Single Market Programme (SMP COSME)

Call for proposals

Enterprise Europe Network
(SMP-COSME-2024-EEN)

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HISTORY OF CHANGES			
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EUROPEAN INNOVATION COUNCIL AND SMEs EXECUTIVE AGENCY (EISMEA)

Innovation ecosystems, SMP/Entrepreneurship and Consumers
SMP/SME Pillar, Internal Market and Support to Standardisation

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

0. Introduction

This is a call for proposals for EU **action grants** under the Competitiveness of Enterprises and SMEs strand of the **Single Market Programme** (**SMP COSME**).

The regulatory framework for this EU Funding Programme is set out in:

- Regulation 2018/1046 (EU Financial Regulation)
- the basic act (SMP Regulation 2021/690[1]).

The call is launched in accordance with the 2024-27 SMP Work Programme[2] and will be managed by the **European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency (EISMEA)** ('the Agency').

The call covers the following **topic**:

- **SMP-COSME-2024-EEN – Enterprise Europe Network.**

We invite you to read the **call documentation** carefully, and in particular this Call Document, the Model Grant Agreement, the EU Funding & Tenders Portal Online Manual and the EU Grants AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement**.**

These documents provide clarifications and answers to questions you may have when preparing your application:

- the Call Document outlines the:
  - background, objectives, scope, activities that can be funded and the expected results (sections 1 and 2)
  - available budget and timetable (sections 3 and 4)
  - admissibility (including mandatory documents) and eligibility conditions (sections 5 and 6)
  - criteria for financial and operational capacity and exclusion (section 7)
  - evaluation and award procedure (section 8)
  - award criteria (section 9)
  - legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements (section 10)
  - how to submit an application (section 11)
- the Online Manual outlines the:
  - procedures to register and submit proposals online via the EU Funding & Tenders Portal ('Portal')
  - recommendations for the preparation of the application

[1] Regulation (EU) 2021/690 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 April 2021 establishing a programme for the internal market, competitiveness of enterprises, including small and medium-sized enterprises, the area of plants, animals, food and feed, and European statistics (Single Market Programme) (OJ L 153, 3.5.2021, p. 1).

[2] Annex II to the Commission Implementing Decision C(2023) 8926 final of 21.12.2023 on the financing of the Programme for the internal market, competitiveness of enterprises, including small and medium sized enterprises, the area of plants, animals, food and feed and European Statistics and the adoption of the work programme for 2024-2027.

- the AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement contains:
  - detailed annotations on all the provisions in the Grant Agreement you will have to sign in order to obtain the grant *(including cost eligibility, payment schedule, accessory obligations, etc.)*.

You are also encouraged to visit the Enterprise Europe Network and the COSME data hub to consult the list of projects funded previously.

1. Background

1.1 SMEs in changing times

The EU has embarked on a major transformation to a more sustainable, digital and resilient modern economy. Harnessed correctly, this could lead to new business opportunities and more and better jobs, and help the EU gain a competitive advantage on global markets. The urgency of this transformation has been underlined by the COVID-19 pandemic, the unprovoked Russian aggression against Ukraine, and war in the Middle East.

The 24 million SMEs in the EU can and must be at the heart of this transformation and its long-term economic prosperity. They represent 99% of all businesses, provide two-thirds of jobs in the private sector, and are deeply embedded in local communities. They form essential parts of Europe's supply chains.

Innovative and export-oriented SMEs are a particular asset to the European economy, spurring and leading innovation, and creating sustainable and quality jobs. As such, they could lead the rapid development and uptake of innovative green and digital business models, and Europe's economic and industrial resurgence.

Nevertheless, many SMEs are daunted by the cost and complexity of this green and digital transformation. They also face continued barriers in doing cross-border business and scaling up within the Single Market and beyond. They struggle to access the finance and support they need to innovate and commercialise. They can find it difficult to identify commercial partners to develop products and markets. And they face major uncertainties, supply constraints and labour shortages.

1.2 EU support for SMEs

Over the past years, the European Commission has acted forcefully to harness this potential, both of SMEs and the European industry more widely, supporting the green and digital transition, strengthening Europe's stability and ability to withstand shocks, and reinforcing its Single Market.

In March 2020, the Commission released two key communications: "A New Industrial Strategy for Europe"[3] and "An SME Strategy for a sustainable and digital Europe"[4] setting out key actions to address these barriers and put in place the support that companies need. They were bolstered by the 2021 Updated Industrial Strategy[5]. These strategies not only remain valid in the light of this economic transition, but their importance has strengthened.

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[3] A New Industrial Strategy for Europe, COM(2020) 102 final.
[4] An SME Strategy for a sustainable and digital Europe, COM(2020) 103 final.
[5] Updating the 2020 New Industrial Strategy, COM(2021) 350 final.

More recently, in September 2023, the Commission adopted the "SME Relief Package"[6]. In this Package, more measures are proposed to address issues faced by SMEs, including administrative burden and access to investments and skilled workforce.

In all these strategies, the Commission has emphasised the role of business support networks to help SMEs and entrepreneurs.

1.3 The role of the Enterprise Europe Network

Over the past 15 years, the Enterprise Europe Network ("the Network") has emerged as a central support for ambitious SMEs looking to innovate and grow within the Single Market and beyond by:

- Guiding them to the **information** that they need on Single Market, including through general awareness-raising activities;
- Providing an increasing suite of **advisory services** tailored to the individual needs of each company in its growth journey, including tailored training, on topics including:
    - accessing finance and funding;
    - expanding into new markets and in particular the EU's Single Market;
    - carrying out research and innovation;
    - becoming more environmentally, socially and economically sustainable;
    - tapping the potential of digital and other new technologies;
    - becoming more resilient to shocks and future developments;
    - scaling up;
    - upskilling, reskilling, identifying skills needs.
- Helping them find **commercial, research & development, and investment partners.**

This has been built on a number of elements:

- That the Network services are free of charge for Network clients and of high quality across the EU;
- That Network members build on existing local, regional, and national business support structures and are closely integrated with them;
- That they have a European dimension and provide EU added value to clients;
- That they are focused on the individual needs of individual SMEs and support the client SME throughout its growth journey;
- That they combine the knowledge and expertise of a number of partners through a 'hub and spoke' support approach.

Until now, the Network has delivered an impressive number of services with significant impact in terms of market positioning, cost savings and job creation in SMEs. Over 800

[6] COM(2023) 535 - Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - SME Relief Package, SME Relief Package (europa.eu)

companies receive the services of the Network every day and 92% of them declares to be satisfied with the quality of these services. Every day, the Network supports on average 112 enterprises with in-depth tailored advisory services and 525 enterprises with specialised guidance and training sessions, and helps 5 companies sign partnership agreements. As a result, the Network is now the largest support network in the world for SMEs with international ambitions, active in over 40 countries.

The Network is co-financed by the European Commission through multi-annual grants, signed with consortia of eligible business support organisations. With the grants for the current Network due to expire in June 2025, the European Commission is now looking for proposals for the next Network for the period from 1 July 2025 to 31 December 2028.

This Network will be expected to build upon the work done until now by the existing Network and continue to improve the quality of its services, its visibility, positioning and integration within national and regional industrial and support ecosystems, responding to new economic developments and policy priorities.

2. Objectives — Themes and priorities — Activities that can be funded — Expected impact

2.1 Scope of the call

This call for proposals establishes and ensures the continuous functioning of the Enterprise Europe Network from 1 July 2025 until 31 December 2028 by selecting the consortia that will make up the Network.

To this end, applicants are invited to submit proposals:

- Defining the strategic approach and explaining how the objectives and requirements laid down in the present call will be addressed, taking account of the challenges faced by SMEs in the target region(s) and the specific strengths of businesses and the business environment; and

- Suggesting specific activities translating that strategic approach into action.

2.2 Objectives

The purpose of the Enterprise Europe Network is to help European SMEs innovate, grow and scale in the Single Market and beyond.

The Network should be recognised by SMEs and stakeholders as the indispensable "European arm" of regional and national business support systems. It should provide clear European added value and services that help SMEs to grow and become more competitive.

In doing so, the Network will contribute to the objectives of the SMP[7] by improving the competitiveness, sustainability, digitalisation, and resilience of SMEs in Europe and by promoting entrepreneurship.

To achieve this, the Network will provide continued and continuous support, partnering and advisory services in particular in, but not limited to, the following areas:

- participation of SMEs in the Single Market;

- internationalisation of SMEs within the Single Market and beyond;

[7] Single Market Programme Overview - European Commission (europa.eu)

- innovation in SMEs;
- participation of SMEs in EU-funded programmes.

All the Network's services will be designed to work towards the common goals of increasing **sustainability, growth, resilience and digitalisation** levels among SMEs. These services will be deployed in close cooperation and synergy with other local and regional support actors.

Furthermore, the Network will promote relevant EU policies and programmes and, by collecting valuable feedback from SMEs on the effectiveness of EU policies, provide a link between SMEs and EU policy making. The Network will also provide economic feedback to the European Commission and support evidence gathering on challenges faced by SMEs, including supply chain disruptions.

2.3 Description of the Network

The Network is a single, coherent, and collaborative European network of business support organisations organised at regional level. It should cover all regions of the EU and the countries associated to the Competitiveness and SMEs part of the SMP. No geographic area will be covered by two consortia at the same time. Should several proposals be received covering – entirely or partially – the same geographic area, only one of them will be retained for funding for that area. More details can be found in sections 6.2 Geographic location (target countries) and 6.3 Consortium composition.

The Network is made up of units, departments or operational teams working in individual business support organisations referred to as "Network partners".

The Network partners must be hosted in business support organisations (also referred to as "host organisations") committed to support Network activities described in the present call. Host organisations must provide strong support for the implementation of the Network activities and to contribute to the effectiveness of the Network. This includes seamless cooperation with other host organisations in the Network and/or stakeholders outside the Network to support individual clients. Therefore, the host organisations are required to integrate the Network as a strategic element in their organisation's portfolio to ensure that Network activities receive a high degree of internal and external visibility and must ensure that all services provided in the context of the Network are labelled and identified as Enterprise Europe Network services co-funded by the European Commission.

The Network must be also fully integrated into the regional/national business support infrastructure and should cooperate efficiently with all relevant regional/national stakeholders and other European networks.

The Network is built on a **client-centric approach**. This means designing the services from the client's perspective, where a focal point is identifying the needs and following up of the individual client. This approach aims at creating positive experience for companies by maximising quality, building relationships and reaching a concrete success for the SMEs in terms of impact.

2.3.1 Target group

The **Network's target group** are European SMEs ready to scale their activities in the Single Market and in third countries, and with the ambition to improve and take a leading position through product, service or process innovation.

Any SME is entitled to turn to the Network for assistance, regardless of their size, sector or business cycle. First level services of the Network, such as, for example, awareness raising and purely information services should be accessible to all SMEs (see definition of first level services in section 2.3.3). For tailor-made advisory and partnering services, the Network should address SMEs with a high potential for internationalisation and/or innovation (see definition of second level services in section 2.3.3).

Some other types of organisations in the regional, national or local landscape may also receive Network support if the services provided to them are directly beneficial to the SMEs falling within the Network's scope.

The target group is referred to as "Network clients".

2.3.2 Composition of the Network

The Network consists of organisations with a proven experience in providing business support services to SMEs, such as, for example, chambers of commerce, craft or industry, innovation agencies, regional development agencies, trade promotion agencies, universities, research and/or technology transfer organisations and other organisations with relevant experience. An indicative and non-exhaustive list of typical Network host organisations is given in chapter 6.3.

2.3.2.1. Competences of Network partners

The success and quality of the Network's services depend largely on the skills and capacities of Network partners. They must have the organisational competences and suitably skilled staff to deliver the services of the Network locally and in collaboration with local stakeholders, where needed.

Core expertise that every Network consortium should demonstrate to ensure efficient support for SMEs as described in the present call include:

1. **Facilitation of SME internationalisation,** within the Single Market and/or third countries, notably through the development of market access advice and matchmaking services;

2. **Single Market support**, including advisory services tailored to SMEs' individual needs to help them fulfil regulatory requirements and overcome obstacles in the Single Market[8] and feedback from SMEs about the functioning of the Single Market;

3. **Innovation support for SMEs**, including providing innovation capacity building services and innovation management support, providing technology expertise and technology transfer services, facilitating access to or management of national/regional innovation support schemes;

4. **Advice on access to funding and finance**, including helping SMEs access EU-funded support programmes (for example Horizon Europe, where relevant in cooperation with the National Contact Points (NCPs)[9], ERDF programmes in cooperation with Managing Authorities/Intermediate Bodies, InvestEU, EU Innovation Fund), raising awareness about EU financial instruments, and advising SMEs about other public or private sources of finance relevant to their needs and how to prepare for seeking funding from investors and financial intermediaries;

[8] Relevant topics include goods, CE marking, standardisation and REACH, services and posting of workers, intellectual property services, procurement, VAT, e-commerce and digitalisation.

[9] The network of National Contact Points is the main structure to provide guidance, practical information and assistance on all aspects of participation in Horizon Europe. NCPs are also established in many non-EU and non-associated countries.

5. Services supporting the **sustainability**[10] of SMEs, including advice on how to transform their business models to take advantage of the benefits of circular economy, energy efficiency, and resource efficiency, as well as advice on how to improve their social performance looking at issues such as gender equality and human rights due diligence along their value chain.

6. Services supporting the **digitalisation** of SMEs, including advice on how to integrate digital technologies into their business models to improve their efficiency (such as artificial intelligence tools, internet of things, e-commerce, 5G, quantum computing, etc.).

7. Services designed to increase the **resilience** of SMEs' business models, including advice on how to predict and prepare for disruptions in their value chain.

8. Services designed to **up-skill and re-skill** SMEs in the areas covered by the Network.

It is not necessary for all Network partners in a consortium to possess the entire range of competencies described above. Where expertise or special knowledge is missing to address a client need, other Network partners or external stakeholders in the regional ecosystem can contribute. This is where the Network effect of the hub and spoke model comes in (see below).

2.3.2.2 Network staff

Host organisations are required to ensure that all staff members assigned to the Network (referred to as "Network advisors") have adequate qualifications to fulfil their tasks to high quality standards.

The requirements for the **general profile of a Network Advisor** delivering Network services include:

- Completed higher education or equivalent by experience;
- Experience in providing advice to SMEs on a broad range of innovation, Single Market or internationalisation issues enabling SMEs to make the transition to sustainability, digitalisation and greater resilience;
- Good understanding of the local/regional/national business and innovation support ecosystem and of relevant regional/national information sources, and an ability to interact with other organisations to support the implementation of the hub and spoke model;
- Excellent communication skills: ability to grasp the issue that the client is facing and to interact with local cooperation partners and experts, and other Network partners;
- Good analytical skills: ability to analyse the needs of the client, identify relevant information (often of legal character) and provide appropriate support services on the basis of this analysis;
- Language skills: host organisations must ensure that core staff members as well as project management and coordination staff have a strong command of English language to interact efficiently at professional level with colleagues of

[10] As explained in the UN Sustainable Development Goals, Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

the Network from other countries (at least B2 level of the Common European Framework of Reference[11]).

In addition to the general qualifications of a Network advisor each consortium must have individual Network staff members with specific expertise on:

- priority aspects of the Network's service range, such as sustainability, innovation, internationalisation, access to funding and finance, resilience, digitalisation, scale-up support, intellectual property protection, and specific SME support in those areas;
- sectors of economic activity that are of economic and/or strategic importance for the region where the consortium is active;
- communication activities, with a proficient knowledge of media and online services as well as access to social media for project-related activities. Designated **communication correspondents** (see section 2.4.2) must have at least two years of professional experience in communication in one of the following areas: drafting, implementing and evaluating communication strategies, plans and projects, management of events, web and social media management, media relations, writing articles, graphic design (see section 2.4.2 for more details).

Consortium and project coordination tasks should be assigned to senior staff members with sufficient authority to represent the Network in the management of the host organisation, the European Commission, the Agency and other Network partners. Strong leadership skills and experience with managing teams should be additionally demonstrated in the profile of the advisors occupying these roles.

Staff continuity is very important in the Network. Host organisations are therefore requested to assign both full-time and part-time staff to the Network on a permanent basis throughout the duration of the project.

All new staff members joining an Enterprise Europe Network team at a later stage must meet the requirements described in this call. New Network staff replacing colleagues who have left or will leave a Network team must have the appropriate skills to fill the position without competence loss in the team.

When new staff is integrated into the Network team, this should be facilitated as much as possible by providing training and transferring necessary knowledge to new staff members. Training courses provided by the Agency should be seen as an addition to the (essential) induction of new staff provided by the host organisation. The latter should at least include information about the aims and working methods of the Network, the consortium and its work programme, the regional environment and the services provided by the Network in general, and the host organisation in particular.

2.3.3 Network services

Depending on the needs of each individual client and of the Network's broader target audience in general, Network services are categorised in different service levels.

- **First level services** (usually basic in nature) give direct and straightforward solutions to a company's problem, so that the company does not need further assistance on the specific query.

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11 https://europa.eu/europass/en/common-european-framework-reference.

Often short-term in nature, first level services tend to be standardised; they are not specifically customised and provide off-the-shelf solutions to companies. They are usually, but not necessarily, delivered as one-to-many services.

Examples include simple direct answers to clients by providing up-to-date information to queries, e.g., via referral to existing websites, other stakeholders, frequently asked questions (FAQs), information events, webinars, etc. without any requirement for further analysis of the client's needs.

- **Second level services** (usually advanced in nature) support clients facing more complex issues or barriers and help them prepare or implement medium- and longer-term business plans. Second level services are provided when a company's problem or request cannot be attained with off-the-shelf or standardised answers. They are, by definition, tailored to the specific needs of the company and should be linked appropriately with relevant first level services as well as with services provided by other Network partners via the hub and spoke model.

  Second level services require an elaborate analysis to address the client's needs in the short- and medium- to longer term, as part of a client journey. They are often more technical and specialised and require higher level of competences from Network advisors. Consultation among Network advisors, e.g., via Sector and Thematic Groups, can in many cases be necessary. A shared repository of common methodologies, tools and individual skills (see chapter 2.3.4) will support the provision of second level services, which are usually delivered as one-to-few or one-to-one services.

  Second level services are either advisory services or partnering services. They lead to Achievements considered as milestones in the client journey (see Annex 3).

All Network services must be adjusted to and serve the needs of client companies. Second level services are, however, always expected to ultimately generate impact for the client's business expressed in increased market share, turnover, optimised costs or realised savings in international activities, job creation or maintenance, improved quality of products, services or processes, introduced product or service innovations related to international activities. Second level services are typically delivered as a series of services building upon and connected to each other in a client journey.

Network partners must focus on quality and impact of the services for the client companies. To this end, they should continuously evolve their services to make sure they respond to the needs of their clients, including by using new tools like Artificial Intelligence to improve the quality of services.

