



CALL FOR PROPOSALS – COS-WP2014-3-15.03

Diversifying the EU Tourism Offer and Products -

Sustainable Transnational Tourism Products 2014

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1. EU policy framework

The Lisbon Treaty provides a framework which allows the Commission to undertake necessary measures in order to complement the action of the Member States in the tourism sector, in particular by promoting the competitiveness of Union undertakings in that sector (Title XXII Tourism, Art. 195 TFEU).

Additionally, in various Communications the Commission has identified sustainability as a fundamental aspect for the quality and competitiveness of European Tourism ((COM(2003)716¹, COM(2006)134²), (COM(2007)621³).

In its latest Communication (COM (2010)352⁴), the Commission focuses on two key concepts mutually influencing each other: the need for a sustainable approach and the need to boost the competitiveness of the European tourism sector. Indeed, the tourism sector's competitiveness is closely linked to its sustainability, as the quality of tourist destinations is strongly influenced by their natural and cultural environment and their integration into a local community. **Sustainability principles refer to the environmental, economic and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development, and a suitable balance must be established between these three dimensions to guarantee long-term sustainability.**

The sustainability of tourism covers thus a number of different aspects: the responsible use of natural resources, taking into account the environmental impact of activities (production of waste, pressure on water, land and biodiversity, etc.), the use of 'clean' energy, protection of the heritage and preservation of the natural and cultural integrity of destinations, the quality and sustainability of jobs created, local economic fallout or customer care. These principles are largely reflected in tourism strategies introduced at

¹ <http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/lex/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52003DC0716:EN:NOT>

² <http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/lex/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52006DC0134:EN:NOT>

³ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/COMDay.do?year=2007&month=10&day=19>

⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/tourism/files/communications/communication2010_en.pdf

national and regional level, although they still find insufficient expression in specific actions.

In this context, the Programme for the competitiveness of enterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises (2014-2020), hereinafter referred to as COSME⁵, aims to promote growth and to strengthen the competitiveness and sustainability of enterprises in the European Union.

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)⁶ play a crucial role in reaching the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy⁷. 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.

The present call for proposals contributes to the implementation of the 2010 Commission Communication on Tourism COM(2010)352⁸, in particular to the objective of promoting diversification of the supply of tourism products and services, as well as to enhancement of development of sustainable tourism in Europe.

The contracting authority is the Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (hereinafter referred to as "EASME").⁹ EASME is, *inter alia*, entrusted by the European Commission with the implementation of parts of the COSME programme and the Horizon 2020 programme.¹⁰

1.2. Context and background

In the framework of its tourism policy, one of the main aims of the European Commission remains the promotion of the development of a competitive, sustainable, responsible and high-quality tourism offer. To stimulate competitiveness in the European tourism sector and to keep the leading position of Europe as a tourist destination, the Commission encourages, among others, **the diversification of the supply of tourist services and products**. In doing so, it encourages the development of tourism products on a transnational and European scale. Various initiatives in favour of the development of diversified and sustainable European transnational products have been put in place over the recent years. The Commission is for example enhancing visibility and promotion of different thematic tourism products through conferences and other events¹¹ organised at European level and has been cooperating with the Council of Europe on the "Cultural Routes" programme¹². It is also

⁵ Regulation (EU) No 1287/2013 of 11 December 2013 (Official Journal of the European Union L347/33 of 20/12/2013)

⁶ For the purpose of this call, the European definition of an SME is applied. See Commission Recommendation C (2003) 1422 of 6 May 2003 (Official Journal of the European Union OJ L 124/36 of 20.05.2013).

⁷ COM (2010) 2020 final of 3 March 2010.

⁸ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2010:0352:FIN:EN:PDF>

⁹ EASME was set up by Commission implementing decision 2013/771/EU of 17.12.2013 "establishing the Executive Agency for Small and Medium Size Enterprises and repealing decisions 2004/20/EC and 2007/372/EC" (Official Journal of the European Union L 341/73 of 18.12.2013).

