

Report	Type of Report	Implementation period	Due date
1	Inception	-	15 days after kick-off
2	Progress	Months 1 to 6	15 th of month 7
3	Progress	Months 7 to 12	15 th of month 13

4	Interim	Months 1 to 18	60 days after month 18
5	Progress	Months 19 to 27	15 th of month 28
5	Final	Months 1 to 36	60 days after end

Further details are included in the model grant agreement.

14. PUBLICITY

14.1 By the beneficiaries

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 in accordance with the details provided in the grant agreement.

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

In addition to the text and logo relevant to the EU programme, the EASME will provide beneficiaries with a disclaimer stating that the EU is not responsible for the views displayed in the publications and/or in conjunction with the activities for which the grant is used.

14.2 By EASME

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.

EASME will publish the following information:

- name of the beneficiary
- address of the beneficiary when the latter is a legal person, region when the beneficiary is a natural person, as defined on NUTS 2 level³⁸ if he/she is domiciled within EU or equivalent if domiciled outside EU,
- subject of the grant,
- amount awarded.

³⁸ Commission Regulation (EC) No 105/2007 of 1 February 2007 amending the annexes to Regulation (EC) No 1059/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of a common classification of territorial units for statistics (NUTS) (OJ L 39 of 10.02.2007).

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.

15. 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 (EU) 2018/1725 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data by the Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies and on the free movement of such data³⁹. Unless indicated otherwise, the questions and any personal data requested that are required to evaluate the application in accordance with the call for proposals will be processed solely for that purpose by the EASME Head of Unit A.1. Details concerning the processing of personal data are available on the privacy statement at: http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/support/legal_notice/h2020-ssps-grants-sedia_en.pdf

Personal data may be registered in the Early Detection and Exclusion System (EDES) should the beneficiary be in one of the situations mentioned in Articles 136 and 141 of the EU Financial Regulation 2018/1046⁴⁰ (for more information see the Privacy Statement on: http://ec.europa.eu/budget/library/explained/management/protecting/privacy_statement_edes_en.pdf).

16. PROCEDURE FOR THE SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

Proposals must be submitted in accordance with the requirements of section 2 and by the deadline specified under section 5.

➤ Electronic submission

Applicants are requested to go to <http://ec.europa.eu/easme/en/cosme-eu-programme-competitiveness-enterprises-and-small-and-medium-sized-enterprises-smes> and follow the procedure for submitting an application.

No modification to the application is allowed once the deadline for submission has elapsed. However, if there is a need to clarify certain aspects or for the correction of clerical mistakes, EASME may contact the applicant for this purpose during the evaluation process.

Applicants will be informed in writing about the results of the selection process.

➤ Contacts

EASME is available to answer questions relating to the content of the present call for proposals. All questions must be sent by e-mail to EASME-COSME-WEGATE@ec.europa.eu.

Answers will be published at <https://ec.europa.eu/easme/en/section/cosme/cos-wegate-2018-5-01-encouraging-community-building-women-entrepreneurship>.

³⁹OJ L 295/39 of 21.11.2018.

⁴⁰ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32018R1046>

17. ANNEXES:

Annex 1: Description of Action (DoA) template

Annex 2: Detailed budget template

Annex 3: COSME Guide for applicants

Annex 4: EASME Model Grant Agreement (MGA)

Annex 5: Technical annex about the WEgate e-platform