2.3.3.1 First level services: Information services

Information services are the unidirectional provision of information to clients in any of the Network's areas of activity. This can take the form of:

- Standardised published digital information products (including websites, newsletters, videos/animations, podcasts, etc);
- Standardised published printed information material (leaflets, flyers, etc.);
- Events and information campaigns aimed at a wider audience;
- Answering one-off queries or requests for information of individual clients;
- Redirecting clients to existing available information (Single Digital Gateway, Your Europe Portal, etc.);
- Other information activities that are relevant in the local business and innovation support ecosystem.

Information services are usually first level services although requests for information may also come from clients involved in a longer-term client journey.

2.3.3.2 Second level services: Advisory services

Advisory services aim at increasing sustainable growth, competitiveness, and/or resilience of individual clients. They must relate to one or more thematic or sectoral priority areas of the Network (see section 2.4.1.1).

They may include capacity building services, such as coaching and training, to increase clients' skills for sustainability, innovation, resilience and adaptability to new economic conditions, digitalisation, internationalisation, and other priority areas.

Furthermore, advisory services may aim at helping individual Network clients access relevant EU funding programmes, finance and other support mechanisms.

Advisory services should lead to measurable and/or identifiable impact for the client.

In the client journey, advisory services carried out by one or more Network partners leading to a positive outcome for the client result in **Advisory Achievements (AAs)**.

2.3.3.3 Second level services: Partnering services

Partnering services include all types of international brokerage and matchmaking services with the aim to generate SMEs' sustainable growth through international business and technical collaborations between Network partners' clients. The aim is to help clients of the Network engage in establishing successful partnerships in:

1) Business / commercial collaboration;
2) Innovation / technology and knowledge transfer;
3) Collaboration fostering R&D activities of SMEs and aiming at participation of SMEs in European research and innovation programmes.

The Network's assistance covers the entire partnering process, from the identification of suitable partnering opportunities to accompanying advisory services and assistance to ensure a successful entry into the target market(s) or sector(s).

In the client journey, partnering services carried out by one or more Network partners leading to a significant positive outcome for the clients concerned lead to **Partnering Achievements (PAs)**.

PAs mark the successful conclusion of a concrete medium- to long-term collaboration between two Network clients located in different countries addressed by the Network12, or a Network client's inclusion in a consortium for a collaborative project under an EU R&D or innovation programme. The result of this collaboration is associated with measurable and/or identifiable impact for the client.

[12] One of the Network clients concluding the partnership must always be based in the EU or in an SMP associated country. If a client seeks cooperation / a partnership agreement with a country which is covered by a Network partner – including an International Network Partner – cooperation with that partner is normally mandatory. If there is no Network partner in the target country, the target country must be designated in the action plan.

2.3.4 Structure of the Network and its way of working

2.3.4.1 Network coordination at European level

The Network will have a representative body with an advisory role. It will be chaired by the European Commission and the Agency.

This body will act a sounding board for the European Commission to gather evidence on issues faced by SMEs in the Single Market, and on their potential solution. This body will also be asked to provide feedback to the European Commission about obstacles or disruptions faced by SMEs in specific areas.

Its role will also be to receive and disseminate information on strategic decisions for the Network made by the Commission and the Agency, inform and advise them about views and issues in the Network, provide feedback on changing needs or implementation difficulties, and take a lead in implementing changes in the Network, acting as an interface with Network members in their respective countries.

The representative body will have a structure consisting of a plenary and a bureau with purely organisational functions. The bureau has a coordinating role whereas the plenary represents the opinion of Network members in the EU and Associated Countries participating in the Network. Each representative will be in charge of informing the rest of the Network in their country of matters discussed in meetings, communicating significant issues to the Agency and the Commission, driving the implementation of actions and, ensuring a common approach to Network operations in countries where there is more than one Network consortium. This means that the members of the representative body should coordinate closely with the Network partners and other Network consortia in the country.

2.3.4.2 Thematic Groups and Sector Groups

Thematic Groups and Sector Groups are an essential enabling factor of the hub and spoke model. These Groups bring together Network advisors with a particular thematic or sectoral expertise to exchange information on the issues faced by their SME clients and the practicalities of serving them. Members of Sector and Thematic Groups are therefore expected to provide support to SME clients of other organisations or consortia across the Network, in line with the hub and spoke methodology (see section 2.3.4.7).

The sectoral knowledge of Network staff members is a key asset for the Network. In order to make particularly efficient use of existing expertise, and to facilitate networking and cooperation across consortia, all Network consortia are encouraged to take part in **Sector Groups** covering economic sectors that are particularly relevant in their region and to the needs of their clients. The Sector Groups are indicatively organised according to the industrial ecosystems identified by the European Industrial Strategy[13].

Sector Groups are expected to take a leading role in the partnering activities of the Network, in cooperation with relevant Thematic Groups where appropriate. Their expertise will also contribute to the Network's learning and development programme (see chapter 2.4.3).

Sector Groups are expected to provide regular feedback to the European Commission about any observed or anticipated Single Market obstacle or supply chain disruption in their ecosystems. The Agency will define the appropriate channels for this purpose. If a specific disruption is detected, the Network may be asked to direct specific efforts to supporting SMEs find relevant solutions.

[13] European industrial strategy - European Commission (europa.eu)

In addition to specialised sectoral issues, several cross-cutting topics concern all Network consortia. They are organised in **Thematic Groups** with a coverage ranging from internal Network matters to broad issues concerning most clients of the Network in the areas of its operations (e.g., Single Market, internationalisation, and innovation). To create a better networking environment and to encourage contacts between experts in the Network, contact persons specialising in those topics will be appointed by each consortium. Staff members should be appointed based on their professional expertise and their role within the Network. They will act as a point of contact for other Network partners sharing an interest in the respective area and as an interlocutor for a mutual flow of information and feedback with the Agency and the European Commission. Suitable internal online communication channels will be made available.

Furthermore, specific Thematic Groups on Sustainability and Scale-ups will gather the Network's **Sustainability and Scale-Up advisors**, respectively, thereby implementing the provisions of the "SME Strategy"[14].

Thematic Groups are considered as ideal forums to develop common approaches, exchange experience and good practice and to coordinate and organise common types of activities across Network consortia and countries. They thus become the competence centre for the Network to ensure appropriate and high-end service provision. They are consequently also expected to take a leading role in the Network's learning and development programme (see chapter 2.4.3).

Furthermore, Thematic Groups may be asked by the Commission to provide feedback on existing or anticipated obstacles or disruptions for SMEs in their area of activity.

All types of groups are convened by the Agency and the European Commission. They will have a common, lean structure, consisting of one chairperson, one or more vice-chairs and ordinary members. Practical working arrangements, including division of tasks, are left to the groups.

2.3.4.3 Temporary groups

Additional **temporary groups** with a limited mandate may be also organised at the initiative of the European Commission or the Agency. They will have specific assignments depending on the issue they will deal with and will operate over a short, limited time span.

2.3.4.4 International Network Partners

To facilitate the internationalisation activities of the Network, International Network Partners will be established in selected third countries on a self-financed basis, via a separate procedure.

International Network Partners will contribute to the purpose of the Network by helping ambitious SMEs and start-ups ready to scale in international markets. They will be hosted in client-oriented business support organisations in third countries with experience to support the internationalisation and innovation process of companies.

The focus of International Network Partners will be on the provision of partnering services fostering cross-border commercial as well as research & development and innovation cooperation, particularly via business matchmaking activities. Moreover, international partners will exchange market intelligence with Network partners and their clients, e.g. on national regulations, standards, customs information, etc.

[14] An SME Strategy for a sustainable and digital Europe, COM(2020) 103 final.

Since the list of countries covered by International Network Partners may still change, applicants to this call should indicate which international markets are of strategic interest to their local clients.

The selection of International Network Partners will occur in a separate procedure and is out of the scope of this call.

2.3.4.5 The role of the European Commission and the Agency

The European Commission provides political and strategic steering, sets the thematic priorities of the Network, and is responsible for all policy-making activities linked to the Network.

Each year the Commission drafts a guidance note to the members of the Network with key actions to take in the following year in the light of new EU policy priorities and initiatives and on synergies at European, national, and regional level.

Acting under powers delegated from the European Commission, the Agency ensures the operational, contractual, and financial management of the Network.

The Agency will enable the functioning of the Network and provide tools for the daily operations and activities of the Network partners. This includes:

- Project management through the entire lifecycle, from preparation of the grant agreements with the successfully evaluated applicants and signature of the contracts, to approval of the final reports and closure of the projects;
- Advice and guidance on the implementation of the Network activities and eligibility of costs;
- Sector-specific, thematic and country-specific follow-up of Network operations;
- Common website as a communication platform to enhance the Network's visibility at EU level – https://een.ec.europa.eu;
- Network IT platform[15] which will enable the application of the client-centric approach and the hub and spoke model, develop the Network potential and enact knowledge-based interactions between Network partners:
    - Help Network partners support their clients efficiently and follow up on the services provided to them, identify and call on expertise of other Network advisors to provide the best available support to clients in an efficient and collaborative manner;
    - Provide a collaborative space for communication, exchanges, knowledge-sharing and networking;
    - Provide support for learning and development (including e-learning);
    - Include an online directory of Network staff members with their professional and contact details[16];
    - Provide Network consortia with reference data on their activities and results;

[15] Use of Network IT tools shall be compulsory for all operational Network staff.

[16] Processing of personal data in the Network's IT platform will be based for the Agency and the Commission on Regulation (EU) N° 2018/1725 and for network partners and other stakeholders on the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR, Regulation (EU) N° 2016/679).

    - Provide a solution to efficiently share information about tools and methodologies that can be used by Network partners, as well as skills/competences of individual Network staff members;

- Common Network brand and visual identity;
- Common working standards designed in cooperation with Network partners;
- Provision of the technical basis for a supply chain resilience platform.

2.3.4.6 The client journey in the Network

All clients receiving second level services and/or entering a longer-term one-to-one relationship with a Network partner will have a **client journey** of Network services, in line with the client-centric approach of the Network (see section 2.3).

This **client journey** is the complete experience that clients go through when interacting with the Network – it consists of all action plans, services, achievements and touchpoints between the Network and a client SME. It makes sure the client's needs are placed at the heart of the Network's service provision and that there is a clear logic in the type, sequence and timing of services received by a company.

The client journey should also reflect the company's growth path realised with the help of the Network's advisory and partnering services (see section 2.3.3).

The services provided during the client journey should be tailor-made and adapted to the client's needs. Action plans should determine and document the concrete actors (including identification of the hub and the spokes), timing and steps addressing the needs, as well as the desired targets. They must be customised to each individual client and should be reviewed and, if necessary, adjusted, in the course of time.

The services in the action plan should be planned to maximise the impact of the Network services on each client company and to define in which areas the Network can offer European added value to already existing regional and national support offers.

Network advisors must record and track the activities with their clients in the Network's central IT platform. The impact of the client journey on Network clients is measured on the basis of a set of performance indicators designed to encourage the development of a client-focused Network (see section 2.5.2).

The client journey cycle will also facilitate feedback to Network partners about client satisfaction and impact, thus providing valuable information for potential improvement.

A visualisation and more details on the Network client journey concept can be found in Annex 3.

2.3.4.7 Hub and spoke model

The Network's greatest strength lies in the combined knowledge and expertise of all Network partners. To put this to the best possible use for Network clients, all Network consortia are expected to play an active part in the Network's hub-and-spoke model.

In the hub and spoke model, different entities (Network partners and external stakeholders), each remaining individually managed and accountable under their contracts, pool their assets together contributing to one central goal: providing high-end customised services to a Network client. All Network partners should have this same objective and work with each other and external stakeholders in the same way.

This working method implies that while there is one 'lead' Network partner for each client in the client journey (the "hub"), individual services which do not fall into the hub's key competence will always be provided by the Network partner or external stakeholders who is best suited and best placed to deliver high quality support to the client (the "spoke").

Within their role of Network hubs, Network partners provide tailor-made advisory and partnering services and pull together the complementary services of the spokes, i.e. partners of the same consortium, partners from other consortia in the same country, partners from other countries, or external stakeholders.

This means that Network partners will be acting as spokes for companies who are in a client journey of a different Network partner, and companies who are not based in their region or country. In line with the common principles of the Network this support will remain free of charge when offered by Network partners.

All Network partners should plan resources for the provision of services to SMEs as a "spoke", which may mean that the client company is located in a different region or country than the Network partner. Such support activities are recognised as contribution to the quality of the Network's services and are reflected in the key performance indicators.

2.3.4.8 Quality assurance in the Network

Quality is essential for the Network to deliver on its missions and have the ability to create a positive impact on the clients it serves. Hence, a common quality system is essential to the efficient delivery of Network services across the Network.

Network members should strive to maintain high quality standards in all aspects of their Network membership and activities, covering, specifically:

- Good administrative behaviour and conduct, including prompt responsiveness. All Network partners are expected to reply to requests coming from companies and other clients, other Network partners, the European Commission or the Agency without delay.
- Collaboration with other Network partners in line with the hub and spoke model;
- Quality of information and data entered in common Network databases, especially cooperation profiles published in the Network's Partnering Opportunity Database. All consortia should plan an internal process to control the quality of the information and train their staff appropriately;
- Quality of activities and services delivered to clients;
- Active membership in the Network's Sector Groups and Thematic Groups (see chapter 2.3.4.2).

Specific guidelines and checklists will, when relevant, be available to ensure common standards are applied to specific activities, such as the use of the partnering database or the organisation of partnering events.

Continuous **learning & development** is considered a key factor ensuring high quality standards in the Network. Participation in the Network's training, learning and development programme (as provider/trainer and as recipient/participant) is expected to be a priority for all Network consortia (see section 2.4.3 and 2.4.4).

Training material, including eLearning modules with integrated quizzes etc. will be made available and/or developed with the active involvement of Network members, to contribute to high quality working standards and services.

A mentoring scheme and staff exchanges will also enable Network partners to learn about and ensure quality processes are implemented across the Network.

Specific metrics will be monitored to ensure that the Network's quality system is implemented (see section 2.5.2 on key performance indicators). These metrics will include client satisfaction, collected regularly directly from clients, the average number of services linked to an achievement, the average impact per client in the client journey and the contribution to other Network partners' client journey.

A repository of existing tools and methodologies used by Network partners and their host organisations in specific areas covered by the Network (such as, but not limited to, innovation management, sustainability, digitalisation, intellectual property protection, resilience), and which are available for sharing / use by all Network partners will facilitate the implementation of the hub and spoke model and increase the efficiency of individual client journeys. The Agency will request Network partners to provide an overview of these tools in the early phase of the projects for inclusion in the repository. Throughout the implementation of the project, host organisations are invited to share information about tools and methodologies that are available for shared use by the Network, thereby keeping the repository of tools and methodologies updated.

Furthermore, all Network staff members will be required to provide **information about their key skills, competences and areas of specialisation** in the Network Directory (provided by the Agency in the Network's IT platform) in order to ensure that Network partners implementing the hub and spoke model have an easy way of identifying skills within the Network which they require for the successful provisions of services in a client journey.

Network staff will be encouraged or requested to follow training courses deemed essential to upholding high quality standards across the Network. Participation in such courses may be a condition for access to specific databases used by the Network, subject to a decision by the Agency.

2.3.5 Synergies

2.3.5.1 Cooperation with European, national and regional stakeholders

The Network is conceived as the European branch of business and innovation support available at national and regional level. Therefore, Network services must be embedded in the national, regional and local business support ecosystem. Ensuring coherence of the Network activities and their seamless integration in the regional environment is a priority and a strategic issue for all consortia. This also includes cooperation with other EU networks present in their region that provide services or outreach activities targeted at SMEs.

In order to address this, Network consortia should:

- Avoid duplication and seek complementarities and synergies with existing services and actions supporting SMEs in the regional or national ecosystem, including actions and initiatives supported by other parts of their own host organisation;
- Position the Network and its members through a thorough communication strategy (see section 2.4.2), providing added value with a European dimension to SMEs in the regional support environment;
- Identify and provide value-added services with a European dimension that fit into and complement the existing regional business and innovation support ecosystem and contribute to its quality. This should also include

systematically transferring good practices developed at the European level to stakeholders in the regions covered by the consortia;

- Plan regular stakeholder meetings to provide updates on current EU-related issues, Commission initiatives and services;
- Communicate and coordinate effectively at regional level, feeding actively into regional and macro-regional initiatives and strategies, such as the Smart Specialisation Strategies.

Relevant regional stakeholders could include actors such as:

- Local/regional/national authorities, regional development agencies, regional innovation hubs, associations, representative organisations of SMEs, industrial alliances;
- Digital innovation hubs, circular economy hubs, innovation agencies, business and incubation centres, universities, knowledge centres, clusters, environmental agencies, social innovation incubators and social actors;
- Organisations promoting trade and foreign direct investment (such as Trade Promotion Organisations), chambers of commerce and industry not involved in the Network;
- Financial intermediaries and support providers for access to finance;
- Bodies providing advice on issues, such as certification, intellectual property rights, access to finance, internationalisation, energy and resource efficiency;
- Any other relevant support service providers.

Relevant stakeholders at European level could include actors and networks such as:

- European clusters networks and the European Cluster Collaboration Platform (ECCP)[17];
- European Digital Innovation Hubs (EDIH)[18];
- Europe Direct[19], EURES[20], Your Europe Portal[21], SOLVIT[22];
- The European Business and Innovation Centres[23];
- EUREKA[24];
- Trade Promotion Europe[25] (TPE) and the European Business Organisation Worldwide Network (EBOWN)[26];

[17] ECCP, https://www.clustercollaboration.eu.
[18] https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/digital-innovation-hubs
[19] Europe Direct – European information network, https://europa.eu/european-union/contact_en.
[20] EURES – European cooperation network of employment services, https://ec.europa.eu/eures.
[21] https://europa.eu/youreurope.
[22] SOLVIT – EU-wide problem-solving network, https://ec.europa.eu/solvit.
[23] EBN, http://www.ebn.eu.
[24] Eureka | Home (eurekanetwork.org)
[25] - TPE - Trade Promotion Europe
[26] European Business Organisation Worldwide Network – European Business Organisation Worldwide Network (eboworldwide.eu)

- National Contact Points (NCPs) for the EU Research and Innovation framework programme[27], such as the (networks of) Horizon Europe National Contact Points;
- European Institute of Technology – KICs (Knowledge and Innovation Communities)[28];
- Smart Specialisation Thematic Platforms[29];
- The European IP Helpdesk and the international IP Helpdesks[30];
- Joint Cluster Initiatives (Euroclusters)[31];
- European Business Angels Network (EBAN)[32];
- Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs (EYE)[33], for example with a view to supporting successful participants in EYE projects scale up their business or assisting EYE host enterprises with their international ambitions. In particular, Network consortia are requested to actively support and engage in cooperation strategies developed by EYE Intermediary Organisations.

The European Commission in collaboration with the Agency will support the Network in its European, national and regional integration, positioning and visibility, for example by ensuring that the activities of the Network are coordinated with those of other relevant stakeholders.

The proposal should explain how the collaboration with the most relevant stakeholders will be implemented.

To be successful, the cooperation implies a high degree of regular stakeholder involvement in Network activities at all levels (local, regional, national, local members of EU networks/initiatives) and constant dialogue with other support service providers. This could be carried out in a variety of ways, including through regional working groups involving all relevant stakeholders, or the establishment of advisory boards or regular meetings of relevant bodies.