¹⁰ See Article 3 of the above-mentioned Commission implementing decision.

¹¹ i.e.: European Tourism Day, Crossroads of Europe, networking event, Enhancing cooperation of different European networks working among others in tourism, such as e.g.: EEN, ENRD, NECSTouR and ERRIN

¹² http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/culture/Routes/default_en.asp
http://www.culture-routes.lu/php/fo_index.php?lng=en

encouraging the exchange of good practices between Members States¹³ and has been raising awareness on the importance of sustainable, including environmentally friendly, tourism¹⁴.

Europe has an impressive wealth of common heritage and natural assets, whose added-value lies in their great diversity. There are numerous transnational thematic tourism products (e.g. routes/itineraries/trails) crossing several countries related to different types of tourism which can benefit of support for further development and increased visibility and thereby contribute to promoting sustainable tourism.

The present call comes as a continuation of the Preparatory Action “Sustainable Tourism” (2009-2011) as well as the calls for proposals launched under the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme on “Promotion of trans-national thematic tourism products in the European Union as means of sustainable tourism development”¹⁵ by the European Commission.

The overall aim of the initiative is to stimulate competitiveness in the European tourism sector by encouraging the diversification of the supply of tourist services and products.

By supporting projects promoting sustainable thematic tourism products EU aims at:

- Strengthening trans-national cooperation with regard to sustainable tourism
- Encouraging a higher involvement of small and micro enterprises and local authorities;
- Stimulating competitiveness of the tourism industry by means of an enhanced focus on the diversification of sustainable thematic tourism products.

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

2.1. General objective

The objective of the present call is to:

- support projects promoting transnational tourism routes/itineraries/trails, either physical or virtual,
- stimulate competitiveness of the tourism industry
- encourage the diversification of the supply of tourism products and services by the development of sustainable tourism products
- encourage the participation of SMEs and create a framework favourable to SMEs' cooperation

¹³http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/industrial-competitiveness/monitoring-member-states/good-practice/index_en.htm

¹⁴ The information on the co-financed projects can be found on:
http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/tourism/sustainable-tourism/index_en.htm
http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/tourism/cycling-tourism/index_en.htm

¹⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/newsroom/cf/itemdetail.cfm?item_id=5090

2.2. Description of the work

2.2.1. The types of tourism

The Commission proposes to reward projects which have developed a **tourism offer based on sport or wellness activities** and which are related to one of the following types of tourism: **coastal or maritime or mountain or rural tourism**.

2.2.2. General requirement

In their proposal, applicants are requested to clearly explain the actions they will set up for the development of their project.

In order to ensure good structuring and clarity of the project, applicants are requested to divide the actions into work packages, each work package having objectives, a description of work, deliverables, milestones, expected results measured by performance indicators.

The project proposal should be accompanied by a short but robust action plan including the description of the following aspects:

- a) the present assets /situation
- b) what is needed to be changed
- c) specific objective of the project
- d) effectiveness of the requested EU co-financing
- e) tangible results of the project
- f) sustainability/ continuation of the project after the co-financing end

To do so, a template "Technical annex 1: Description of Work" is provided together with the call.

2.2.3. Eligible activities

To be eligible the project should:

a) Focus on sport or wellness activity tourism

The project should be focused on **sustainable transnational tourism product/offer in sport or wellness activity tourism** and be related to one of the following types of tourism: **coastal or maritime or mountain or rural tourism**.

For the purpose of this call, by "sport activity tourism" it is meant tourism related to sport activities in a large sense: to the practice of recreational sport or of any other physical activity. By wellness tourism, it is meant tourism motivated by proactive approach in seeking to improve and maintain health and quality of life.

Moreover, the project should demonstrate that it promotes tourism to natural areas that benefits local communities and destinations environmentally, culturally and

economically.