The collaboration can be structured through joint actions such as common action plans, information and capacity building days for SMEs at national and EU level, training courses on pitching (to investors, funding bodies), B2B events bridging academic and entrepreneurial communities and promoting transnational collaboration / research / technological projects.

The overall goal is to increase synergies and improve cost-effectiveness by involving regional stakeholders in joint activities.

The European Commission representations in EU Member States are also useful interlocutors for the Network and may help ensure the coherence of different European initiatives across the EU. Where possible, it is therefore recommended that Network consortia, in cooperation with their communication correspondent (see section 2.4.2),

[27] In line with the minimum standards and guiding principles for National Contact Points (Annex IV on Cooperation with the EEN), https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/support/ncp/h2020-standards-principles_en.pdf.

[28] In line with the Strategic Innovation Agenda of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) 2021-2027 (page 19), https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/document-library-docs/proposal-decision-eit-2021-2027-annex.pdf.

[29] S3 Thematic Platforms - Smart Specialisation Platform (europa.eu)

[30] Intellectual Property Helpdesk - European Commission (europa.eu)

[31] Euroclusters | European Cluster Collaboration Platform

[32] EBAN – Europe's leading early stage investors network

[33] European business exchange programme - Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs (erasmus-entrepreneurs.eu)

agree on a national or regional approach (depending on national circumstances) for liaising and cooperating with the competent Commission Representation(s).

2.3.5.2 Cooperation partners at European level

The Commission may conclude cooperation agreements with other organisations acting at European level that are in a position to support the operations of the Network as a whole.

If established, the aim of such cooperation agreements will be to provide support to the Network in the area of expertise of the respective cooperation partner and to cooperate with Network partners in specific areas of their technical and/or sectorial expertise.

Cooperation partners do not receive EU funding for any activities with the Network, and are not entitled to provide Network services directly to SMEs, nor to enter into competition with the Network.

2.4 Activities that can be funded

All consortia have to carry out the following four types of activities (plus project management) and describe them in their proposals:

1) Activity 1: Provision of value-added services to clients
2) Activity 2: Promotion of the Network and communication
3) Activity 3: Network development and capacity building
4) Activity 4: Network coordination and quality management
5) Activity 5: Project management (including consortium coordination)

These five types of activities **are mandatory** – the combination of expertise, skills and positioning of all Network partners in a consortium must guarantee that the full range of activities is provided in the region covered by the proposal.

All proposals must include five work packages, one for each of the activities listed above in part B of the application form.

Individual partners in a consortium are not obliged to run all types of activities. However, all of them should be capable to provide first level Network services (see section 2.3.3).

All Network services must be provided **free of charge** to the client companies. However, registration fees for events, seminars and workshops may be charged. Travel and accommodation expenses incurred by the clients are not eligible under this action.

⚠ Applicants are required to respect certain thresholds in terms of share of the total effort (full-time equivalent (FTE) or person-months)[34] for each of the Network activities (see Table 1).

Moreover, the budget share for Activity 4 is fixed at up to 10% of the consortium's budgeted personnel costs for the other activities of the project for all consortia[35], due to the different nature of funding of this activity (lump sums reimbursed at 100% – *see sections 2.4.4 and 10 for more information*).

[34] The proposal uses person-months to measure effort: 1.0 FTE (a full-time employee) = 12 person-months.
[35] See Commission Decision of 17/04/2024

Activity	Effort
Activity 1: Provision of value-added services to clients	Minimum 65% of the total FTE
Activity 2: Promotion of the Network and communication	Between 15% and 17% of the total FTE
Activity 3: Network development and capacity building	Maximum 8% of the total FTE
Activity 4: Network coordination and quality management	Lump sum: up to 10% of the consortium's budgeted personnel cost for the other activities of the project
Activity 5: Project management (including consortium coordination)	Maximum 5% of the total FTE

Table 1. Required thresholds of effort per activity, and threshold for the lump sum in Activity 4.

2.4.1 Activity 1: Provision of value-added services to clients

The purpose of the Network is to help European SMEs innovate, grow and scale in the Single Market and beyond.

Network partners will provide **first level services as well as second level advisory and partnering services** as defined in section 2.3.3, focusing on EU programmes, policies and legislation that are relevant to SMEs.

The Network's services, while contributing to solving ad-hoc problems SMEs are facing, should always aim at expanding and improving the capacities of companies in the respective service area.

To this end, Network consortia are expected to provide tailor-made, value-added advice and support to client SMEs. This will focus on resolving specific issues/challenges that SMEs need to overcome during the client journey, moving beyond a question/answer-based approach. This may also include events where customised individual advice, training and other relevant Network services are provided to businesses.

2.4.1.1. Thematic and sectoral priority areas

Key thematic and sectoral priority areas where first and second level services are expected to be delivered by all consortia, without exception, are listed below. Depending on the evolving policy priorities, the European Commission and the Agency may further define the priority areas or define new areas.

The priority areas are:

- Single Market
- Internationalisation to third countries
- Innovation
- Sustainability
- Digitalisation
- Resilience

- Access to funding and finance
- SME Feedback / Single Market obstacles / supply chain disruptions
- Scale-up support

Single Market

All Network consortia are expected to help SMEs benefit from the opportunities of doing business within the Single Market, and to overcome any barriers they may encounter in this context.

Network consortia are expected to:

- Provide advisory services on EU legislation and policies in the Single Market[36]. An important part of this service is to help clients plan ahead to ensure that they are aware of formalities they may need to comply with. There will also continue to be a need for advice to help clients tackle specific barriers they face in the Single Market. These services will include promoting and using Single Digital Gateway, its Single Market Obstacle Tool and the Your Europe portal as well as the online procedures for cross-border activities contained in these services;
- Cooperate with other advisors in the Network, and making expertise available to other Network partners;
- Cooperate with other EU Single Market networks to deliver advisory services, for example by signposting relevant cases to SOLVIT or other relevant services.

In addition, as an option consortia may:

- Provide advisory services in a specific field relevant to the identified needs of Network clients and where Network members have built up specific expertise;
- Provide legislation watch services, alerting SMEs to new EU and national legislation.

Internationalisation to third countries

All Network consortia are expected to help relevant SMEs benefit from the opportunities of international trade, technology transfer, as well as research and innovation cooperation with third countries outside the Single Market. This includes helping in making use of EU Free Trade Agreements (FTAs), and overcoming barriers to trade and participation in international public procurement projects.

This implies providing:

- Support to help companies access third countries' markets through business matchmaking activities and advisory services supporting the partnering process, focusing for example on market intelligence, identification of suitable growth markets, local business conditions, and on capacity building for SMEs;
- Tailor-made services to overcome barriers to the internationalisation of innovation-oriented and technology-driven European SMEs with high-growth potential and help them scale up their activities in third countries;
- Support to SMEs on trade related issues for better exploitation of business

[36] In particular in areas such as free movement of goods, standards, CE-marking and REACH, services and posting of workers, procurement and tender opportunities, cross-border VAT, e-commerce, digitalisation and contracts, Single Market advice for Network IP services, and other EU legislation.

opportunities offered by new or existing EU trade and economic partnership agreements;

- Collaboration with International Network Partners in third countries to better support clients' access to third countries' markets (see section 2.3.4.4).

Innovation

All Network consortia are expected to provide research, innovation and technology transfer support services to companies and help them increase their competitive position by increasing their innovation capacities.

Network consortia will therefore:

- Provide innovation (management) capacity building services for SMEs when a need is detected as part of the client journey with a particular focus on digitalisation and sustainability, utilising certified tools for innovation (management) audits. This service may include an innovation (management) capacity assessment, a gap analysis and the provision of targeted services to address recognised gaps. In case of need to purchase a license to use a tool, the license costs may be eligible under the future grant agreement;

- Cooperate with Horizon Europe National Contact Points (HE NCPs) Coordinators and thematic HE NCPs networks to identify and exploit complementarities and synergies;

- Monitor EU funding opportunities for innovation activities from Horizon Europe and other relevant sources (such as European Innovation Ecosystems[37] calls, EIT (KIC)[38] calls, EUREKA[39] calls or the I3 Instrument[40]) and ensure – in cooperation with other networks such as the HE NCPs where relevant – that SMEs are informed about them;

- Organise in-depth competence-building workshops for SMEs on the European Innovation Council (EIC) Accelerator[41] and other relevant opportunities within Horizon Europe (such as other EIC pillars, EIT, etc.), EUREKA, the EU Innovation Fund, and others. These are part of the Network's general innovation support and competence-building activities and will aim to improve the knowledge and ability of SMEs to design and write good funding proposals and to support their proposals. While this activity is pertinent in all EU Member States and Horizon Europe associated countries, it is expected that such workshops are organised more frequently and with higher intensity in countries where funding rates from Horizon Europe are low (e.g., countries eligible for widening support[42]). One-to-one advice on accessing Horizon Europe EIC Accelerator calls from widening countries and for women-led enterprises (without any geographical limitation), as well as dedicated support to EIC Seal of Excellence for accessing alternative sources of funding/finance, are only eligible under the grant agreement resulting from this call if there is no separate action serving this purpose[43];

- Provide technology transfer services to facilitate the brokerage of transnational

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[37] https://eismea.ec.europa.eu/programmes/european-innovation-ecosystems_en.

[38] https://eit.europa.eu/our-communities.

[39] https://www.eurekanetwork.org.

[40] https://eismea.ec.europa.eu/programmes/interregional-innovation-investments-i3-instrument_en

[41] https://ec.europa.eu/easme/en/section/sme-instrument/eic-accelerator-funding-opportunities.

[42] From the EU Member States, these countries are Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia, for the whole duration of the Programme. For Horizon Europe associated countries, the list of eligible countries will be defined based on an indicator and published in the Horizon Europe Work Programme.

[43] Such as the EEN2EIC action under the Horizon Europe EIC Work Programme or any potential future successor action to it.

technology transfer agreements. Technology transfer activities may also support research intensive SMEs throughout the innovation process leading up to the commercialisation of products, processes and services;

- To raise awareness on intellectual property issues and provide support to facilitate the use of IP rights and help SMEs trade and exploit their intellectual assets at international level;
- To act as a multiplier for the European IP Helpdesk and the international IP Helpdesks[44]. Cooperation with them should be foreseen to provide SMEs with access to their IP services (including joint training events and mutual signposting of clients). Consortia or host organisations that are not able to deliver IP services for legal reasons may rely on collaboration agreements with other providers outside the consortium.

Sustainability

Network consortia will help SMEs in their transition to more sustainable business models and more resource-efficient, energy-efficient and circular processes and infrastructures. Sustainability is always a core consideration in all types of advisory and partnering services provided by the consortia, including awareness-raising and capacity-building services.

While Network advisors should analyse which sustainability aspects are relevant within the context of a particular client journey, it is expected that there will be a particular focus on the areas of resource- and energy efficiency, circularity, clean production, renewable energies, environmental footprint as well as related legal/administrative obligations such as sustainability reporting.

The cross-cutting and broad nature of sustainability support implies that not all consortia are likely to be able to provide the full range of expertise in-house. Therefore, Network consortia are expected to make full use of the hub and spoke model to make specialised sustainability advice available to companies. This implies that all Network advisors with sustainability competencies are expected to make these accessible within the Network (upon request), beyond the limits of their own consortium.

The sustainability support services will be provided and coordinated within each Network consortium by the **Sustainability Advisor**.

Each Network consortium must nominate at least one Sustainability Advisor. When human resources capacity allows, the Sustainability Advisor(s) will be supported by an extended sustainability team. Specific access to sectoral expertise will also need to be ensured within the Network, notably by relying on Sector Groups.

Sustainability Advisors have the ability to identify and help companies address sustainability challenges and opportunities for SMEs, act as the key point of contact in the consortium for sustainability issues, and be able to advise SMEs on new sustainable business models, circular economy and resource efficiency, etc., as well as linking them to complementary forms of support and more specialised advice provided in the immediate business ecosystem (see section 2.3.5).

Given the complexity of sustainability challenges, Sustainability Advisors are encouraged to act as a coordinator of sustainability support services delivered by other actors within the concept of the hub and spoke model. They are also encouraged to draw on findings, results or resources developed in the context of other initiatives such as the Sustainability Partnership for SMEs projects run under the 2021 SMP COSME

[44] https://intellectual-property-helpdesk.ec.europa.eu.

Work Programme. Network consortia are expected to provide:

- Awareness raising and information activities amongst SMEs on the challenges and opportunities of implementing sustainable business models and activities, including the environmental and social aspects of sustainability;
- Sustainability assessments taking place at the stage of the client needs assessment in the client journey;
- Dedicated advisory services based on the degree of awareness and willingness of the SME to engage in more sustainable business models and activities. This ranges from an introduction into the aims of a sustainable business approach to tailored advisory services;
- Services that help SMEs understand and embrace the long-term benefits of the transition to more sustainable business models and activities, such as:
  - Advice on access to (public or private sources of) finance;
  - Partnering and technology transfer services;
  - Advice on EU legislation and standards;
  - Support for EU certification schemes such as the EU Ecolabel[45] or EMAS[46];
  - Advice on new sustainable business models, circular economy, green entrepreneurship, resource efficiency and clean energy – in cooperation with relevant service providers;
  - Specific innovation support services, such as on eco-innovation and social innovation;
  - Other specialised services with a strong sectoral focus.

In order to carry out the dedicated services, different assessment tools focusing on sustainability might be used. In case there is a need to purchase a license to use a tool, the license costs can be eligible under the future grant agreement.

Digitalisation

Network consortia will help SMEs in their transition to more digital business models by advising them on how to apply and integrate digital technologies to improve their efficiency (such as artificial intelligence tools, internet of things, e-commerce, 5G, quantum computing, etc.).

The cross-cutting and broad nature of digitalisation support implies that not all consortia are likely to be able to provide the full range of expertise in-house. Therefore, Network consortia are expected to make full use of the hub and spoke model to make digitalisation support services available to companies through collaboration with other consortia or external stakeholders, especially European Digital Innovation Hubs (EDIH) and digital clusters.

Network consortia are expected to:

- Raise awareness (among others via workshops and webinars) amongst SMEs on the challenges and opportunities of digital technologies to improve their business models, and the support available for them to uptake such technologies;

45 https://ec.europa.eu/environment/ecolabel.
46 https://ec.europa.eu/environment/emas/index_en.htm.

- Carry out basic digitalisation assessments to help SMEs understand how to better implement their digital transformation, ranging from basic solutions such as e-commerce to more advanced solutions such as application of artificial intelligence. Network consortia are invited to make use of the Digital Maturity Assessment (DMA) tool of EDIH[47], which has been developed by the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission and is available free of charge. In case Network consortia opt for another assessment tool and need to purchase a license to use it, the license costs can be eligible under the future grant agreement;
- Provide related services that further support SMEs in their digital transformation, such as advice on access to finance, partnering and technology transfer services, advice on EU legislation and standards, etc.

In the delivery of these services, Network consortia are expected to collaborate with EDIH and digital clusters, where relevant for the success of their clients' client journey. Network consortia should facilitate cross-border cooperation between their clients and the clients of EDIH, serve EDIH clients with specialised services such as the ones on internationalisation, organise joint B2B events, investor-related events and hackathons with EDIH and digital clusters. For their collaboration with EDIH and digital clusters, Network consortia are invited to use the principles presented in the "Cooperation Guidelines for a seamless digitalisation support to European SMEs"[48], which have been prepared by a joint coordination group of Network partners, EDIH and cluster representatives.

Access to funding and finance

Network consortia are expected to provide a broad range of services that focus on access to funding, working in close cooperation with relevant stakeholders, such as local financial intermediaries and providers, national contact points, etc.

Network consortia will provide advice on different types of EU funding programmes that that are likely to be relevant to a client's needs to help them achieve the goals supported in the client journey, such as InvestEU, Horizon Europe, Innovation Fund, European Regional Development Funds, European Structural and Investment Fund (ESIF) programmes, and funds under national Recovery and Resilience Plans. Services in this area include general awareness-raising events, competence building workshops focusing on hands-on advice to prepare high quality proposals, partnering services to identify suitable project partners, as well as one-to-one support during the partnering/application process[49].

In addition to helping companies access EU funding, Network consortia will also support SMEs seeking other types of finance. These other sources of finance include banks, public finance schemes, venture capital, seed capital and business angels, and alternative sources of finance like crowdfunding. It will be important to establish good relations with financial providers and financial intermediaries at national and/or regional level, to gain a good understanding of the type of projects/businesses they invest in and their specific criteria. A mapping of key financial providers in the country/region should be made for this purpose.

In addition, consortia may provide more complex services focusing on individual investment readiness programmes, business planning, pitching techniques and partnership activities to put SMEs into contact with potential investors (including using

[47] DMA Tool | European Digital Innovation Hubs Network (europa.eu)
[48] https://european-digital-innovation-hubs.ec.europa.eu/knowledge-hub/guidance-documents/strategic-guidelines-cooperation
[49] Except in cases where this is specifically managed and funded through a separate EU-funded action.

innovative methods such as investor hackathons). The scope to provide these services may depend on national legislation and this type of service provision should be adapted to avoid overlap with other national or regional services.

Access to finance services should be closely linked to the activities of the Scale-up Advisors where relevant (see below).

Resilience

Resilience is the ability of a company to spot and understand upcoming challenges and shape its business with a view to withstanding and dealing with unexpected changes in their business environment, including for example supply chain disruptions or geopolitical changes.

Resilient companies are able to adapt their business practices to anticipate challenges they may come across and to benefit from any new business opportunities arising from changing trends, making informed strategic business decisions at the right time.

Resilience relies both on the skills of companies to manage change and innovation, and on diversification of their dependencies.

Network consortia are expected to design their advisory and partnering services in such a way that client companies become aware of the economic importance of resilience and build skills as well as structures to increase their resilience to external developments. In particular, Network consortia will:

- Raise awareness (among others via workshops and webinars) amongst SMEs on the benefits of planning business practices in a resilient manner, focusing on anticipating potential disruptive trends;
- Integrate the resilience element into the intake assessments with SMEs to help them understand how to manage change and innovation with the purpose of reducing risks in their value chain. In case of need to purchase a license to use a specific assessment tool, the license costs can be eligible under the future grant agreement;
- Provide related services that further support SMEs in this process, such as advice on access to finance, partnering and technology transfer services, advice on specific innovation management, etc;
- Make use of the tools available under the Supply Chain Resilience Platform[50], when applicable.

SME feedback

Network consortia are a key instrument for the European Commission to gather information on the needs and challenges of SMEs on the ground.

When needed, Network consortia are therefore expected to provide economic feedback to the European Commission by collecting information, evidence and data from their clients, such as on supply chain disruptions. In addition, Network consortia are also expected to gather feedback from SMEs on selected EU policies, actions and legislation, complementing the role of other business organisations in this context.

All consortia must nominate at least one **SME feedback contact person** who will act as an intermediary in relation of the above-mentioned activities.