As possible examples, projects on transnational itineraries/trails/tourism offers related to the following aspects could be supported: nautical tourism, water-based sports (such as recreational fishing, boating, wind surfing, diving etc.), cycle routes, hiking trails, horse-riding routes, adventure tourism trails, itineraries linked to sports events including practice of specific sports e.g.: skiing, cycling, water-based sports, itineraries linked to wellness, including spa tourism etc. *This list is not meant to be exhaustive.*

b) Be transnational

For the purpose of this call, a transnational tourism product means a set of tourism destinations/attractions/services which take the form of a transnational route/itinerary/trail/tourism offer, either physical (based on physical infrastructure) or conceptual (linking places/destinations/attractions) and which all share a common link/feature/topic/theme.

The product has to cover/be developed in at least 4 countries as listed under the point 6.1 Geographical eligibility.

Promoting local offers only, without focusing on a transnational dimension of the offer, or promoting a general type of tourism only, without focusing on a concrete transnational product (route/trail/itinerary/tourism offer) will not be sufficient to fulfil the requirements of the call.

c) Promote sustainable tourism

The project should propose exemplary and innovative ideas for sustainable development of tourism via transnational cooperation for the enhancement and promotion of sustainable transnational tourism products. Sustainable tourism is meant to be respectful of the economic, socio-cultural and environmental principles. The project proposal is expected to show synergies with and benefits for the natural (and also cultural) environment, local economy, local communities etc.

The project should clearly identify the sustainability aspect which it aims to improve (e.g.: the responsible use of natural resources, taking into account the environmental impact of activities such as production of waste, pressure on water, land and biodiversity, etc., the use of 'clean' energy, protection of the heritage and preservation of the natural and cultural integrity of destinations, the quality and sustainability of jobs created, local economic fallout or customer care) and indicate how the improvement will be measured.

d) Be technically and financially sustainable

The project proposal should identify the management structure and explain how it will enable the project to meet its goals, identify the staff to be involved and the distribution of tasks between partners and staff members.

The project should aim at the creation of a medium-to-long-term communication/promotion and market uptake strategy. Therefore, the project proposal

shall clearly refer to how the action will be further developed after the end of the project period, both technically and financially.

e) Generate measurable results and long term impacts

The proposal should explain how the expected results and impacts will be achieved and measured, what indicators or tolls will be used to measure them.

2.3. General expected results

The project proposal shall target the following general expected results:

- demonstrated contribution to the development of more sustainable tourism offer in Europe and its diversification
- development of comprehensive and practical information on the product for potential tourists (including concrete and attractive tourist offers/packages)
- better market visibility of attractive and sustainable European transnational tourism offer
- facilitation and stimulation of public-private partnerships and involvement of tourism enterprises, in particular micro and small, in the supply chain of transnational thematic tourism products as well as into regional development and tourism promotional strategies
- contribution to sustainable development, growth (increase in tourism flows) and employment in the tourism sector
- benefits and multiplier effects of synergies between tourism and sport and wellness related activities on economy and people's wellbeing.

The applicant is free to add other, more specific, results relevant to the project proposal which will be an asset

2.4. Reporting

- 2 interim technical implementation reports, respectively after 1/3 and 2/3 of the project duration (e.g for 18 months projects, after 6 months and 12 months following the start date of the action);
- 1 final technical implementation report (including all deliverables) and financial statement including a consolidated statement and a breakdown between each beneficiary.

Reports must be submitted by the coordinator in English.

3. INDICATIVE TIME TABLE

	Stages	Date and time or indicative period
a)	Publication of the call	4 July 2014
b)	Deadline for submitting applications	07/10/2014 17:00 (Brussels time)
c)	Evaluation period	October- December 2014
d)	Information to applicants	January 2015
e)	Signature of grant agreements	March 2015
f)	Starting date of the action	April 2015

4. BUDGET AVAILABLE AND FUNDING OF PROJECTS

The total budget earmarked for the co-financing of projects is estimated at **1.000.000 EUR**¹⁶

The maximum grant will be 250.000 EUR per project.