[50] The Supply Chain Resilience (SCR) platform - Welcome (b2match.io)

Network consortia are expected to:

- Contact, inform, invite and consult SMEs in the framework of SME consultations launched through the Network;
- Promote on-line public consultations launched by the European Commission (organise events and provide advice or support to SMEs for understanding the consultation and encouraging them to respond), and inform SMEs of evaluations, roadmaps and consultations on new Commission initiatives that are likely to affect businesses;
- Respond to ad hoc feedback requests from the Commission, related to EU policies especially in the framework of impact assessments and evaluations;
- Disseminate the results of this feedback in their region, when applicable (for instance to sector-specific organisations, regional and national authorities, etc.);
- Collect feedback and report on obstacles SMEs encounter in the Single Market, using where appropriate central tools such as SOLVIT, the Single Digital Gateway and its Single Market Obstacles Tools.

Under certain circumstances an individual, one-to-one second level SME feedback support service that generates a positive impact can lead to an Advisory Achievement (see Annex 4).

Scale-up support

Scale-ups face several challenges in the EU as they pursue the ambition of securing market opportunities and growing their revenues. The EU recognises their potential to drive innovation, economic growth and job creation, while addressing societal challenges, promote sustainability and contribute to the digital and green transition. While the EU lags behind other markets in the number of tech scale-ups, it is paramount to foster an inclusive scale-up ecosystem with tailored support.

Network consortia will help SMEs to scale up and grow internationally, capitalising on the services offered by Network partners as well as other more specialised support offered by external stakeholders.

Each consortium will nominate a **Scale-Up Advisor**. This advisor will provide tailor made support for scale-up clients by means of services in the areas of capacity building, business advice, access to funding and the organisation of pitching sessions (and related training activities) with investors.

In order to provide such services, Scale-Up Advisors will engage with the local investor ecosystems and, in more general terms, be informed about and distribute information about relevant private and public finance opportunities from, for example, the European Innovation Fund's expanded ESCALAR mechanism[51] or the EIC Scaling Club, where relevant.

2.4.2 Activity 2: Promotion of the Network and communication

Applicants must make sure the Network is visible to SMEs with innovation and internationalisation potential, as well as to other relevant stakeholders in their regional business support infrastructure, including policy makers. Applicants must also make sure that the Network is visible within their own host organisations.

[51] ESCALAR Pilot Programme (eif.org)

Applicants must demonstrate how they will achieve this considering the situation in their region and taking into account the following four key communication objectives of the Network:

- Increase awareness of the Network among SMEs, multipliers (e.g., media, other SME services suppliers) and stakeholders;
- Enhance the visibility of the Network and its brand (a corporate brand of a network of excellence of integrated business and innovation services);
- Promote the achievements of the Network;
- Promote success stories of the Network.

Communication about the Network will highlight its excellence and high quality in service supply, and the added value to SMEs of Network services. It should also showcase successful results and impacts on SMEs by means of success stories, which are considered a crucial tool to inspire other SMEs to contact their local Network branch.

This must include the regular use of cost-effective external communication, in particular social media and other online tools, as well as organising and speaking at events. Communication partnerships, for example with the media, representative organisations with a wide reach into the SME community or with organisations in charge of important events for SMEs, such as large trade fairs, are also encouraged.

Network partners will also promote the Network and its services to the wider business support system in the region and organise joint promotion activities with key local partners. Promotion messages should highlight the Network's services, stressing that the Network is there to provide added value, not to create competition.

Network partners, in particular the communication correspondents (see below) will also occasionally be invited to contribute to outreach activities on EU initiatives and campaigns of specific relevance to SMEs (outreach by social media, and occasional contribution to awareness-raising campaigns)[52].

Communication strategy and work plan

Network partners must coordinate their communication activities to attract the widest number of potential clients in their region. A communication strategy for the entire period of the is therefore required as part of the proposals, while an annual communications work plan for the first year of operation must be submitted as deliverable at the beginning of the project. Both documents must reflect the communication priorities set out in this section and in KPI5 (see Annex 4).

The communication strategy must follow the template provided by the Agency and include information on:

- How you plan to achieve the key communication objectives of the Network and how you will apply them to your consortium activities;
- Communication themes guiding your actions and key messages you want to convey with your dedicated activities.
- Your target audiences for communication;

[52] The EU campaigns aim at raising awareness among relevant stakeholders and EU citizens about EU policies, programmes and its achievements. The most relevant campaigns for the Networks partners to participate in are included in the yearly communication work plans.

- The communication tools (e.g. success stories, audiovisual materials, podcasts, brochures, banners, leaflets, signage and more) and channels (e.g. social media, newsletters, websites, events and more) you will use;
- How you will measure the results of your communication activities and define success, featuring a series of both quantitative and qualitative targets/objectives;
- Identify the roles of different partners to ensure an efficient use of expertise and resources;
- How you will coordinate communication activities at local / regional / national level and create synergies with other relevant networks, business support organisations and multipliers. A clear definition of Network-related promotional and public relations activities, as opposed to host organisation activities.

Whereas the communication strategy gives the major direction, the annual communication work plan acts as a detailed step-by-step guide for a defined period of time. A strategy answers the question of 'why' and 'what'; a work plan answers the question of 'how'. A strategy is ongoing until review, a plan has a very rigid timeline of one year.

Every consortium is expected to provide a concrete communication work plan for each year of operation, using the template provided by the Agency and translating the objectives of the communication strategy into concrete actions. The first communications work plan must be provided as a deliverable at the beginning of the action. Updated communications work plans are requested for each subsequent period of 12 months. Communication work plans include:

- A list of detailed communication activities to be developed within a year under the overarching key objectives;
- Specific objectives, target audiences, draft messages, proposed tools and channels. These objectives must be ambitious, be realistic, reflect the size of the project and its communications budget, as well as the needs of its target audience;
- Specific indicators and thresholds for each communication activity;
- A short summary of the communications activities carried out in the previous year and any lessons learnt for future communication activities.

The template for a communication work plan is available on Funding & Tenders Portal Reference Documents.

Websites and social media presence

Each consortium is furthermore obliged to maintain a common consortium website featuring the latest Network brand guidelines in full.

The consortium's communication activities may be carried out by one or more Network partners, fully or partly devoted to promoting the Network in the region covered by the consortium.

In countries with more than one consortium, each consortium should maintain a consortium website. Furthermore, a common **national Network website** must be put in place (in countries where there is only one Network consortium, one website with a national reach is sufficient). The common national Network website should provide visitors with general information about the Network and its services, as well as contact details and links to the websites of each consortium. It must feature the latest Network brand guidelines in full.

The consortium / national websites should be available in the national language(s) and in English to ensure a more comprehensive reach.

Moreover, in countries with more than one consortium, all consortia should coordinate at national level and carry out common communication actions in addition to individual regional activities. Examples include national events, media relations or promotional campaigns. A commitment to taking part in national and EU-wide visibility activities should also be made.

All consortia must establish an easy way to be contacted. This could be an e-mail address such as "info@consortium-web-address" but a contact form on the consortium website or other suitable channels are also acceptable. Whichever channel is chosen, it should be monitored every day and enquiries sent to it should be forwarded to the most appropriate consortium partner without delay.

Furthermore, each consortium is required to maintain an active social media presence on the channels considered most useful depending on the local landscape. These channels need to be fed regularly with relevant Network content, news and branded materials. Network consortia are expected to run at least one national promotional campaign on social media every year. In countries with more than one consortium, the national campaign should be coordinated across all consortia and can be run by one or more Network consortia.

Branding

Consortia are required to follow the Network's Visual Identity Guidelines and apply the branding rules in full on all their publications, electronic communication products, posters, programmes, brochures, banners, leaflets, signage and other communication and event material realised under the co-financed project. The full range of Network services must be described on dedicated regional and national Network webpages. Network partners should also publish Network related content on their social media channels, visibly branded, as to ensure wider visibility from multiple accounts.

The Visual Identity Guidelines will be made available to all Network partners via the Network IT platform.

Communication Correspondents and National Communication Champions

Each consortium must nominate a **communication correspondent** whose qualifications match the minimum requirements described in section 2.3.1.2. In countries with more than one consortium, all communication correspondents from each consortium should work closely (in a group) and meet regularly.

These correspondents will act as interlocutors for the Agency and the European Commission's communication activities and promote good communication within their own country, including sharing of good practices.

In countries with more than one consortium, out of the different consortia communication correspondents one will be nominated as National Communication Champion. In countries with only one consortium, the communication correspondent will automatically become National Communication Champion as well. Champions will be the first point of contact for the Agency and the European Commission. They will streamline information on their national channels and work together to improve the standards of communication across the Network.

Success stories and outreach activities

Success Stories are a powerful communication tool to share and interpret experiences, inspire and engage others, and make the best use of the Network effect. Furthermore, stories promote and increase the visibility of the Network towards the stakeholders and the public.

Each consortium must provide the Agency and the European Commission, at least once per year, with a solid and validated example of a good story that demonstrates the impact of the Network services on the SME clients. These stories should clearly explain the challenges the clients were facing, their needs, the type of support provided by Partners and the concrete impact and value of the Network's support. The aim is to leverage these success stories as powerful promotional tools, effectively influencing and engaging the target audience.

They will be collected by the Agency and the European Commission for further publication and promotion and must therefore meet high quality standards in terms of content, style of presentation and language. Some of these stories, depending on their quality and communication priorities, may be promoted at EU level via corporate communication channels (i.e. central Network website and social media).

Consortia are encouraged to provide additional success stories during the year. This will facilitate the promotion of the Network by the Agency and the European Commission, providing new stories on a regular basis.

In addition to the production and submission of success stories, consortia are furthermore obliged to conduct a diverse range of outreach activities aiming at ensuring the visibility of the Network at local level. These activities comprise the management of paid campaigns and social media advertising, the organisation of events, workshops, ambassador campaigns, the creation of new content such as podcasts, web articles and audiovisual materials, and the contribution to EU wide communication actions. These initiatives expand the Network's reach, fostering connections with a broader audience and creating a lasting impression on our target audience.

Communication within the Network

All Network partners are required to play an active role in communicating with the rest of the Network. To this end, all core staff members should connect regularly and frequently to the Network's intranet and the Network IT platform and participate in relevant discussions and information sharing activities.

Furthermore, an online directory of Network staff members providing professional and contact details will be made available. All Network partners are required to provide the relevant information for their staff members and to keep it updated.

Communication and promotion of Enterprise Europe Network by host organisations

All host organisations are required to commit to giving adequate visibility to the Network and its services and promote its achievements.

To this end, each host organisation must place the Network logo on a principal and widely visited page of their website and provide an explanatory text / dedicated page for the project.

Furthermore, partners must show their membership in the Network by placing the Network logo in an easily and publicly visible place at the entrance of the host organisation premises where the Network offices are located, and must advertise the related services in a clear and adequate manner.

When communicating about the Network, host organisations are required to comply with the branding guidelines of the Network. These will provide for co-branding between the Network and the host organisations. Tools, templates, training and support will be provided by the Agency.

2.4.3 Activity 3: Networking, learning and development

Providing high quality services in the broad range of support services provided by the Network requires a high degree of professionalisation of the Network and a well-functioning hub and spoke model. That in turn requires a sufficient level of knowledge and expertise across Network advisors to ensure clients are directed to the right expert.

This translates into a constant need to invest in and develop the competences and skills of Network advisors. Therefore, Network partners must dedicate sufficient resources to collaborating with other Network partners to develop and improve the Network, as well as working on the constant development of their own skills and expertise.

Each consortium is expected to contribute actively – in its areas of expertise - to learning and development activities organised within the Network for these purposes. Sector and Thematic Groups are also expected to contribute significantly, for example by organising their own learning activities, sharing experiences or contributing to learning activities organised by the Agency or other Network partners.

The Network's learning activities are organised in a training programme open to all Network partners. The programme combines training events organised in Brussels and in Network countries as well as e-learning activities. The trainers are a mix of Agency staff, Network partners, external experts and European Commission speakers. E-learning material – including material developed by or with Network partners - will, as much as possible, be made available via the EU Academy and/or a specific space dedicated to learning activities in the Network's IT platform.

To coordinate the Network's internal capacity building activities, all Network consortia are requested to nominate one **training correspondent** who ensures that all staff members of their consortium are aware of the training opportunities in the Network, helps gather and summarise training needs and coordinates the consortium's contribution to the Network's training activities (for example provision of trainers or mentors, hosting staff exchanges, etc.). All training correspondents gather in a group to coordinate and exchange information about training activities.

The Network's learning & development activities include:

- Attending online and on-site learning activities organised by the Agency, the European Commission or other Network partners, seminars and workshops, annual conferences of the Network, as well as the development of e-learning resources for Network staff;
- Participation in peer learning activities approved by the Agency, such as staff exchanges, study visits, exchanges of best practices, coaching activities and mentoring activities;
- Active membership in Sector, Thematic or other groups formally organised by the Network, the Agency and/or the European Commission;

- Participation in consortium, national, regional and transnational meetings of Network staff[53];
- Active and strategic networking activities with other Network staff members in the interest of developing client services.

2.4.4. Activity 4: Network coordination and quality management

Whereas Activities 1, 2 and 3 are performed at partner and consortium level, Activity 4 relates to tasks of individual Network advisors where they have a specific role or have taken on specific responsibilities on coordination and quality management of the Network.

Network partners are encouraged to actively contribute to the activities listed below, which are of general benefit for the Network.

Participation in the activities listed below is not mandatory for all Network partners in a consortium – in some cases the tasks will be based on a specific mandate or follow a selection process. However, it should always match the competences, experience and expertise of the individuals, take into account the available resources and comply with the strategic positioning and role of the Network partner in the consortium.

More specifically, the activities under this category include:

- Chairing, co-chairing or acting as a deputy chair of Sector, Thematic or other groups formally organised by the Network, the Agency and/or the European Commission;
- Contributions to quality improvement in the Network as a whole:
    - Acting as a trainer or speaker in Network training courses, seminars and workshops, annual conferences of the Network;
    - Organisation and hosting of Network training courses, seminars and workshops other than those organised and hosted by the Agency or the European Commission (the cost of these courses may be shared by two or more Network partners);
    - Acting as mentor or coach for other Network partners or for international partners within a scheme approved by the Agency;
    - Substantial contributions to the quality of content in the Network Community platform on the Agency’s request, e.g., acting as community manager, editing or quality control;
    - Pilot actions to test or implement new procedures or working methods that are designed to improve the efficiency, quality or impact of Network operations on a wider scale (such actions must always involve more than one consortium and are subject to individual approval by the Agency).
    - Active membership in temporary groups initiated by the Agency for the development of Network-wide processes, tools or methodologies;

[53] Transnational Network staff meetings are meetings that gather staff members from different countries/cross border regions with similar characteristics or interests. Such meetings should be **transparent, inclusive, and open to any Network partner** that wishes to participate to support trans-regional economic development. The Agency reserves the right to request prior approval of such meetings.

- Membership in representative bodies or steering groups at Network level;
- Acting as national communication champion (Activities of the communication correspondent in each consortium are part of activity 2 and must therefore not be included in activity 4. In cases where a communication correspondent is also a national communication champion a clear distinction between those two activities will have to be maintained.);
- Coordination of Network activities at national and/or regional level where there is more than one consortium per country, including activities related to the organisation of national and/ or regional Network meetings, maintenance of national and/or regional Network websites, specific tasks serving several consortia.

All consortia are asked to budget up to 10% of the consortium's budgeted personnel cost for the other activities of the project for activity 4. They are, however, free to distribute the funds for activity 4 between consortium partners in whichever way they consider most beneficial.

Proposals should describe which activities the applicants intend to prioritise and how they see their role in improving networking, cooperation across consortia and quality management at Network level. During the implementation of the action, however, priorities may shift (for example, training plans can change). Furthermore, some of the activities in this work package are difficult to predict because they are demand-driven and/or based on elections. Consequently, consortia will be allowed to substitute activities within this work package and within the existing budget. Similarly, the contribution of individual consortium partners to activity 4 may increase or decrease during the implementation of the project as long as the consortium as a whole carries out the entirety of the planned activities.

The lump sum for activity 4 covers direct personnel costs for this work package as well as other direct costs including travel, accommodation, subsistence allowances and the cost of logistics for meetings/events that are directly linked to additional coordination and networking activities.

2.4.5. Activity 5: Project management

Participation in the Network requires complex operations that need careful, diligent, and constant management.

The consortium coordinator oversees day-to-day consortium management, coordination between partners and maintaining a contractual relationship with the Agency. This includes all tasks relating to the organisation of joint activities of the consortium, grant management and reporting tasks, management of the project budget, overseeing the implementation of the hub and spoke model in the consortium and ensuring efficient workflows, collaboration between partners and synergies within the consortium.

The coordinator must also ensure the overall coherence of the activities of the entire consortium and is encouraged to contribute to creating a consortium-wide Network team spirit in cooperation with the consortium partners. The consortium coordinator is the representative of the consortium towards the Agency.

Each partner organisation in the consortium must ensure efficient management of their internal Network team and appoint a Network team leader who is in charge of the coordination of Network activities within the organisation and their coordination with the activities of the rest of the consortium.

2.5 Expected impact

It is essential that services offered by the Network demonstrate a clear objective positive impact on SMEs. The impact that Network services have on SMEs will be measured in terms of increased market share, increased turnover, optimised costs or realised savings in international activities, job creation or maintenance, improved quality of products, services or processes, introduced product or service innovations related to international activities, etc.

Network services are expected to result in:

- SMEs who are better adapted to deal with the challenges in the Single Market helping them to become more aware of the requirements or challenges that they may face in future for their specific types of business activities so that they can plan ahead and prepare, and support for overcoming immediate barriers they face for doing business in the Single Market;
- SMEs with improved international activities in third countries;
- SMEs who are more innovative in terms of products and services, and how they manage their business and innovation processes, and integrate green, clean and/or digital technologies and processes;
- SMEs who have better awareness of sustainability and existing support for their transition, and improved sustainable business models and activities;
- SMEs who have better awareness of the benefits of digital technologies and have successfully integrated them in their business model and activities;
- SMEs who are aware of sources of EU funding and other sources of finance for expanding their business internationally, and what they need to do to apply and/or to establish fruitful contacts with potential investors;
- SMEs who are more competitive, future-proof, and economically resilient;
- SMEs who are ready to provide their feedback and input in relation to upcoming EU legislation and to alert the European Commission about Single Market barriers or supply chain disruptions;
- SMEs who understand the importance of showcasing their successes and are ready to share them in a systematic way.

2.5.1 Expected results

The Network is expected to obtain the following results:

- Client SMEs of the Network exporting within the Single Market and outside the EU;
- Client SMEs of the Network with international ambitions create links with other entities across Europe and beyond for cross-border business cooperation, technology and knowledge transfer and technology and innovation partnerships;
- Relevant client SMEs of the Network increase their understanding of sustainability challenges and opportunities and improving the sustainability of their business processes;
- Relevant client SMEs of the Network adopt digital solutions to improve business processes and developing new business opportunities;

- Client SMEs of the Network participating in EU funding programmes;
- Better understanding by client SMEs of the Network of EU legislation and of opportunities offered by EU funding programmes;
- Relevant client SMEs of the Network adopt future-proof, resilient business models and strategies and become better prepared to react to future crises and challenges;
- Client SMEs of the Network improving their market share, increasing their turnover, optimising costs or realising savings in international activities, creating or maintaining jobs, improving quality of products, services or processes, introducing product or service innovations;
- Better visibility of the Network at European / national / regional level by promoting success stories;
- Better understanding by client SMEs of the Network of the importance of providing feedback on EU legislation relevant to their business activities.

2.5.2 Measuring performance and efficiency in the Network

A set of key performance indicators (KPI) is set up to monitor the delivery of Network services and the cooperation between Network partners within and beyond their consortium, and with external stakeholders.

Furthermore, ratios will be used as an internal management tool to assess efficiency and quality.

Network partners must use the following KPIs to report on the achieved progress and results and include the ratios in the monitoring and analysis of their project-related activities to adapt their strategies and ensure continuous quality of their operations. The system of KPI and ratios in the Network is shown in the tables below.

Key Performance Indicators (KPI)	
KPI1	SMEs served by the Network
KPI2	Unique clients in the Network client journey
KPI3 *KPI3a* *KPI3b*	Achievements *Advisory Achievements (AAs)* *Partnering Achievements (PAs)*
KPI4	Impact on clients in a client journey
KPI5	Communication activities
KPI6	Contribution to other Network partners' client journeys
KPI7	Promotion of SME feedback activities

Table 2. Key performance indicators in the Enterprise Europe Network.

Quality Ratios
R1 Achievements per unique clients in the Network client journey
R2 Services linked to an achievement / total number of services
R3 Achievements per FTE
R4 Average impact per client in the client journey

Table 3. Quality ratios in the Enterprise Europe Network.

Key performance indicators

Key Performance Indicators are measurable values that demonstrate how effectively Network partners achieve their objectives in the period of the action.

They are built on the client journey concept and hub and spoke model (see section 2.3.4).

Applicants **must set targets for KPI1, KPI2, KPI3a/3b and KPI7** in their application. Furthermore, specific communication objectives must be included in the communication strategy and work plans. Other KPIs do not require targets as they are considered a quality indicator rather than a set figure that should be reached.

All targets must be ambitious, but realistic and must adequately reflect the scope, size of the project, size and needs of the target audience and the budget share allocated to the respective activity.

Targets – where required - will be set at consortium level but a breakdown per partner organisation is also required (in section 3.1. of the application form) for all targets for project management purposes. Targets should be set for the entire duration of the project, unless otherwise indicated in the relevant templates.

Although every partner sets individual targets, the progress on their achievement will be assessed at consortium level. Assessment will be carried out on continuous basis according to the reporting requirements set in section 2.5.3.

To be successful in their target setting, each consortium should make a thorough analysis of their target group rather than apply a one-size-fits-all approach regardless of their needs. KPI targets will reflect the relative size of the consortium and the region it covers.

Where possible KPIs will be counted automatically in the Network IT Platform or collected separately by the Agency where no automatic tracing is possible.

More information on the KPI system is available in Annex 4.

Quality Ratios

While KPIs provide information on performance and activities in absolute numbers, ratios make the link between them and provide relative information on efficiency and quality.

Specific targets for the ratios are not requested, nor are there any reporting obligations on them – they will be calculated by the Agency and provided to partners as quality feedback.

Performance and efficiency ratios should be used as internal tools by consortia and each individual Network partner to adjust their client support offer and improve their overall project advancement. They will also be used by the Agency in monitoring and evaluation of day-to-day actions or during reporting assessment exercises of deliverables according to contractual obligations.

More information can be found in Annex 4.

2.5.3 Reporting and monitoring

Desk monitoring

Consortium coordinators have the responsibility to oversee the implementation of the work programme and to monitor whether all partners carry out their respective deliverables. They must raise any risk of underperformance with the partner(s) concerned and notify the Agency if the concerns are not addressed swiftly.

On-site monitoring visits

The progress of the project implementation will be assessed and discussed during periodic on-site monitoring visits performed by the Agency.

Assessment at reporting stage

At the end of each reporting period, the Agency will carry out a risk-based assessment of the performance of the Network. In this context, Network partners whose performance is significantly below Network averages will be identified and suitable training and mentoring procedures will be put in place.

3. Available budget

The indicative call budget is **EUR 182 500 000**. This budget might be increased by a maximum of 20%.

This amount refers to the participation of entities from the EU Member States and from non-EU countries participating in the SMP under Article 5 of the SMP Regulation.

The allocation of EU funding is based on the population and the cost of living in each country and considers the resources estimated to ensure the appropriate delivery of the activities described in this call.

The indicative budget distribution per country and per region (where applicable) can be found in Annex 5.

The Agency reserves the right not to award all available funds or to redistribute them between the call priorities, depending on the proposals received and the results of the evaluation.

4. Timetable and deadlines

Timetable and deadlines (indicative)		
Call opening	April 2024	
Deadline for submission	**1st cut-off date**	**2nd cut-off date**
	19 September 2024 17:00 CET (Brussels)	04 February 2025 17:00 CET (Brussels)
Evaluation	September – November 2024	February 2025 – April 2025
Information on evaluation results	End November / December 2024	End April 2025
GA signature	January 2025 – March 2025	April – June 2025

The **first submission deadline** (1st cut-off date) will be open to all eligible applicants as defined in section 6 below.

The **second submission deadline** (2nd cut-off date) will be open to applicants who meet the eligibility criteria and who are established in:

– EU Member States and overseas countries and territories (OCTs) covering EU regions not included in the Network after evaluation of the proposals submitted at the first cut-off date. Note that proposals covering regions for which a successful proposal was submitted and evaluated positively will be excluded from the second cut-off.

- Non-EU countries that started negotiations with the European Commission for an association agreement to the SMP after the closing date of the first cut-off.

5. Admissibility and documents

Proposals must be submitted before the **call deadline** (cut-off dates) *(see timetable section 4)*.

Proposals must be submitted **electronically** via the Funding & Tenders Portal Electronic Submission System (accessible via the Topic page in the Search Funding & Tenders section). Paper submissions are NOT possible.

Proposals (including annexes and supporting documents) must be submitted using the forms provided *inside* the Submission System (⚠ NOT the documents available on the Topic page — they are only for information).

You can submit your proposal in any official EU language. However, for reasons of efficiency, we kindly invite you to submit your proposal in English.

Proposals must be **complete** and contain all the requested information and all required sees and supporting documents:

- Application Form Part A — contains administrative information about the participants (future coordinator, beneficiaries and affiliated entities) and the summarised budget for the project *(to be filled in directly online)*
- Application Form Part B — contains the technical description of the project *(to be downloaded from the Portal Submission System, completed and then assembled and re-uploaded)*
- **mandatory annexes and supporting documents** *(templates available to be downloaded from the Portal Submission System, completed, assembled and re-uploaded)*:
  - detailed budget table/calculator
  - CVs (short outlines) of core project team
  - activity reports of last year: not applicable
  - list of previous projects: not applicable.

Please note that, for Network additional coordination and networking costs (see Activity 4 in section 2.4.4; cost category D.3 in section 10), the detailed budget table will serve as the basis for fixing the lump sums for your grant. The costs you include in the lump sum must therefore comply with the general and specific eligibility conditions for the underlying types of costs of the coordination and networking activities in EU actual cost grants *(see Annotated Grant Agreement, art 6)*. This is particularly important for purchases and subcontracting, which must comply with best value for money (or if appropriate the lowest price) and be free of any conflict of interests. If the budget table contains ineligible costs, the grant may be reduced (even later on during the project implementation or after their end). Please also note that this budget category is set at up to 10% of the budgeted personnel costs for the other activities of the project of each consortium.

Please note that the amounts entered into the summarised budget table (filled in directly online) must correspond to the amounts calculated in the detailed budget table.

In case of discrepancies, the amounts in the online summarised budget table will prevail.

At proposal submission, you will have to confirm that you have the **mandate to act** for all applicants. Moreover, you will have to confirm that the information in the application is correct and complete and that the participants comply with the conditions for receiving EU funding (especially eligibility, financial and operational capacity, exclusion, etc.). Before signing the grant, each beneficiary will have to confirm this again by signing a declaration of honour (DoH). Proposals without full support will be rejected.

Your application must be **readable**, **accessible and printable**.

Proposals are limited to maximum **70 pages**. Evaluators will not consider any additional pages.

You may be asked at a later stage for further documents *(for legal entity validation, financial capacity check, bank account validation, etc.)*.

For more information about the submission process (including IT aspects), consult the Online Manual.

6. Eligibility

Applications will only be considered eligible if their content corresponds wholly (or at least in part) to the topic description for which it is submitted.

6.1 Eligible participants (eligible countries)

In order to be eligible, the applicants (beneficiaries and affiliated entities) must:

- be legal entities (public or private bodies),
- be established in one of the eligible countries, i.e.:
  - EU Member States (including overseas countries and territories (OCTs))
  - non-EU countries:
    - countries associated to the Single Market Programme or countries which are in ongoing negotiations for an association agreement and where the agreement enters into force before grant signature (list of participating countries).

Beneficiaries and affiliated entities must register in the Participant Register — before submitting the proposal — and will have to be validated by the Central Validation Service (REA Validation). For the validation, they will be requested to upload documents showing legal status and origin.

Other entities may participate in other consortium roles, such as associated partners, subcontractors, third parties giving in-kind contributions, etc. *(see section 13)*.

Specific cases

Natural persons — Natural persons are NOT eligible.

International organisations — International organisations are NOT eligible.

Entities without legal personality — Entities which do not have legal personality under their national law may exceptionally participate, provided that their representatives have the capacity to undertake legal obligations on their behalf, and offer guarantees for the protection of the EU financial interests equivalent to that offered by legal persons[54].

EU bodies — EU bodies (with the exception of the European Commission Joint Research Centre) can NOT be part of the consortium.

Associations and interest groupings — Entities composed of members may participate as 'sole beneficiaries' or 'beneficiaries without legal personality'[55]. ⚠ Please note that if the action will be implemented by the members, they should also participate as beneficiaries otherwise their costs will NOT be eligible).

Countries currently negotiating association agreements — Beneficiaries from countries with ongoing negotiations for participation in the programme *(see list of participating countries above)* may participate in the call and can sign grants if the negotiations are concluded before grant signature and if the association covers the call (i.e. is retroactive and covers both the part of the programme and the year when the call was launched).

EU restrictive measures — Special rules apply for certain entities *(e.g. entities subject to EU restrictive measures under Article 29 of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU) and Article 215 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU)[56] and entities covered by Commission Guidelines No 2013/C 205/05[57])*. Such entities are not eligible to participate in any capacity, including as beneficiaries, affiliated entities, associated partners, subcontractors or recipients of financial support to third parties (if any).

Following the Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/2506, as of 16 December 2022, no legal commitments (including the grant agreement itself as well as subcontracts, purchase contracts, financial support to third parties etc.) can be signed with *Hungarian public interest trusts* established under Hungarian Act IX of 2021 or *any entity they maintain*. Affected entities may continue to apply to calls for proposals. However, in case the Council measures are not lifted, such entities are not eligible to participate in any funded role (beneficiaries, affiliated entities, subcontractors, recipients of financial support to third parties). In this case, co-applicants will be invited to remove or replace that entity and/or to change its status into associated partner. Tasks and budget may be redistributed accordingly.

ℹ For more information, *see Rules for Legal Entity Validation, LEAR Appointment and Financial Capacity Assessment*.

6.2 Geographic location (target countries)

Enterprise Europe Network is expected to be present in all regions of the European Union, including outermost regions, and the other countries associated to the Single Market Programme to provide its services in close proximity to SMEs.

Each proposal must refer to a clearly defined geographic area. The NUTS classification[58] with the administrative division of the EU and its partner countries can be used for the purpose.

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54 See Article 197(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation (EU) N° 2018/1046.
55 For the definitions, see Articles 187(2) and 197(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation (EU) N° 2018/1046.
56 The EU Official Journal contains the official list and, in case of conflict, its content prevails over that of the EU Sanctions Map.
57 Commission guidelines No 2013/C 205/05 on the eligibility of Israeli entities and their activities in the territories occupied by Israel since June 1967 for grants, prizes and financial instruments funded by the EU from 2014 onwards (OJEU C 205 of 19.07.2013, pp. 9-11).
58 NUTS 2021 classification: Statistical regions in the European Union and partner countries — NUTS and statistical regions 2021.

The typical area covered by a proposal corresponds to **NUTS1 administrative regions**. While consortia are expected to serve the entire area covered by them, individual members of a consortium may be assigned smaller geographic areas (i.e. at NUTS2 level) provided this does not result in any service gaps in the geographic area covered by the proposal.

Should the NUTS1 level not correspond to domestic structures, coverage of alternative geographic areas of comparable size may be considered.

Provided this contributes to a higher efficiency and accessibility to the Network services for SMEs, the following options can be envisaged:

- Consortia in smaller countries with several NUTS1 regions may be formed on a **nationwide** principle.
- **Cross-regional** consortia may be acceptable in larger countries.
- Consortia may also be **cross-border**, i.e. cover administrative regions in more than one country.

In all cases, proposals are expected to cover geographically coherent areas enabling broadest access to SMEs and delivery of the full range of Network services. The suggested approach should be clearly explained in the proposal.

6.3 Consortium composition

Consortia should be composed of the appropriate mix of entities ('host organisations' as described in section 2.3.4) to ensure delivery of the full range of Network services in their designated geographic area.

An indicative and non-exhaustive list of host organisations for the Network includes:

- SME support organisations: sector and industry associations, export agencies, chambers of commerce, chambers of crafts, technology transfer companies, business incubators, clusters;
- Organisations with proven experience on resource efficiency and circularity support services;
- Trade promotion organisations (TPOs);
- Business organisations and representative organisations of SMEs;
- Regional development agencies;
- Innovation agencies;
- Research organisations or foundations;
- (Business support units of) higher education institutions.

To achieve the Network objectives, proposals should typically be submitted by a consortium made up of **at least two entities (host organisations)** in the covered geographic area. Proposals from single entities can be accepted in duly justified cases if these entities are able to provide the full range of services described in the call in the entire geographic area covered by the proposal.

Cross-regional consortia (consortia spanning over several administrative regions, including cross-border consortia) must have organisations acting in all regions they cover.

An efficient service delivery and coordination must be a determinant factor in establishing the adequate size of a consortium.

6.4 Eligible activities

Eligible activities are the ones set out in section 2.4 above.

In their proposals, applicants should show that they respect the principle of additionality, which stipulates that in order to achieve a genuine economic impact, the EU funding contribution may not replace public or other equivalent expenditure by a Member State. In other words, the EU funds may not replace national or regional funding, but must be additional to these.

Furthermore, applicants should describe the European dimension and European added value of the proposed activities and achievements. European added value means that the goals, methodology and nature of the co-operation is not merely confined to local, regional or national interests, but has a European scope. Applicants should also show how they will make use of this European dimension.

Applicants are also asked to explain the expected impact of their project (the impact-driven principle), in particular in terms of increasing the competitiveness and innovation capacities of European SMEs and enhancing their ability to become active in the Single Market and beyond.

Projects must clearly demonstrate that they are complementary to the efforts in the area covered by the proposal already made in the countries of the applicants.

Activities should be complementary to and should not overlap with activities financed through other financial instruments of the EU.

Projects should take into account the results of projects supported by other EU funding programmes.

The complementarities must be described in the project proposals (Part B of the Application Form).

Projects must comply with EU policy interests and priorities.

Financial support to third parties is not allowed.

6.5 Duration

The maximum duration of projects is 42 months, from 1 July 2025 until 31 December 2028. All projects must end on 31 December 2028. If, in exceptional and duly justified cases, the starting date is later than 1 July 2025, the project duration will be reduced accordingly.

7. Financial and operational capacity and exclusion

7.1 Financial capacity

Applicants must have **stable and sufficient resources** to successfully implement the projects and contribute their share. Organisations participating in several projects must have sufficient capacity to implement all these projects.

The financial capacity check will be carried out on the basis of the documents you will be requested to upload in the Participant Register during grant preparation *(e.g. profit and loss account and balance sheet, business plan, audit report produced by an approved external auditor, certifying the accounts for the last closed financial year, etc.)*. The analysis will be based on neutral financial indicators, but will also take into account other aspects, such as dependency on EU funding and deficit and revenue in previous years.

The check will be done for all beneficiaries, except:

– for public bodies (entities established as public body under national law, including local, regional or national authorities) or international organisations

– if the individual requested grant amount is not more than EUR 60 000.

If needed, it may also be done for affiliated entities.

If we consider that your financial capacity is not satisfactory, we may require:

– further information

– an enhanced financial responsibility regime, i.e. joint and several responsibility for all beneficiaries *(see below, section 10)*

– prefinancing paid in instalments

– (one or more) prefinancing guarantees *(see below, section 10)*

or

– propose no prefinancing

– request that you are replaced or, if needed, reject the entire proposal.

For more information, *see Rules for Legal Entity Validation, LEAR Appointment and Financial Capacity Assessment*.

7.2 Operational capacity

Applicants must have the **know-how, qualifications** and **resources** to successfully implement the projects and contribute their share (including sufficient experience in projects of comparable size and nature).

This capacity will be assessed together with the 'Quality' award criterion on the basis of the competence and experience of the applicants and their project teams, including operational resources (human, technical and other) or, exceptionally, the measures proposed to obtain it by the time the task implementation starts.

If the evaluation of the award criterion is positive, the applicants are considered to have sufficient operational capacity.

Applicants will have to show their capacity via the following information:

– profiles (qualifications and experience) of the staff responsible for managing and implementing the project

– description of the consortium participants

Additional supporting documents may be requested, if needed to confirm the operational capacity of any applicant.

Organisational competences

Host organisations of the Enterprise Europe Network project must be highly committed to the aims of the Network and to have all the necessary skills and expertise to implement the required activities. The professional capacity to successfully support, advise and inform SMEs and a long-standing experience in those areas are key qualifications for Network partners.

In order to demonstrate their capacity, complying with the required core expertise explained in section 2.3.2, consortia are required to:

- Demonstrate that they have the capacity to reach out to the target group of the Network and to address the SME community, including services and crafts. To this end, Network consortia should avail of a wide, suitable client base[59];

- Demonstrate how they provide value added partnering, advisory and capacity building services through a clearly defined, documented and monitored impact-driven delivery process. This should include a description of the following capacities:

    - Experience in assisting and advising enterprises on EU legislation in order to allow them to become active in the Single Market and beyond (e.g. CE marking, product conformity, Services Directive, VAT, public procurement);

    - Experience in assisting companies in transnational commercial and/or technology- and research-oriented partnerships from identification of specific needs to the signature of long-term business and technology cooperation, including access to specific tools for the provision of such services and for ensuring their quality;

    - Experience in provision of sustainability and digitalisation support services;

    - Experience in assisting SMEs undergoing periods of high growth and international expansion based on innovative products and services;

    - Experience in providing services on research and innovation, including activities linked to the EU's recent Framework Programmes for R&D including exploitation of results.