The EASME expects to co-fund 5 proposals.

The EU grant is limited to a maximum co-funding rate of 75% of **eligible costs**

The 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 as explained in section 14;
- Applications must be drafted in one the EU official languages.

Failure to comply with those requirements will lead to the rejection of the application without any evaluation process.

6. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

6.1. Geographical eligibility

Applicant organisations must be established

- in EU Member States;

¹⁶ In case of a revision of the COSME Work Programme, a higher amount might be made available for this action, and thus more projects might be co-financed.

- or in countries participating in the COSME programme under Article 6 of the COSME Regulation¹⁷.

In addition, participation of partners from other countries (than the ones covered by the above points (a) and (b)) is allowed if relevant for the project. But any costs derived from these countries are not eligible, nor these additional countries will not be considered for verifying the eligibility criterion of a minimum of 5 partners from 4 different countries. Countries which will be considered for verifying this criterion will only be the ones covered by point 6.1 (a),(b).

6.2. Eligible applicants entities

Applicant¹⁸ organisations must be legal entities. They can be fully or partly public or private bodies; private bodies must be properly constituted and registered under national law.

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 affiliated entities, and may declare eligible costs as specified in section 11.2. For that purpose, applicants shall identify such affiliated entities in the application form.

6.3. Eligibility conditions for consortia

Type of applicants:

(1) Applicants should act in consortium with partner organisations. One of the applicant must act as the consortium coordinator. Several applicants, submitting a joint project proposal should choose within their midst a lead organisation, referred to as the coordinator.

The consortium must gather **a minimum of five partners** - legal entities - **covering at least four countries** as listed under point 6.1. "Geographical eligibility".

¹⁷ The following groups of countries are eligible for participation in COSME:

- 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.

¹⁸ By "applicants" are to be understood as any potential co-signatory of the future grant agreement subject to this call, and as proposed by the applicant coordinator.

(2) Moreover, among the minimum five applicants in the consortium:

a) at least two partners in the project consortium must be SMEs¹⁹ – Small and Medium Sized enterprises - acting in the tourism sector.

For the purpose of the present call, it is considered that SMEs being partners in the consortium have to act in one of the following fields:

- tourist accommodation
- catering
- travel agencies and tour operators
- attractions
- leisure (recreational, cultural and sporting activities)
- tourism related transport
- other tourism related fields if their relevance for the project proposal is duly justified by the applicant

Other kinds of SMEs (e.g. in the fields of media, ICT development and others) may be involved in the project only as subcontractors (see point 11.1.e), not as applicants in the consortium.

b) at least one of the applicants must be either a national or regional or local public governmental authority²⁰ or a network or association of regional or local public governmental authorities (in this case, at least one member of the association/network has to be a regional or local public governmental authority, namely -region, province, department, municipality, city council, commune-).

A body/organisation acting on behalf (or with delegated powers) of a national, regional or local public governmental authority will not be sufficient to fulfil this criterion.

The consortium coordinator must submit with the project proposal **a letter of support** of the project idea and the activities proposed **delivered by a public national governmental authority of one of the eligible countries**, namely a Ministry at national level (or in case of countries with decentralised competences in tourism – a Ministry at regional level) in charge of tourism and/or regional development or any other area which is in relation to the object of the proposal.

(3) Applicants (coordinator and consortium partners) in the project consortium must correspond to the definition of the following target organisations active in the field of tourism or any other field that is strictly related to the object of the proposal such as:

¹⁹ SME is defined as a company engaged in economic activities and having less than 250 employees, with a turnover of less than € 50 million or a balance sheet total of less than € 43 million http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/facts-figures-analysis/sme-definition/index_en.htm

²⁰ For the purpose of this call, public governmental authorities at national, regional and local level are ministries, regions, provinces, departments, municipalities, city councils and communes

- Public governmental authorities and their networks or associations at European, international, national, regional and local level or other organisations acting on behalf of a public governmental authority
- Training or educational institutions including universities, research centres
- Destination management organisations and their networks/associations
- Travel Agents and Tour Operators and their umbrella associations
- Chambers of commerce and industry, chambers of handicrafts or similar bodies and their umbrella Associations.
- Non-profit/ Non-governmental organisations, civil society organizations, foundations, think-tanks, umbrella associations, networks or federations of public or private bodies, whose core activity falls under the following fields: tourism, regional development or any other field that is strictly related to the object of the proposal;
- International, European and national organisations/associations active in the field of tourism and related fields
- Federations and associations operating in partnership across the borders of a number of countries with a proven cross-border outreach.
- Small and Medium Size enterprises (SMEs) acting in the tourism sector
- National, regional, local tourism organisations, public and private agencies related to tourism promotion
- Public and private bodies whose core activity falls under the following fields: tourism, regional development or any other field that is strictly related to the object of the proposal.

ATTENTION: The onus will be on the applicants to demonstrate that they fully respect the requirements set in the call. Please provide any useful supporting document and proof of the fulfilment of the above-mentioned compulsory requirements and clearly indicate in the submitted proposal, the name of the applicants fulfilling them, in order to allow the evaluation committee to accomplish its assessment

The coordinator and other applicants (consortium partners) must satisfy the same eligibility criteria.

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 affiliated entities, and may declare eligible costs as specified in section 11.2.

For that purpose, applicants shall identify such affiliated entities in the application form. The affiliated entities will have to comply with the eligibility and exclusion criterial.

6.4. Eligible activities

Applicants are free to propose any kind of activities falling, as a minimum, in all of the following three areas:

- 1) developing and strengthening sustainable transnational tourism product through the development of concrete tourist offers/packages and the facilitation of their market uptake after the end of the project's co-financing period;
- 2) promoting and enhancing the visibility of sustainable transnational tourism product through joint transnational promotion-communication activities and by, amongst others, providing comprehensive and practical information to potential tourists and other tourism stakeholders;
- 3) facilitating public-private partnerships and the integration of tourism-related enterprises, in particular small and micro enterprises, as well as local authorities in the supply chain of transnational tourism products as well as into regional development and tourism promotional strategies.

Applicants are free to propose other additional kind of activities if dully justified as fulfilling the objectives of the call.

Examples of the types of activities (*the list is only indicative and does not mean to be exhaustive*):

- cooperation projects/activities;
- conferences, seminars, awareness raising events and other events relevant to the call's objectives
- training or research activities related to enhancing development of sustainable tourism;
- awareness and dissemination actions (e.g: producing of audio-visuals, communication activities, publications, websites, participation in fairs etc.);
- actions aiming at the creation and improving of networks, exchanges of good practices;
- studies, analyses, mapping projects;
- developing of practical information for potential tourists (including tourism offers/packages)

Non-eligible activities:

Development/improvement of infrastructure

6.4 Implementation period

The project's duration must be between 12 months and **maximum 18 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 from participation

Applicants will be excluded from participating in the call for proposals procedure if they are in any of the following situations:

- (a) they are bankrupt or being wound up, are having their affairs administered by the courts, have entered into an arrangement with creditors, have suspended business activities, are the subject of proceedings concerning those matters, or are in any analogous situation arising from a similar procedure provided for in national legislation or regulations;
- (b) they or persons having powers of representation, decision making or control over them have been convicted of an offence concerning their professional conduct by a judgment of a competent authority of a Member State which has the force of res judicata;
- (c) they have been guilty of grave professional misconduct proven by any means which the contracting authority can justify including by decisions of the EIB and international organisations;
- (d) they are not in compliance with their obligations relating to the payment of social security contributions or the payment of taxes in accordance with the legal provisions of the country in which they are established or with those of the country of the Authorising Officer or those of the country where the grant agreement is to be performed;
- (e) they or persons having powers of representation, decision making or control over them have been the subject of a judgment which has the force of res judicata for fraud, corruption, involvement in a criminal organisation, money laundering or any other illegal activity, where such an illegal activity is detrimental to the Union's financial interests;
- (f) they are currently subject to an administrative penalty referred to in Article 109(1) of the financial regulation²¹.