- Prove their ability to work with foreign organisations in a European, international business- and technology-oriented network. Specific knowledge of European initiatives and the ability to share expertise and to build complementarities and synergies with other partners in diverse sectors should also be demonstrated. To this end, applicants must demonstrate:

    - Their experience in working in transnational projects supporting international business cooperation, research and innovation;

    - Their capacity to organise general or specific brokerage events and focused or sectoral company visits abroad and their experience in using dedicated tools (including those for follow-up and reporting).

- Explain how they are embedded in the regional SME/innovation support environment. This should include a description of:

59 The 'client base' criterion applies at consortium level as the roles of some individual partners may not require a strong SME client base – e.g. provision of highly specialised thematic support or purely administrative/coordinating roles.

- Their experience in working with regional and national organisations, including cooperation with other national, regional and local business service providers relevant for the proposed activities;
- Their experience in working with regional and national public authorities in order to ensure that the implementation strategy fits into the wider context of the national and regional strategy of the country.

Applicants should give in their proposals an overview of the activities to be performed by each partner in the consortium. This will form a basis for the assessment of the overall capacity of the consortium and the expertise of each Network partner.

Network staff competences

Each host organisation must ensure that the staff members listed in their proposal are effectively available and assigned to the Network when the project begins.

Host organisations are encouraged to support a high degree of staff continuity within the Network. Applicants should therefore explain their strategy to motivate and retain staff members of the Network.

Furthermore, host organisations should make sure that Network staff and activities will not be subject to any internal rules that are in conflict with the Network activities and tasks *(see section 2.4)*. There should not be any restriction on international travel to attend Network training sessions, events and meetings requested by the Agency. Staff members should be free to engage in any international communication that is required for the services to operate in a transnational context.

7.3 Exclusion

Applicants which are subject to an **EU exclusion decision** or in one of the following **exclusion situations** that bar them from receiving EU funding can NOT participate[60]:

- bankruptcy, winding up, affairs administered by the courts, arrangement with creditors, suspended business activities or other similar procedures (including procedures for persons with unlimited liability for the applicant’s debts)
- in breach of social security or tax obligations (including if done by persons with unlimited liability for the applicant’s debts)
- guilty of grave professional misconduct[61] (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- committed fraud, corruption, links to a criminal organisation, money laundering, terrorism-related crimes (including terrorism financing), child labour or human trafficking (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- shown significant deficiencies in complying with main obligations under an EU procurement contract, grant agreement, prize, expert contract, or similar (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)

[60] See Articles 136 and 141 of EU Financial Regulation 2018/1046.
[61] Professional misconduct includes violation of ethical standards of the profession, wrongful conduct with impact on professional credibility, false declarations/misrepresentation of information, participation in a cartel or other agreement distorting competition, violation of IPR, attempting to influence decision-making processes or obtain confidential information from public authorities to gain advantage.

- guilty of irregularities within the meaning of Article 1(2) of EU Regulation 2988/95 (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- created under a different jurisdiction with the intent to circumvent fiscal, social or other legal obligations in the country of origin or created another entity with this purpose (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant).

Applicants will also be rejected if it turns out that[62]:

- during the award procedure they misrepresented information required as a condition for participating or failed to supply that information
- they were previously involved in the preparation of the call, and this entails a distortion of competition that cannot be remedied otherwise (conflict of interest).

8. Evaluation and award procedure

The proposals will follow the **standard submission and evaluation procedure** (one-stage submission + one-step evaluation).

An **evaluation committee** (assisted by independent outside experts) will assess all applications. Proposals will first be checked for formal requirements (admissibility and eligibility, *see sections 5 and 6*). Proposals found admissible and eligible will be evaluated against the operational capacity and award criteria *(see sections 7 and 9)* and then ranked according to their scores.

For proposals with the same score (*ex aequo* proposals) a **priority order** will be determined according to the following approach:

1) The ex aequo proposals within the same topic will be prioritised according to the scores they have been awarded for the award criterion 'Quality'. When these scores are equal, priority will be based on their scores for the criterion 'Relevance'. When these scores are equal, priority will be based on their scores for the criterion 'Impact'.

2) If this does not allow to determine the priority, a further prioritisation can be done by considering the overall project portfolio and the creation of positive synergies between projects, or other factors related to the objectives of the call. These factors will be documented in the panel report.

3) After that, the remainder of the available call budget will be used to fund projects in order to ensure a balanced spread of the geographical and thematic coverage and while respecting to the maximum possible extent the order of merit based on the evaluation of the award criteria.

All proposals will be informed about the evaluation result (**evaluation result letter**). Successful proposals will be invited for grant preparation; the other ones will be put on the reserve list or rejected.

⚠ No commitment for funding — Invitation to grant preparation does NOT constitute a formal commitment for funding. We will still need to make various legal checks before grant award: *legal entity validation, financial capacity, exclusion check, etc*.

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[62] See Article 141 EU Financial Regulation 2018/1046.

If you believe that the evaluation procedure was flawed, you can submit a **complaint** (following the deadlines and procedures set out in the evaluation result letter). Please note that notifications which have not been opened within 10 days after sending will be considered to have been accessed and that deadlines will be counted from opening/access (*see also Funding & Tenders Portal Terms and Conditions*). Please also be aware that for complaints submitted electronically, there may be character limitations.

Grant preparation will involve a dialogue in order to fine-tune technical or financial aspects of the project and may require extra information from your side. It may also include adjustments to the proposal to address recommendations of the evaluation committee or other concerns. Compliance will be a pre-condition for signing the grant.

9. Award criteria

The **award criteria** for this call are as follows:

1. **Relevance:** clarity and consistency of project, objectives and planning; extent to which they match the themes and priorities and objectives of the call; contribution to the EU strategic and legislative context; European/trans-national dimension; impact/interest for a number of countries (EU or eligible non-EU countries); possibility to use the results in other countries; potential to develop mutual trust/cross-border cooperation (**30 points**)

2. **Quality:**

   – **Project design and implementation:** technical quality; logical links between the identified problems, needs and solutions proposed (logical frame concept); methodology for implementing the project (concept and methodology, management, procedures, timetable, risks and risk management, monitoring and evaluation); feasibility of the project within the proposed time frame; cost effectiveness (sufficient/appropriate budget for proper implementation; best value for money) (**30 points**)

   – **Project team and cooperation arrangements:** quality of the consortium and project teams; appropriate procedures and problem-solving mechanisms for cooperating within the project teams and consortium (**30 points**)

3. **Impact:** ambition and expected long-term impact of results on target groups/general public; appropriate dissemination strategy for ensuring sustainability and long-term impact; sustainability of results after EU funding ends (**10 points**).

Award criteria	**Minimum pass score**	**Maximum score**
Relevance	16	30
Quality — Project design and implementation	16	30
Quality — Project team and cooperation arrangements	16	30
Impact	6	10
Overall (pass) scores	**70**	**100**

Maximum points: 100 points.

Individual thresholds per criterion: 16/30, 16/30, 16/30 and 6/10 points.

Overall threshold: 70 points.

Proposals that pass the individual thresholds AND the overall threshold will be considered for funding — within the limits of the available budget (i.e. up to the budget ceiling). Other proposals will be rejected.

10. Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements

If you pass evaluation, your project will be invited for grant preparation, where you will be asked to prepare the Grant Agreement together with the EU Project Officer.

This Grant Agreement will set the framework for your grant and its terms and conditions, in particular concerning deliverables, reporting and payments.

The Model Grant Agreement that will be used (and all other relevant templates and guidance documents) can be found on Portal Reference Documents.

Starting date and project duration

The project starting date and duration will be fixed in the Grant Agreement *(Data Sheet, point 1)*. The common starting date for all Enterprise Europe Network projects is 1 July 2025. Retroactive starting dates may be granted exceptionally, if necessary, and for duly justified reasons if grant signature is not possible before 1 July 2025.

Project duration: *see section 6 above*.

Milestones and deliverables

The milestones and deliverables for each project will be managed through the Portal Grant Management System and will be reflected in Annex 1 of the Grant Agreement.

The project activities must be organised in the following mandatory work packages and with the following deliverables:

- WP 1 – Provision of value-added services to clients: no milestones or deliverables
- WP 2 – Promotion of the Network and communication
    - Deliverable 2.1 Communication work plan for months 1-12 (due in month 2)
    - Deliverable 2.2 Communication work plan for months 13-24 (due in month 12)
    - Deliverable 2.3 Overview and evaluation of communication activities/results in months 1-12 (due in month 13)
    - Deliverable 2.4 Communication work plan for months 25-42 (due in month 24)
    - Deliverable 2.5 Overview and evaluation of communication activities in months 13-24 (due in month 25)

  - Deliverable 2.6 Overview and evaluation of communication activities in months 25-36 (due in month 37)

- WP 3 – Networking, learning and development
  - Milestone 1. Analysis of the consortium’s training needs for months 1-12 (due in month 2)
  - Milestone 2. Analysis of the consortium’s training needs for months 13-24 (due in month 12)
  - Milestone 3. Analysis of the consortium’s training needs for months 25-42 (due in month 24)
- WP 4 – Network coordination and quality management.
  - Milestone 4: Outline of the consortium’s planned contribution to the Network’s learning, development, networking and quality assurance activities in months 1-12 (due in month 1)
  - Milestone 5: Outline of the consortium’s planned contribution to the Network’s learning, development, networking and quality assurance activities in months 13-24 (due in month 12)
  - Milestone 6: Outline of the consortium’s planned contribution to the Network’s learning, development, networking and quality assurance activities in months 25-42 (due in month 24)
- WP 5 – Project management (including consortium coordination)
  - Milestone 7: All Staff members have completed their profile in the Network Directory (due in month 2)
  - Milestone 8: Provision of a list of tools and methodologies that can be used by other Network partners (due in month 2)
  - Milestone 9: Update (if necessary) of Network Directory profiles of staff members and of the list of tools and methodologies that can be used by other Network partners (due in month 12)
  - Milestone 10: Analysis of the consortium’s training needs for months 25-42 (due in month 24)
  - Milestone 11: Update (if necessary) of Network Directory profiles of staff members and of the list of tools and methodologies that can be used by other Network partners (due in month 24)
  - Milestone 12: Update (if necessary) of Network Directory profiles of staff members and of the list of tools and methodologies that can be used by other Network partners (due in month 36)
  - Deliverable 5.1.: Description of internal quality control system of the consortium for partnering profiles (due in month 2)

Form of grant, funding rate and maximum grant amount

The grant parameters *(maximum grant amount, funding rate, total eligible costs, etc)* will be fixed in the Grant Agreement *(Data Sheet, point 3 and art 5)*.

Project budget (maximum grant amount): *see section 3 above and annex 5*.

The grant will be a budget-based mixed actual cost grant (actual costs, with unit cost, lump sum and flat-rate elements). This means that it will reimburse ONLY certain types of costs (eligible costs) and costs that were *actually* incurred for your project (NOT the *budgeted* costs). For unit costs, lump sums and flat-rates, you can charge the amounts calculated as explained in the Grant Agreement *(see art 6 and Annex 2 and 2a)*.

The costs will be reimbursed at the funding rate fixed in the Grant Agreement (**100%** for Network additional coordination and networking costs and **60%** of the eligible costs for the other cost categories).

The grant may NOT produce a profit. If there is a profit (i.e. surplus of revenues + EU grant over costs), we will deduct it from your final grant amount.

Moreover, the final grant amount may be reduced in case of non-compliance with the Grant Agreement *(e.g. improper implementation, breach of obligations, etc.)*.

Budget categories and cost eligibility rules

The budget categories and cost eligibility rules are fixed in the Grant Agreement *(Data Sheet, point 3, art 6 and Annex 2)*.

Budget categories for this call:

- A. Personnel costs
  - A.1 Employees, A.2 Natural persons under direct contract, A.3 Seconded persons
  - A.4 SME owners and natural person beneficiaries
- B. Subcontracting costs
- C. Purchase costs
  - C.1 Travel and subsistence
  - C.2 Equipment
  - C.3 Other goods, works and services
- D. Other cost categories
  - D.3 EEN additional coordination and networking costs
- E. Indirect costs

Specific cost eligibility conditions for this call:

- personnel costs:
  - SME owner/natural person unit cost[63]: Yes
- travel and subsistence unit cost[64]: Yes
- equipment costs: depreciation
- other cost categories:
  - costs for financial support to third parties: not allowed

[63] Commission Decision of 20 October 2020 authorising the use of unit costs for the personnel costs of the owners of small and medium-sized enterprises and beneficiaries that are natural persons not receiving a salary for the work carried out by themselves under an action or work programme (C(2020)7115).

[64] Commission Decision of 26 July 2023 (C2023 4928 final) amending Commission Decision C(2021)35 authorising the use of unit costs for travel, accommodation and subsistence costs under an action or work programme under the 2021-2027 multi-annual financial framework.

  - EEN additional coordination and networking costs lump sum: amount fixed by the granting authority based on a detailed estimation by the applicants of the effort and resources planned for work package 4 (additional coordination and networking activities work package, see Activity 4 in section 2.4). The lump sum must be up to 10% of the consortium's budgeted personnel costs for the other activities of the project[65]
- indirect cost flat-rate: 25% of the eligible direct costs (categories A-D, except volunteers costs, subcontracting costs, financial support to third parties and exempted specific cost categories, if any)
- VAT: non-deductible VAT is eligible (but please note that since 2013 VAT paid by beneficiaries that are public bodies acting as public authority is NOT eligible)
- other:
  - in-kind contributions for free are allowed, but cost-neutral, i.e. they cannot be declared as cost
  - personnel costs of staff of national administrations is eligible to the extent that they relate to the cost of activities which the public authority would not carry out if it were not for the project
  - eligible cost country restrictions: No
  - other ineligible costs: No

Reporting and payment arrangements

The reporting and payment arrangements are fixed in the Grant Agreement *(Data Sheet, point 4 and art 21 and 22)*.

After grant signature, beneficiaries will normally receive **prefinancing** to start working on the project (float of normally **25%** of the maximum grant amount exceptionally less or no prefinancing). The prefinancing will be paid 30 days from entry into force/10 days before starting date/financial guarantee (if required) — whichever is the latest.

There will be 1 **additional prefinancing payment** of maximum 30% of the grant amount (without financial reporting) and 1 **interim payment** (with detailed cost reporting).

Payment of the balance: At the end of the project, we will calculate your final grant amount. If the total of earlier payments is higher than the final grant amount, we will ask your coordinator to pay back the difference (recovery).

All payments will be made to the coordinator.

⚠ Please be aware that payments will be automatically lowered if one of your consortium members has outstanding debts towards the EU (granting authority or other EU bodies). Such debts will be offset by us — in line with the conditions set out in the Grant Agreement *(see art 22)*.

Please also note that you are responsible for keeping records on all the work done and the costs declared.

[65] Commission Decision of 17/04/2024

Prefinancing guarantees

If a prefinancing guarantee is required, it will be fixed in the Grant Agreement (Data Sheet, point 4). The amount will be set during grant preparation and it will normally be equal or lower than the prefinancing for your grant.

The guarantee should be in euro and issued by an approved bank/financial institution established in an EU Member State. If you are established in a non-EU country and would like to provide a guarantee from a bank/financial institution in your country, please contact us (this may be exceptionally accepted, if it offers equivalent security).

Amounts blocked in bank accounts will NOT be accepted as financial guarantees.

Prefinancing guarantees are formally NOT linked to individual consortium members, which means that you are free to organise how to provide the guarantee amount *(by one or several beneficiaries, for the overall amount or several guarantees for partial amounts, by the beneficiary concerned or by another beneficiary, etc)*. It is however important that the requested amount is covered and that the guarantee(s) are sent to us in time to make the prefinancing (scanned copy via Portal AND original by post).

If agreed with us, the bank guarantee may be replaced by a guarantee from a third party.

The guarantee will be released at the end of the grant, in accordance with the conditions laid down in the Grant Agreement.

Certificates

Depending on the type of action, size of grant amount and type of beneficiaries, you may be requested to submit different certificates. The types, schedules and thresholds for each certificate are fixed in the Grant Agreement *(Data Sheet, point 4 and art 24)*.

Liability regime for recoveries

The liability regime for recoveries will be fixed in the Grant Agreement *(Data Sheet point 4.4 and art 22).*

For beneficiaries, it is one of the following:

- limited joint and several liability with individual ceilings — *each beneficiary up to their maximum grant amount*
- unconditional joint and several liability — *each beneficiary up to the maximum grant amount for the action*

or

- individual financial responsibility — *each beneficiary only for their own debts*.

In addition, the granting authority may require joint and several liability of affiliated entities (with their beneficiary).

Provisions concerning the project implementation

IPR rules: *see Model Grant Agreement (art 16 and Annex 5):*

- list of background: No
- rights of use on results: Yes
- access rights to ensure continuity and interoperability obligations: No

Communication, dissemination and visibility of funding: *see Model Grant Agreement (art 17 and Annex 5):*

- communication and dissemination plan: Yes
- additional communication and dissemination activities: Yes

Specific rules for carrying out the action: *see Model Grant Agreement (art 18 and Annex 5)*: n/a

Other specificities

n/a

Non-compliance and breach of contract

The Grant Agreement (chapter 5) provides for the measures we may take in case of breach of contract (and other non-compliance issues).

For more information, *see AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement*.

11. How to submit an application

All proposals must be submitted directly online via the Funding & Tenders Portal Electronic Submission System. Paper applications are NOT accepted.

Submission is a **2-step process**:

a) **create a user account and register your organisation**

To use the Submission System (the only way to apply), all participants need to create an EU Login user account.

Once you have an EULogin account, you can register your organisation in the Participant Register. When your registration is finalised, you will receive a 9-digit participant identification code (PIC).

b) **submit the proposal**

Access the Electronic Submission System via the Topic page in the Search Funding & Tenders section (or, for calls sent by invitation to submit a proposal, through the link provided in the invitation letter).

Submit your proposal in 3 parts, as follows:

- Part A includes administrative information about the applicant organisations (future coordinator, beneficiaries, affiliated entities and associated partners) and the summarised budget for the proposal. Fill it in directly online.
- Part B (description of the action) covers the technical content of the proposal. Download the mandatory word template from the Submission System, fill it in and upload it as a PDF file.
- Annexes (*see section 5*). Upload them as PDF file (single or multiple depending on the slots). Excel upload is sometimes possible, depending on the file type.

The proposal must keep to the **page limits** *(see section 5)*; excess pages will be disregarded.

Documents must be uploaded to the **right category** in the Submission System otherwise the proposal might be considered incomplete and thus inadmissible.

The proposal must be submitted **before the call deadline** (*see section 4*). After this deadline, the system is closed and proposals can no longer be submitted.

Once the proposal is submitted, you will receive a **confirmation e-mail** (with date and time of your application). If you do not receive this confirmation e-mail, it means your proposal has NOT been submitted. If you believe this is due to a fault in the Submission System, you should immediately file a complaint via the IT Helpdesk webform, explaining the circumstances and attaching a copy of the proposal (and, if possible, screenshots to show what happened).