7.2 Exclusion from award

Applicants will not be granted financial assistance if, in the course of the grant award procedure, they:

- (a) are subject to a conflict of interest;
- (b) are guilty of misrepresentation in supplying the information required by the Commission as a condition of participation in the grant award procedure or fail to supply this information;
- (c) find themselves in one of the situations of exclusion, referred to in section 7.1.

The same exclusion criteria apply to affiliated entities.

²¹ Regulation (EU, EURATOM) No 966/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council (Official Journal of the European Union L 298 of 26.10.2012)

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

7.3 Supporting documents

Applicants must sign a declaration on their honour certifying that they are not in one of the situations referred to in articles 106(1) and 107 to 109 of the Financial Regulation²², filling in the relevant form.

8. SELECTION CRITERIA

8.1 Financial capacity

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

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.

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

On the basis of the documents submitted, if the authorizing officer considers that financial capacity is not satisfactory, he may:

➤ request further information;

➤ propose a grant agreement without pre-financing;

➤ propose a grant agreement with a pre-financing paid in instalments;

➤ propose a grant agreement with a pre-financing covered by a bank guarantee (see section 11.4 below);

²² See above.

- where applicable, require the joint and several financial liability of all the co-beneficiaries;
- reject the application.

8.2 Operational capacity

Applicants must have the professional competencies as well as appropriate qualifications necessary to complete the proposed action or work programme. In this respect, applicants have to submit a declaration on their honour, and the following supporting documents:

- curriculum vitae or description of the profile of the people primarily responsible for managing and implementing the operation;
- the organisations' activity report
- an exhaustive lists of previous projects and activities performed and connected to the policy field of a given call or to the actions to be carried out;
- 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:

EVALUATION CRITERIA AND KEY ELEMENTS LIKELY TO BE ASSESSED BY THE EVALUATION COMMITTEE	MAX. SCORE
1. Relevance of the actions proposed in view of the objectives established in the call	30
<i>How relevant is this proposal to the objectives of the published call for proposal?</i>	
<i>Does the proposed transnational tourism product correspond to the requirements of the call?</i>	
<i>Has the project a real transnational dimension, do the proposed activities demonstrate a European added value?</i>	
<i>To what extent does the project proposal contribute to enhance and promote sustainable tourism development in Europe?</i>	
<i>How clearly defined and strategically chosen are the project partners? (different types of partners, relevance of the partners to the project, degree of involvement of the partners)</i>	
<i>Are the partners able to guarantee successful continuation of the project in the future?</i>	
<i>Are more than 4 countries involved?</i>	

2. Quality of the proposal and proposed activities	30
<i>How coherent is the overall project design (including preparedness for evaluation and presentation of the proposal)?</i>	
<i>How coherent, appropriate and practical are the activities proposed (including the internal plan of action/work packages)?</i>	
<i>To what extent has the project been well thought out or prepared (including the outline of the communication/promotion strategy)?</i>	
<i>Is the proposed methodology and organisation (including the timetable and monitoring) seems to be effective?</i>	
<i>Are the actions proposed of innovative nature?</i>	
3. Impact and Visibility	30
<i>To what extent is the project likely to have a tangible impact on sustainable tourism in Europe and a tangible impact on the target groups?</i>	
<i>To what extent does the project contribute to create real measurable effects on tourism development and on economy in general (e.g. increasing tourists' flows, development of tourism SMEs)?</i>	
<i>To what extent does the proposal contain objectively verifiable indicators for evaluating the project outcomes?</i>	
<i>To what extent does the proposal contain specific elements of a follow-up with regard to further development of the transnational tourism product?</i>	
<i>To what extent does the project show synergies with and benefits for the natural and cultural environment, local economy, local communities etc.?</i>	
<i>Do dissemination of the expected results and communication activities seem to be successful?</i>	
<i>Are the expected multiplying effects sound?</i>	
4. Budget and cost-effectiveness	10
<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>	
<i>Do the probable results stand in a reasonable relationship to the amount of the grant? To what extent is the proposed expenditure necessary for the implementation of the project?</i>	
Maximum total score	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, threshold of 50% will be applied to each individual award criterion described above in order to ensure a consistent minimum quality for all award criteria. Proposal will be ranked according to their total score.

10. LEGAL COMMITMENTS

In the event of a grant awarded by the Agency, a grant agreement, drawn up in euro and detailing the conditions and level of funding, will be sent to the beneficiary. The Agency will give details on the procedure to formalise the obligations of the parties.

11. FINANCIAL PROVISIONS

11.1. 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 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 resources which are necessary to carry out the action may not be entirely provided by the EU grant.

May take the form of:

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

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 who foresee that costs will not be incurred in euros, are invited to use the exchange rate published [in the Official Journal of the European Union] (on the Infor-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.

Entities acting in their capacity of contracting authorities in the meaning of Directive 2004/18/EC²³ or contracting entities in the meaning of Directive 2004/17/EC²⁴ shall abide by the applicable national public procurement rules.

Sub-contracting, i.e. the externalisation of specific tasks or activities which form part of the action as described in the proposal must satisfy the conditions applicable to any implementation contract (as specified above) and in addition to them the following conditions:

- it may only cover the implementation of a limited part of the action;
- it must be justified having regard to the nature of the action and what is necessary for its implementation;
- it must be clearly stated in the proposal.

f) Financial support to third parties

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

11.2. 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 amount requested**

The EU grant is limited to a maximum co-funding rate indicated in section 4. Consequently, part of the total eligible expenses entered in the estimative budget must be financed from sources other than the EU grant (see section 11.1c).

➤ **Eligible costs**

Eligible costs are costs actually incurred by the beneficiary of a grant which meet all the following criteria:

- ✓ 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 11.1b).

- ✓ 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

²³ Directive 2004/18/EC on the coordination of procedures for the award of public work contracts, public supply contracts and public service contracts.

²⁴ Directive 2004/17/EC coordinating the procurement procedures of entities operating in the water, energy, transport and postal services sectors.

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.

The same criteria apply to the affiliated entities.

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 :

- the costs of personnel working under an employment contract with the applicant or equivalent appointing act and assigned to the action, comprising actual salaries plus social security contributions and other statutory costs included in the remuneration, provided that these costs are in line with the applicant's usual policy on remuneration. Those costs may include additional remuneration, including payments on the basis of supplementary contracts regardless of their nature, provided that it is paid in a consistent manner whenever the same kind of work or expertise is required and independently from the source of funding used;
- costs of the personnel of national administrations to the extent that they relate to the cost of activities which the relevant public authority would not carry out if the project concerned were not undertaken;
- subsistence allowances (for meetings, including kick-off meetings where applicable, conferences etc.) provided that these costs are in line with the beneficiary's usual practices,
- costs of travel (for meetings, including kick-off meetings where applicable, conferences etc.), provided that these costs are in line with the beneficiary's usual practices on travel,
- the depreciation costs of equipment or other assets (new or second-hand): only the portion of the equipment's depreciation corresponding to the duration of the action/project and the rate of actual use for the purposes of the action may be taken into account by the EASME;
- costs of consumables and supplies, provided that they are identifiable and assigned to the action/project;
- costs entailed by implementation contracts awarded by the beneficiaries for the purposes of carrying out the action/project, provided that the conditions laid down in the grant agreement are met;
- costs arising directly from requirements linked to the implementation of the action/project (dissemination of information, specific evaluation of the action, translations, reproduction);

- costs relating to a pre-financing guarantee lodged by the beneficiary of the grant, where required;
- costs relating to external audits where required in support of the requests for payments;
- non-deductible value added tax ("VAT").