Details on processes and procedures are described in the Online Manual. The Online Manual also contains the links to FAQs and detailed instructions regarding the Portal Electronic Exchange System.

12. Help

As far as possible, ***please try to find the answers you need yourself***, in this and the other documentation (we have limited resources for handling direct enquiries):

- Online Manual
- FAQs on the Topic page (for call-specific questions in open calls; not applicable for actions by invitation)
- Portal FAQ (for general questions).

Please also consult the Topic page regularly, since we will use it to publish call updates.

Contact

For individual questions on the Portal Submission System, please contact the IT Helpdesk.

Non IT-related questions should be sent to the following email address no later than 5 working days before the respective cut-off date: EISMEA-SMP-COSME-ENQUIRIES@ec.europa.eu.

Please indicate clearly the reference of the call and topic to which your question relates *(see cover page)*.

13. Important

⚠ **IMPORTANT**

- **Don't wait until the end —** Complete your application sufficiently in advance of the deadline to avoid any last minute **technical problems**. Problems due to last minute submissions *(e.g. congestion, etc.)* will be entirely at your risk. Call deadlines can NOT be extended.
- **Consult** the Portal Topic page regularly. We will use it to publish updates and additional information on the call (call and topic updates).
- **Funding & Tenders Portal Electronic Exchange System —** By submitting the application, all participants **accept** to use the electronic exchange system in accordance with the Portal Terms & Conditions.
- **Registration —** Before submitting the application, all beneficiaries, affiliated entities and associated partners must be registered in the Participant Register. The participant identification code (PIC) (one per participant) is mandatory for the Application Form.
- **Consortium roles —** When setting up your consortium, you should think of organisations that help you reach objectives and solve problems.

  The roles should be attributed according to the level of participation in the project. Main participants should participate as **beneficiaries** or **affiliated entities**; other entities can participate as associated partners, subcontractors, third parties giving in-kind contributions. **Associated partners** and third parties giving in-kind contributions should bear their own costs (they will not become formal recipients of EU funding). **Subcontracting** should normally constitute a limited part and must be performed by third parties (not by one of the beneficiaries/affiliated entities). Subcontracting going beyond 30% of the total eligible costs must be justified in the application.
- **Coordinator —** In multi-beneficiary grants, the beneficiaries participate as consortium (group of beneficiaries). They will have to choose a coordinator, who will take care of the project management and coordination and will represent the consortium towards the granting authority. In mono-beneficiary grants, the single beneficiary will automatically be coordinator.
- **Affiliated entities** — Applicants may participate with affiliated entities (i.e. entities linked to a beneficiary which participate in the action with similar rights and obligations as the beneficiaries, but do not sign the grant and therefore do not become beneficiaries themselves). They will get a part of the grant money and must therefore comply with all the call conditions and be validated (just like beneficiaries); but they do not count towards the minimum eligibility criteria for consortium composition (if any).
- **Associated partners** — Applicants may participate with associated partners (i.e. partner organisations which participate in the action but without the right to get grant money). They participate without funding and therefore do not need to be validated.

Consortium agreement — For practical and legal reasons it is recommended to set up internal arrangements that allow you to deal with exceptional or unforeseen circumstances (in all cases, even if not mandatory under the grant agreement). The consortium agreement also gives you the possibility to redistribute the grant money according to your own consortium-internal principles and parameters (for instance, one beneficiary can reattribute its grant money to another beneficiary). The consortium agreement thus allows you to customise the EU grant to the needs inside your consortium and can help to protect you in case of disputes.

- **Balanced project budget —** Grant applications must ensure a balanced project budget and sufficient other resources to implement the project successfully *(e.g. own contributions, income generated by the action, financial contributions from third parties, etc.)*. You may be requested to lower your estimated costs, if they are ineligible (including excessive).

- **No-profit rule —** Grants may NOT give a profit (i.e. surplus of revenues + EU grant over costs). This will be checked by us at the end of the project.

- **No double funding —** There is a strict prohibition of double funding from the EU budget (except under EU Synergies actions). Outside such Synergies actions, any given action may receive only ONE grant from the EU budget and cost items may under NO circumstances be declared to two different EU actions.

- **Completed/ongoing projects —** Proposals for projects that have already been completed will be rejected; proposals for projects that have already started will be assessed on a case-by-case basis (in this case, no costs can be reimbursed for activities that took place before the project starting date/proposal submission).

- **Combination with EU operating grants —** Combination with EU operating grants is possible, if the project remains outside the operating grant work programme and you make sure that cost items are clearly separated in your accounting and NOT declared twice *(see AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement, art. 6.2.E)*.

- **Multiple proposals —** Applicants may submit more than one proposal for *different* projects under the same call (and be awarded a funding for them).

  Organisations may participate in several proposals.

  BUT: if there are several proposals for the *same/very similar* project, only one application will be accepted and evaluated; the applicants will be asked to withdraw one of them (or it will be rejected).

- **Resubmission —** Proposals may be changed and re-submitted until the deadline for submission.

- **Rejection —** By submitting the application, all applicants accept the call conditions set out in this this Call Document (and the documents it refers to). Proposals that do not comply with all the call conditions will be **rejected**. This applies also to applicants: All applicants need to fulfil the criteria; if any one of them doesn't, they must be replaced or the entire proposal will be rejected.

- **Cancellation —** There may be circumstances which may require the cancellation of the call. In this case, you will be informed via a call or topic update. Please note that cancellations are without entitlement to compensation.

- **Language —** You can submit your proposal in any official EU language. However, for reasons of efficiency, we strongly advise you to use English. If you need the call documentation in another official EU language, please submit a request within 10 days after call publication (for the contact information, *see section 12*.

- **Transparency —** In accordance with Article 38 of the EU Financial Regulation, information about EU grants awarded is published each year on the Europa website.

  This includes:

  - beneficiary names
  - beneficiary addresses
  - the purpose for which the grant was awarded
  - the maximum amount awarded.

  The publication can exceptionally be waived (on reasoned and duly substantiated request), if there is a risk that the disclosure could jeopardise your rights and freedoms under the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights or harm your commercial interests.

- **Data protection —** The submission of a proposal under this call involves the collection, use and processing of personal data. This data will be processed in accordance with the applicable legal framework. It will be processed solely for the purpose of evaluating your proposal, subsequent management of your grant and, if needed, programme monitoring, evaluation and communication. Details are explained in the Funding & Tenders Portal Privacy Statement.

Annex 1

List of abbreviations

AA	Advisory Achievement
AGA	Annotated Grant Agreement
B2B	Business to business
CRM	Client Relationship Management
DIQ	Digital Innovation Quotient
DoH	Declaration of Honour
EBPT	European Business Test Panel
EC	European Commission
EDIH	European Digital Innovation Hub
EEN	Enterprise Europe Network
EIC	European Innovation Council
EIT	European Institute of Technology
EISMEA	European Innovation Council and SME Executive Agency
EMAS	Eco-Management and Audit Scheme
EPA	Economic Partnership Agreement
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESIF	European Structural and Investment Fund
EU	European Union
FAQ	Frequently Asked Questions
FTA	Free Trade Agreement
GA	Grant Agreement
IHC	Innovation Health Check
IP	Intellectual Property
IPR	Intellectual Property Rights
IT	Information Technology
KIC	Knowledge and Innovation Community
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
LEAR	Legal Entity Appointed Representative
NCP	National Contact Point
NUTS	Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics
OCT	Overseas Countries and Territories
OJ	Official Journal
PA	Partnering Achievement
PIC	Participant Identification Code
REA	Research Executive Agency

REACH	Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals (EC Regulation)
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SME	Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
SMP	Single Market Programme
TEU	Treaty on the European Union
TFEU	Treaty on the Functioning of the EU
TPO	Trade Promotion Organisation
TT	Technology Transfer
UN	United Nations
VAT	Value Added Tax

Annex 2

Glossary

This glossary aims to provide information to applicants on some terms and definitions used in this document and to refer them to other sources, where necessary. The terms are listed in alphabetical order.

A

Achievement

Achievements are milestones in the Network client journey. They capture the significant positive outcome of advisory and partnering services provided to clients.

Action plan

In the Network client journey the action plan describes, starting from the needs assessment, the concrete actions of the hub and all the foreseen touchpoints (interactions) between the client and the spokes to respond to the identified need. It contains information on the actors and the objectives and sets deadlines for completion of the services.

B

Brokerage services / events

Brokerage events (also matchmaking, business speed dating or B2B events) are a series of pre-arranged transnational meetings organised at a single venue for SMEs. They are often arranged at trade shows, fairs, exhibitions or conferences, but can also be stand-alone events.

Brokerage events is the great opportunity to meet potential cooperation partners and make new contacts. Participants meet during facilitated face-to-face meetings (usually 20-30 minutes), where they can explore potential business and technological cooperation opportunities.

C

Centralised / decentralised training

"Centralised" training courses are events organised in Brussels by the Agency for (staff members of) the Network.

"Decentralised" training courses are supported and approved by the Agency but organised by Network partners and take place in the country/city of the organising Network partner. They must be open to all other Network partners (within the limits of the space available).

Client-centric approach

The Network's client-centric approach implies designing the services from the client's perspective where a focal point is identifying the needs and following up of the individual client. The approach aims at creating positive experience for companies by maximising quality and building relationships and reaching a concrete success for the SMEs in terms of impact.

Client journey

The client journey is the company's growth path realised with the help of the Network services.

The client journey in the Network is associated with the provision of second level Network services (see *Network services*) where Network advisors invest considerable efforts and time to respond to a complex query or help the company design a course of action and develop it.

Company mission

A mission with one or more Network clients visiting and meeting one or more Network clients from a different country with a view to establishing a partnership.

Consortium

A group of host organisations joining their respective expertise in a given country or region to provide all required services under the Enterprise Europe Network, who agree to submit a joint proposal and carry out all proposed activities in collaboration with each other (provided the proposal is accepted).

H

Horizon Europe

Horizon Europe is the biggest EU Research and Innovation programme ever with funding available over 7 years (2021 to 2027) for research, development and innovation projects.

For more information: https://ec.europa.eu/info/horizon-europe_en.

Host organisation

The legal entity which carries out the Network activities and in which the department/group of staff members assigned to this activity are employed or engaged. The host organisations are also the legal signatories of the grant agreement and are ultimately responsible for carrying out the activities specified in the grant agreement. Host organisation is therefore a wider term than "Network partner", which only refer to the actual unit/department/team working on the Enterprise Europe Network.

Hub

In the Network, the local hub is the entity that employs the Network advisor who plays the role of a case manager for the client: providing needs assessment and following the entire journey of the client into the Network ecosystem, checking the outputs, outcomes and impact of the journey for the client.

Hub and spoke model

The hub and spoke model ensures that Network partners make the best use of their resources and work better together to use and share services across the Network and across the local, regional, national and/or the EU ecosystem.

The hub and spoke model brings together knowledge, excellence and competence to deal with the complex challenges the Network clients face. It brings at the forefront the Network effect as enabler deriving from the connection of partners.

I

Impact

Impact is associated with the client's financial growth, and will be measured in terms of increased market share, increased turnover, optimised costs or realised savings in international activities, job creation or maintenance, improved quality of products, services or processes, introduced product or service innovations related to international activities.

Impact assessment

In the Network's client journey, the impact assessment is a cumulative measurement providing an overview of all impact achieved throughout the span of the individual action plans in a client's journey.

N

National Contact Points (NCP)

The National Contact Points are the main structure to provide guidance, practical information and assistance on all aspects of participation in Horizon Europe. NCPs are national structures established and financed by governments of the 27 EU Member States and the states associated to the research framework programme. The NCP systems can vary from one country to another from highly centralised to decentralised networks, and a number of very different actors, from ministries to universities, research centres and special agencies to private consulting companies.

Needs assessment

In the Network client journey, the starting point of the client journey is to assess the needs and capacity of the client as well as the ability of the individual partner to assist with the identified needs and if not, signpost the client to another Network partner or local stakeholder.

Network advisors

Staff members from host organisations participating in Network consortia that provide value-added advisory and partnering services to clients.

Network clients

Any organisation receiving a service from one or more Network partners. Clients should be part of the target group of the Network referred to in section 2.3.2.

Depending on the level of interaction with the Network, clients can be:

- *Unique clients*: those Network clients are counted once in a given timeframe. They cannot be counted again, no matter how many times they revisit the services;
- *Returning clients*: the clients who have interacted with the Network and turn to it again, at least once more;
- *Repeat clients*: the Network's most loyal clients who return to the Network for services time and time again.

Network effect

The Network effect is the enabler deriving from the connection of partners. It is through the sharing of information, resources, activities, and competences of several Network partners supporting each other and jointly serving SMEs that they achieve a higher impact than when working alone.

This effect is primarily based on the principles of cooperative behaviour and the fact that the organisations in the Network are equally concerned about the impact and success of their fellow partner organisations as they are of their own.

Network members

Any member of a consortium.

Network partners

The units / departments / operational teams within the host organisations that implement the activities of the Enterprise Europe Network.

Network services

Services provided by Network advisors to the target group, implementing the activities as defined in section 2.4 and within the support framework (client journey, hub and spoke model).

Depending on the complexity of the request, the need to tailor and the effort to address it, Network services are categorised as:

- *First level Network services* give direct and straightforward solutions to a company's problem, so that the company does not need further assistance on the specific query. Often short-term in nature, first level services are standard and not specifically customised, and provide off-the-shelf solutions to companies;

- *Second level Network services* support clients facing more complex issues or barriers, and help them prepare for realisation of their medium- and longer-term business plans. When first level services are not sufficient to provide a direct (off-the-shelf or standard) solution to a company's problem, Network partners can propose second level services (advisory or partnership services), tailored to the specific needs of the company.

Depending on the relationship between the Network advisor and the client, Network services can be:

- *One-to-many*: services offered to large groups of clients (referrals to webpages; general seminars, etc.);

- *One-to-few*: services offered to a limited defined group of clients (dedicated workshops for scale-ups, specific sectors, etc.);

- *One-to-one*: individual services delivered to one single client.

NUTS

The abbreviation NUTS stands for nomenclature of territorial units for statistics. It is a hierarchical system for dividing up the economic territory of the European Union and is used in EU (regional) statistics, socio-economic analyses of the regions and the framing of EU policies, in particular the regional policy.

For more information: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/nuts/background.

P

Partnering profile

All requests for partnerships of Network clients are recorded in the so-called "partnering profiles". They outline the type (offers or requests), objective and potential outcome of the desired partnership that the Network client aims to achieve.

Partnering profiles are created in the partnering process when Network advisors identify suitable partnering opportunities for their clients abroad (see section 2.4.1).

R

Regional business and innovation support structure

This term refers to the full set of arrangements that are in place in a given region to support business development and innovation, in particular with regard to SMEs. Network services are expected to complement and tie in with the existing support offer in the region.

S

Sector group

Sector groups are groups of Network advisors with specific background and experience in a certain economic area (sector) who commit to work together in order to meet the specific needs of their clients operating in this area. Sector groups represent a framework to plan and implement efficiently collaborative activities.

Signposting

Signposting occurs when a Network partner, after making full use of the hub and spoke model, is not in a position to deliver a service required by an SME. Typical situations include cases where the SME is looking only for local opportunities without having any international ambitions, or when specific expertise in the Network is missing to respond to the request (rare, but hypothetically possible). Then the respective SME is directed to the most suitable business support provider outside the Network who could (better) address the client's needs.

Single Market

The common (single) market comprising all Member States of the European Union in which the free movement of goods, services, capital and persons is ensured and in which European citizens are free to live, work, study and do business.

For more information: https://ec.europa.eu/growth/single-market_en.

SME

Small and medium-sized enterprise under the definition of EU recommendation 2003/361

For more information: https://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/sme-definition_en.

Spoke

In the Network, spoke is the entity that employs the Network advisor who contributes to a second level advisory or partnering service provided to a client.

Stakeholder

A regional or local stakeholder is any type of actor (including individual persons) located in a Network consortium's local or regional environment that is not a member of the consortium but with which it might collaborate within the framework of its activities.

Stakeholder agreement

An agreement (formal or informal, written or not) between a Network consortium and any number of stakeholders, outlining the relationship and possible areas of collaboration between a Network consortium and a stakeholder/group of stakeholders.

Stories / storytelling

In the Network client journey, when an Achievement is reached, the success of a client’s case and the positive impact on its business is explained in a story.

- *Story lead*: story leads provide a brief description of a client case that concretely demonstrates the impact of the Network services on the SME. They are used to assess whether a story has the potential of becoming a success story.
- *Success story*: success stories are built on story leads and are and promoted at Commission / Agency level. They play a crucial role for the visibility of the Network and contribute strongly to making best use of the Network effect.

For more information: https://een.ec.europa.eu/success-stories.

T

Technology transfer

Transnational technology transfer is at the heart of Network activities and services that are provided to assist SMEs in transferring technologies across national and European borders. The aim is to foster innovation in SMEs by helping them adapt existing technologies or apply new ones so they can develop new products or services.

In the Network, technology transfer is the successful application or adaptation of an innovative technology from one organisation or industrial sector to another.

Thematic group

Thematic groups are formed around cross-cutting topics of concern to all Network consortia. They have for objective to create a better networking environment and to encourage contacts between experts in the Network on horizontal issues.

Third country

For the purpose of this call, "third countries" are defined as countries outside the European Union that do not participate in the SMP programme.

Annex 3

Network client journey

The Network's first level services usually address requests of purely informative nature and they do not require specific preparation, expertise or tailoring.

The client journey in the Network is associated with the provision of second level services where Network advisors invest considerable efforts and time to respond to a complex query or help the company design a course of action and develop it. Therefore, second level services require specific expertise, much deeper research and thorough support.

The figure below illustrates the client journey concept and gives information on the main elements in the process.

Fig.1. The Network client journey

- **Needs assessment**

The initial step in the client journey is to assess the main characteristics and the needs of the SME as well as the ability and capacity of the Network to respond to these needs.

If the company does not meet the requirements to be served by the Network (e.g. due to missing international component, i.e. the potential of the SME to engage in international business activity), the Network partner signposts the client to a stakeholder outside the Network who could (better) address the client's needs.

At this point, the Network partner identifies the main contact point to interact with the client (the hub). This will be the case manager for this client.

The needs assessment should be duly revisited to reflect the client's capacity, dynamics and expectations (or ambitions) and any changes in the external factors of the environment.

- **Action plan**

The action plan describes, starting from the needs assessment, the concrete actions of the hub and all the foreseen touchpoints (interactions) between the client and the spokes to respond to the identified need. It contains information on the actors and the objectives and sets timeline for completion of the services.

The client's engagement in the process should be ensured.

The action plan can be revised and should be regularly updated. If a new need is identified or a new complex query is formulated and taken up by the Network (not signposted), the action plan should be updated.

During the Network client journey, the hub or the spokes can change if deemed appropriate to provide the best support to the client.

Since the client journey is about maximising quality of the service and building relationships with the client, smooth communication with the companies should be maintained at all stages.

- **Achievements**

The successful delivery of second level Network services is expressed in reaching an Achievement. Achievements bring high impact to the client's business and are considered as milestones in the client journey.