Eligible indirect costs (overheads)

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

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

Applicants's attention is drawn to the fact that in the case of organisations receiving an operating grant, indirect costs are not eligible under specific actions.

➤ **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.

➤ **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 of costs actually incurred;

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 of the receipts over the eligible costs incurred by the beneficiary**, when the request is made for payment of the balance. 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.

11.3. Payment arrangements

Pre-financing payment

A pre-financing payment corresponding to 70% 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.

Interim payment

Interim payment reimburse the eligible costs incurred for the implementation of the action during the corresponding reporting periods.

Payment is subject to the approval of periodic reports. Its approval does not imply recognition of the compliance, authenticity, completeness or correctness of its content. The amount due as interim payment will be calculated by the agency as defined in the Grant agreement.

The interim payment shall clear the amount of the pre-financing previously paid.

The interim payment shall not exceed 30% of the maximum grant amount.

Final payment

The 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 11.2 above). If the total of earlier payments is higher than the final grant amount, the beneficiary will be required to reimburse the amount paid in excess by the EASME through a recovery order.

11.4. Pre-financing guarantee

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

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

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

The guarantee shall be released as the pre-financing is gradually cleared against interim payments or payments of balances to the beneficiary, in accordance with the conditions laid down in the grant agreement.

12. PUBLICITY

12.1. 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 EU emblem 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.

12.2. By the 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.

The 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 level²⁵ if he/she is domiciled within EU or equivalent if domiciled outside EU,
- subject of the grant,
- amount awarded.

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

13. DATA PROTECTION

The reply to any call for proposals involves the recording and processing of personal data (such as name, address and CV). Such data will be processed pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 45/2001²⁶ on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data by the Community institutions and bodies and on the free movement of such data. Unless indicated otherwise, the questions and any personal data requested are required to evaluate the application in accordance with the specifications of the call for proposal will be processed solely for that purpose by the Head of Unit A.1 of the EASME. Details concerning the processing of personal data

²⁵ 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) (Official Journal of the European Union L 39 of 10.02.2007).

²⁶ Official Journal of the European Union L 8/1 of 12.01.2001.

are available on the [privacystatement](http://ec.europa.eu/dataprotectionofficer/privacystatement_publicprocurement_en.pdf) at:
http://ec.europa.eu/dataprotectionofficer/privacystatement_publicprocurement_en.pdf.

Personal data may be registered in the Early Warning System (EWS) only or both in the EWS and Central Exclusion Database (CED) by the Accounting Officer of the EASME, should the beneficiary be in one of the situations mentioned in:

- the Commission Decision 2008/969 of 16.12.2008 on the Early Warning System (for more information see the Privacy Statement on:

http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts_grants/info_contracts/legal_entities/legal_entities_en.cfm),

or

- the Commission Regulation 2008/1302 of 17.12.2008 on the Central Exclusion Database (for more information see the Privacy Statement on

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

14. PROCEDURE FOR THE SUBMISISON OF PROPOSALS

Proposals must be submitted in accordance with the formal requirements and by the deadline set out under section 3.

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, the 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.

➤ Electronic submission

Applicants are requested to log in at http://ec.europa.eu/easme/cosme_en.htm and follow the procedure for submitting an application.

➤ Contacts

The EASME is available to answer questions relating to the content of the present call for proposals. All questions related to this call must be sent by e-mail to EASME-COSME-SUSTAINABLE-TOURISM-CALL-2014@ec.europa.eu .

Only questions sent to the above mentioned functional mailbox will be answered. Answers will only be published periodically and within a reasonable period of time on http://ec.europa.eu/easme/cosme_en.htm