The achieved results for each client will be measured against the objectives set in the action plan.

- **Impact assessment**

Every 12 months an impact assessment on all action plans with at least one Achievement will be carried out to determine the effect of the Network services delivered during the previous year as well as ensuring an update on matured impact from services carried out in previous years.

The impact assessment is a cumulative measurement providing an overview of all impact achieved throughout the span of the individual action plans in a client journey.

Annex 4

KPIs and Quality Ratios

Key performance indicators

KPI1. SMEs served by the Network

KPI1 counts the number of SMEs receiving any kind of service, first level and/or second level, including one-to-one, one-to-few and one-to-many.

It captures the Network's outreach within the SME community in the geographical area covered by the consortium. It measures the number of SMEs that have been in contact with the Network in any capacity, regardless of characteristics like effort, duration, or impact.

In the Network client journey, KPI1 is linked to the entry point of the interaction with all companies. Some of the SMEs counted in this indicator will continue in the client journey becoming returning or repeat clients (for definitions, see Annex 2 Glossary of Terms).

For reporting, data will be extracted in combination between the Network partners' CRMs and the Network IT Platform.

KPI2. Unique clients in the Network client journey

KPI2 counts the number of unique Network clients receiving tailor-made **second level services** based on needs assessment and drafted action plan. These are typically customised **one-to-one** and **one-to-few** in-depth services to companies that have already started their client journey.

The indicator measures how many clients get active, strong and continuous Network support in any of the areas described in section 2.4.1.

In the Network client journey, the SMEs counted here are **returning clients**, who often turn into **repeat clients**. The support requires close ties with and deep knowledge of the client developed in both initial and regularly updated needs assessment, supported by a detailed action plan to maximise the positive impact on its business.

KPI2 captures the Network's **effective client base** receiving value-added and impact-driven support through second level services. It is a subset of KPI1. In contrast to KPI1, KPI2 includes only second level services provided during the client journey.

All services delivered to clients in KPI2 are aiming at Achievements (KPI3) – advisory or partnering – and a positive impact for the client in a short- and/or long-term perspective.

KPI3. Achievements

KPI3 counts the number of Achievements from Network advisory and partnering services. They result from tailor-made **second level**, **one-to-one** and **one-to-few** in-depth services with considerable, measurable and/or identifiable **impact** for the client.

Impact is associated with the company's financial growth: increased market share, increased turnover, optimised costs or realised savings in international activities, job creation or maintenance, improved quality of products, services or processes, introduced product or service innovations related to international activities.

KPI3 captures the outcome of the Network support to clients. Achievements can be reached with the participation of one or more Network partners (in this case they can be reported by both), or with the support of external stakeholders.

In the Network client journey, Achievements are milestones for the clients counted under KPI2.

KPI3a. Advisory Achievements

Advisory Achievements result from second level advisory services. They are carried out by one or more Network partners leading to a significant positive outcome for the client.

Advisory Achievements facilitate and consequently mark the successful entry to market or international presence of a Network client in an EU Member State other than the one it is based in, or in an SMP associated country, or in one of the Network's international partners' countries, or to other measurable improvements such as access to funding/finance, significant capacity improvements, better resilience, or sustainability, etc. The result of the service is associated with considerable, measurable and/or identifiable **impact** for the client.

Individual SME feedback provided to the European Commission via the appropriate feedback mechanism after the Network has provided **second-level one-to-one services** can also generate Advisory Achievements, provided that the individual SME feedback cases are recorded in the SME feedback database, a European Business Test Panel or dealt with through SOLVIT, and are recorded as such in the Network's IT platform. There must be a demonstrable immediate or long-term impact (either because of a solution to a problem or a long-term benefit such as informing the legislative or regulatory process).

KPI3b. Partnering Achievements

Partnering Achievements (PAs) result from partnering services. They are carried out by one or more Network partners leading to a significant positive outcome for the clients concerned.

PAs mark the successful conclusion of a concrete medium- to long-term collaboration between two Network clients located in different countries addressed by the Network[66] or a Network client's inclusion in a consortium for a collaborative project under an EU R&D or innovation programme. The result of this collaboration is associated with considerable, measurable and/or identifiable **impact** for the client.

In specific cases and always in the interest of the client, PAs can be concluded between a Network client and a company or organisation that are not Network clients (yet). These **single-party PAs** cannot exceed 20% of all PAs of a consortium[67].

KPI4. Impact on clients in a client journey

KPI4 assesses the long-term impact of Network services on clients that are (or were) engaged in a client journey. To this end an impact assessment needs to be carried out at regular intervals in every client journey, using a set of questions provided by the Agency.

The impact measured by this indicator is, on the one hand, associated with economic estimates of the company's growth in terms of jobs, turnover, sales and cost savings.

[66] One of the Network clients concluding the partnership must always be based in the EU or in a SMP associated country.

[67] In single-party PAs with participation of non-EEN countries, the cooperation with the country should be identified in the work programme of the consortium or, if not, it should be explicitly approved in advance by the Agency.

Here, impact will be measured on the basis of economic estimates that must be provided by the client company. On the other hand, it reflects impact such as tangible changes to make the business model of SMEs more sustainable (for example by means of energy savings/efficiency, better environmental footprint, etc.), more resilient, more digital or more knowledge-based. Here, the number of companies where such an impact has been achieved will be counted.

The impact assessment is conducted by the Network partner acting as the hub according to an **impact assessment questionnaire**, which will be made available by the Agency. It will measure the positive effects of the Network's services on the SME clients provided by Network partners as well as gathering information about client satisfaction.

KPI5. Communication activities

KPI5 on Communication activities plays a pivotal role in evaluating the effectiveness of partner engagement and outreach efforts. This KPI encompasses four fundamental communication aspects that are crucial to the Network's success, and that reflect the actions and objectives to be outlined in the communication plans of the consortia: increasing the awareness of the Network, promoting the achievements of the Network, enhancing the visibility of the Network and its brand, and success stories. Each of these subsets of KPI5 assesses the extent to which the objectives and targets set in the communication plans have been met (fully, partially or insufficiently).

1) Increase awareness of the Network: Network consortia are encouraged to engage in communications activities that increase the awareness of Enterprise Europe Network among potential client SMEs who may not yet have heard about the Network. While the concrete communication strategies depend on the local context and the specific actions will be laid out in the communication plan, this typically includes paid campaigns and social media advertising, events, workshops, ambassador campaigns, the creation of new content such as podcasts, web articles and audiovisual materials, creating synergies with other relevant business support programmes and multipliers, and contributions to EU-wide communication actions. These initiatives expand the Network's reach, fostering connections with a broader audience and creating a lasting impression.

2) Enhance the visibility of the Network and its brand: This aspect of the KPI focuses on the consortium’s online visibility and the integrity of the Enterprise Europe Network brand. Each consortium must maintain an Enterprise Europe Network website for their target area. Additionally, a national Network website must be established and maintained in countries where there is more than one consortium. These platforms should provide comprehensive, up-to-date information about the Network, its services, contact details, and links to consortium websites. Partners are required to follow the Network's Visual Identity Guidelines, ensuring consistent branding across all communication materials, both online and offline to strengthen their recognisability as the regional/national branch of the Enterprise Europe Network. Placing the Network logo prominently on the websites of member organisations and creating dedicated pages for the project enhances the Network's visibility at the local level.

3) Promote the achievements of the Network: Network consortia should regularly use their established communications channels (including those of the host organisations) to promote their achievements as a way of showing the added value for SMEs of becoming a client of Enterprise Europe Network. Going beyond the publication of success stories (covered in the next point) this indicator focuses on how the consortium valorises past successes of the Enterprise Europe Network at regional, national and local level to enhance the perception of Enterprise Europe Network as a provider of high-quality innovation and internationalisation support for SMEs.

4) Success Stories: This aspect evaluates the consortium's compliance with the contractual requirement to produce success stories for wider publication. The minimum is one success story per calendar year, but consortia are encouraged to produce additional success stories. Success stories, whether in written or audiovisual format, are invaluable tools for communication. Partners' ability to create compelling narratives highlighting their achievements not only serves as a testament to the Network's impact but also enhances its credibility and outreach efforts.

In essence, the KPI for Communication, activities evaluates the consortium's proactive approach in embracing digital platforms, storytelling, and innovative outreach techniques. This is a compound KPI that will be calculated in the same way for all consortia:

1. Increase awareness of the Network
    a. 2 points are reported if 80% or more of targets / objectives of the communications work plan are met
    b. 1 point is reported if between 50% and 80% of targets / objectives of the communications work plan are met
    c. 0 points are reported if less than 50% of targets / objectives of the communications work plan are met
2. Promote the achievements of the Network
    a. 2 points are reported if 80% or more of targets / objectives of the communications work plan are met
    b. 1 point is reported if between 50% and 80% of targets / objectives of the communications work plan are met
    c. 0 points are reported if less than 50% of targets / objectives of the communications work plan are met
3. Enhance the visibility of the Network and its brand
    a. 2 points are reported if 80% or more of targets / objectives of the communications work plan are met
    b. 1 point is reported if between 50% and 80% of targets / objectives of the communications work plan are met
    c. 0 points are reported if less than 50% of targets / objectives of the communications work plan are met
4. Success stories
    a. 2 points are reported if three or more success story are made available per calendar year
    b. 1 point is reported if one or two success stories are made available per calendar year
    c. 0 points are reported if less than one success story per calendar year is made available

This KPI will therefore always be between 0 (serious underperformance in all three areas) and 8 (continuously reaching expectations in all four areas). However, to be considered successful, consortia must achieve a minimum of 5 points in total.

KPI6. Contribution to other Network partners' client journeys

KPI6 counts the number of contributions to the client journey of clients of other Network partners and consortia. This indicator relates to the Network effect and captures the hub and spoke model.

The indicator measures the contribution as second hub or as spoke to the client journey of another Network partner.

The quality of Network services depends on an effective use of the hub and spoke model. The purpose of this model is to make specialised expertise in all areas of activity available to all Network partners, regardless of where the required experience is available in the Network. Where such expertise is needed organisations acting as hub for a client need to reach out for further knowledge and experience-based support from Network colleagues in other partner organisations, other consortia anywhere in the Network - including in other countries - in order to address their client's needs. This type of support is sought with the aim of getting one-to-one professional support to dealing more effectively and productively with the needs of their own clients. Sector Groups and Thematic Groups are particularly helpful tools in this context.

Network advisors are therefore expected to provide first and second level support services to clients of other Network partners or Network consortia in matters where they have highly skilled or specialised competencies that can address the needs of that partner's client.

Partner organisations should consider this as an investment in the quality of Network services and of the Enterprise Europe Network brand as a whole. It is also considered that there will be a 'payback': while providing support to an SME from a different region or country may be an unusual activity for many Network partners, the fact of participating in the Network and making one's own expertise available means that each Network partner is also in a position to benefit from the full range of expertise available throughout the Network in order to provide more targeted and higher quality services to their own clients.

KPI7. Promotion of SME feedback activities

KPI7 counts the number of SME feedback activities a consortium has advertised or promoted among its client SMEs in order to gather their opinion about legislative proposals or initiatives of the European Commission that likely to have an impact on businesses. It also counts the number of companies who have been offered or informed individual, one-to-one SME feedback services (this figure may be different from the number of SMEs who have actually received these services).

Concrete results from SME feedback activities with an impact on SMEs are counted in KPI3a.

Quality Ratios

While KPIs provide information on performance and activities in absolute numbers, ratios make a link between them and provide relative information on performance and efficiency. Ratios act as comparison-ready data for a qualitative and quantitative analysis.

Performance and efficiency ratios should be used as internal tools by consortia and each individual Network partner to adjust their client support offer and strategy and improve their overall project advancement and by the Agency in monitoring and evaluation of day-to-day actions or during reporting assessment exercises of deliverables according to contractual obligations.

R1. Achievements per unique clients in the Network client journey

Ratio 1 gives information on the number of Achievements (KPI3) over the number of unique clients getting second level Network services in their client journey (KPI2). This is a **performance** ratio.

$$\text{Ratio \#1} = \frac{\text{KPI3 Achievements}}{\text{KPI2 Unique clients in the Network client journey}}$$

It reflects the level of efficiency of partners in selecting clients with high growth potential and the offer of appropriate set of services. The ratio shows how many unique clients end up with evidenced **short-term** impact of the Network support in their businesses.

R2. Average number of services linked to an achievement

Ratio 2 provides information about the number of services linked to an achievement. It divides the number of services linked to an achievement by the total number of services and thereby facilitates an analysis of the direct connection between (certain types of) service and actual achievements. This is an **efficiency** ratio.

$$\text{Ratio \#2} = \frac{\text{Number of services linked to an achievement}}{\text{Total number of services}}$$

It shows what proportion of Network services tends to have a direct link with an achievement and therefore provides particularly strong added value for SME clients. At the same time it also gives some information about the number of services needed to generate an achievement and helps Network consortia analyse which services have the highest (and lowest) added client value.

R3. Achievements per FTE

Ratio 3 gives information on the number of Achievements (KPI3) over the total number of FTEs dedicated towards supporting unique clients through second level Network services. This is an **efficiency** ratio.

$$\text{Ratio \#3} = \frac{\text{KPI3 Achievements}}{\text{FTE}}$$

It measures the efficiency of services by relating successful services (Achievements) to the effort – resources needed to reach the latter.

R4. Average impact per client in the client journey

Ratio 4 calculates the average impact of Network services on a client by dividing the reported impact by the number of SMEs reporting the impact. It is a performance ratio that allows estimates to be made about the number of companies that report a positive change to their business model as a result of Network services, and about the economic development of companies resulting from Network services.

$$\text{Ratio \#4} = \frac{\text{KPI4 Impact}}{\text{Number of companies reporting impact}}$$

Annex 5

Indicative budget distribution per country, for EU27 and SMP associated countries and, where applicable, per region of EU-27 country (linked to section 3. Available budget).

The tables below provide an indicative overall budget per eligible country and, for EU-27 countries with several consortia in the same country in the previous Enterprise Europe Network period (2022-2025), a regional breakdown (in percent of the national indicative maximum EU grant amount) reflecting the existing (2023) regional coverage of individual Enterprise Europe Network consortia.

This regional breakdown is provided solely for information purposes to allow applicants to estimate an appropriate budget for proposals that do not cover the entire national territory of a country. It does not constitute an eligibility criterion or an obligation to align the regional coverage of any project proposed under this call with the grouping of geographic areas below or with the current regional coverage of existing Enterprise Europe Network consortia. In case several applications are retained covering different regions of the same country, and the sum of the proposed grant amounts for these projects exceeds the total indicative EU grant amount for the country they cover, the Agency reserves the right to reduce the grant amount of each of those proposals so that their sum does not exceed the indicative amount for that country.

Country	Indicative maximum EU grant amount (EUR)
Austria	€3,300,741
Belgium	€4,660,862
Bulgaria	€2,557,641
Croatia	€1,398,659
Cyprus	€1,004,886
Czechia	€3,580,550
Denmark	€2,478,167
Estonia	€613,002
Finland	€2,145,032
France	€24,537,895
Germany	€31,765,999
Greece	€4,455,719
Hungary	€3,433,180
Iceland	€640,815
Ireland	€2,231,129
Italy	€22,587,699
Latvia	€839,953
Lithuania	€1,080,849

Luxembourg	€792,376
Malta	€610,109
Netherlands	€6,499,339
Norway	€1,500,416
Poland	€11,284,652
Portugal	€3,578,653
Romania	€5,621,480
Slovakia	€1,400,903
Slovenia	€1,421,924
Spain	€17,055,036
Sweden	€3,772,834
Non-EU/EEA countries participating in the Single Market Programme	
Albania	€360,500.00
Bosnia Herzegovina	€898,000.00
Kosovo	€330,500.00
Moldova	TBC
Montenegro	€239,000.00
North Macedonia	€415,500.00
Serbia	€1,156,000.00
Turkey	€10,900,000.00
Ukraine	€1,350,000.00
TOTAL	€182,500,000

The approximate regional shares in countries with more than one Enterprise Europe Network consortium (as per 2023, EU-27 only) are listed in the table below.

Country/Region	**Total indicative country budget**	**Share per region (%)**
Belgium	€4,660,862.00	
Bruxelles-Capitale/Brussels Hoofstedelijk Gewest		18%
Vlaams Gewest		53%
Région wallonne		29%
France	€24,537,895.00	
Paris, Ile-de-France, Centre-Val de Loire, Normandie, Nouvelle Calédonie, Polynésie française		29%
Grand Est, Bourgogne Franche-Comté		13%
Hauts-De-France		7%
Bretagne		11%
Nouvelle Acquitaine, Occitanie		18%
Auvergne, Rhone-Alpes		12.5%
Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur, Corse		8%
Antilles		1.5%
Germany	€31,765,999.00	
Baden-Württemberg		14%
Bayern		15%
Berlin, Brandenburg		6%
Bremen		2%
Hamburg, Schleswig-Holstein		6%
Hessen		7%
Mecklenburg-Vorpommern		3%
Niedersachsen		9%
Nortrhein-Westphalen		21%
Pheinland-Pfalz, Saarland		6%
Sachsen		5%
Sachsen-Anhalt		3%
Thüringen		3%
Italy	€22,587,699.00	
Liguria, Piemonte, Valle d'Aosta		10%
Emilia Romagna, Lombardia		24%
Friuli Venezia Giulia, Prov. Aut. Bolzano, Prov. Aut. Trento, Veneto		12%
Marche, Toscana, Umbria		10%
Lazio, Sardegna		12%
Abruzzo, Basilicata, Calabria, Campania, Molise, Puglia, Sicilia		32%

Poland	€11,284,652.00	
Central Poland (Mazowiecki regionalny, Warszawski stołeczny, Łódzkie, Kujawsko-pomorskie, Pomorskie)		24.5%
East Poland (Lubelskie, Warmińsko-mazurskie, Podlaskie)		14.5%
South Poland (Śląskie, Małopolskie, Świętokrzyskie, Podkarpackie)		31.5%
West Poland (Zachodniopomorskie, Lubuskie, Wielkopolskie, Dolnośląskie, Opolskie)		29.5%
Romania	€5,621,480.00	
Argeș, București-Ilfov, Călărași, Dâmbovița, Giurgiu, Ialomița, Prahova, Teleorman		25%
Alba, Bihor, Bistrița-Năsăud, Brașov, Cluj, Covasna, Harghita, Maramureș, Mureș, Salaj, Satu Mare, Sibiu		25%
Bacău, Buzău, Botoșani, Brăila, Constanța, Galați, Iași, Neamț, Suceava, Tulcea, Vaslui, Vrancea		28.5%
Arad, Caras-Severin, Dolj, Gorj, Hunedoara, Mehedinți, Olt, Timiș, Vâlcea		21.5%
Spain	€17,055,036.00	
Asturias, Cantabria, Castilla y Leon, Galicia		14%
País Vasco		5.5%
Aragon, Castilla la Mancha, Extremadura, La Rioja, Navarra		11%
Madrid		14%
Cataluña		16%
Murcia, Valencia		13%
Islas Baleares		4%
Andalucia		17.5%
Islas Canarias		5%