



COSME Programme

Call for Proposals

Establishing Enterprise Europe Network partners
in Kosovo* for the years 2020-2021

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1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1. Introduction

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

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

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

This call for proposals, managed by EASME, implements parts of the COSME Work Programme 2019 as amended on 20 August 2018¹.

1.2. Policy Context

COSME in general and the Enterprise Europe Network in particular, are part of the wider policy framework designed to foster growth, employment and competitiveness in the Single Market. They fully support the aims of the Europe 2020 strategy, which recognises the crucial role of SMEs in delivering high employment, social cohesion and the transition to low carbon, resource, energy efficient economy and social cohesion.

Under COSME 2014-2020, the Network took steps forward by contributing to the objectives of the COSME Programme, which are to facilitate access to European and International markets for European SMEs and to provide growth-oriented, integrated business and innovation support services that help strengthen the competitiveness and sustainability of the European companies.

Recently, the European Union signed an agreement with Kosovo* confirming its participation in the COSME programme with effect from 4 September 2018.

The Network has delivered an impressive number of activities and outcomes and has made considerable efforts to measure its real impact on SMEs (in terms of market improvement, costs' savings, job creation, etc.).

¹ Commission Implementing Decision C(2019)6039 final amending and correcting Implementing Decision C(2018)8098 on the financing of the Programme for the Competitiveness of Enterprises and Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises and the adoption of the work programme for 2019 and its Annex.

Moreover, in the meantime, the Network has successfully integrated two new innovation services into its portfolio. Since 2014, Enterprise Europe Network has been providing services to enhance the innovation management capacities of SMEs to successfully translate their innovation activities into jobs and growth. It also offers high-end Key Account Management services to the SME beneficiaries of the Horizon 2020 SME Instrument, FTI and FET-Open, and recently the beneficiaries of the EIC pilot to help them identify the specific challenges they face and through coaching, assist them in overcoming the existing barriers for their development.

In the last years, the Network has continued to evolve, most notably by introducing the role of the Scale-Up Advisors as set out in the European Commission's Start-up and Scale-up Initiative. These advisors are high-calibre professionals able to take start-ups with growth potential to the next level helping them overcome the barriers and to fully support their ambition to scale their activities and reach out international markets.

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

2.1. Structure of the Network and geographical coverage

2.1.1. Structure of the Network

The Enterprise Europe Network is composed of regional consortia of host organisations, or of single organisations with sole responsibility for the project in its geographic area. In both cases, the proposal must ensure the provision of the full range of services described in the guide for applicants.

Each consortium provides the advisory and support services described in this document to businesses in their own region (regional focus), and cooperate closely with other consortia across the Network in order to form a single, coherent and collaborative European network.

These consortia are established in the vast majority of regions of the European Union and other countries participating in COSME. As from 1 January 2020, all regions of the European Union and other countries participating in COSME shall be covered by an Enterprise Europe Network consortium. The primary target audience of the Enterprise Europe Network are European small and medium-sized businesses interested in carrying out international activities² and/or engaging in innovation. Each Network consortium must ensure that it is fully integrated into their regional business and innovation support infrastructure, and in order to achieve this goal shall cooperate efficiently with all relevant regional stakeholders, service providers and other European Networks.

The Commission has defined governance arrangements for the Network. EASME will coordinate the operational aspects of governance putting in place the necessary governance and Network support structures. Governance mechanisms include the Steering and Advisory Group (SAG) which provides channels for Network partners (via their national SAG representatives) to advise the European Commission and the Agency on the strategic direction and operational aspects of the Network respectively, as well as a range of networking and capacity building activities (annual conference, training facilities, internal communication tools, a common IT infrastructure and intranet, etc.). This may also include activities for strengthening the relationships with the Network's host organisations.

² In this context, activities are considered as international if they involve at least two countries (including the country of origin of the client company).

There is also a SAG Bureau, which has the role of setting the agenda for future SAG meetings together with other SAG representatives, ensuring follow-up of the tasks decided at the SAG, and notifying the European Commission and EASME about important Network-related issues between SAG meetings.

2.1.2. *Geographical coverage*

The Enterprise Europe Network is present in all regions of the European Union and other countries participating in COSME for which the proposals have met the minimum award criteria³.

In most countries, the typical area covered by a consortium corresponds more or less to NUTS¹⁴ regions. While consortia are expected to serve the entire area covered by their consortium, individual partner organisations within a consortium may be assigned smaller geographic areas (for example at NUTS² level), provided that this does not result in any service gaps in the full area covered by the proposal.

2.2. **Objectives of the Network, target audience and fundamental principles**

2.2.1. *Objectives*

The Enterprise Europe Network provides continued support to its clients in:

- Innovation;
- Internationalisation (developing in foreign markets within and outside of the EU);
- Single Market.

Other service areas of the Network are closely related to these goals: support for access to finance, support to scale-ups and advice on implementing circularity, resource efficiency and/or exploiting opportunities in the green economy.

Therefore, Network support should result in:

- Clients who are more innovative in terms of products and services, and how they manage their innovation processes;
- Clients with improved international activities;
- Clients better adapted to the challenges in the Single Market, including better access to funding opportunities.

Since its inception, the priority for the Network has been to achieve, and then improve coherent service delivery across all regions, and out of necessity, this resulted in a very transactional approach with clients and stakeholders.

³ Furthermore, partner organisations will be sought in a number of third countries as stipulated in Article 6 of the COSME Regulation.

⁴ [Commission Regulation \(EC\) No 105/2007 of 1 February 2007 amending the annexes to Regulation \(EC\) No 1059/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of a common classification of territorial units for statistics \(NUTS\) \(Official Journal of the European Union L 39 of 10.02.2007\)](#).

In order to help SMEs to face up to changing and more complex and demanding requirements, the Network has started to move away from this transactional approach, in particular for specific service areas such as innovation, in order to generate more impact for clients.

For the next activity period it is proposed to continue the evolution of the Network to embed the client's experience of what the Network does at the heart of its service planning. The starting point for this is to further build on the excellent service provision of the Network, so that it can clearly demonstrate that it is supporting the client (not just individual projects) at relevant stages of their journey to achieve growth and prosperity. The logical conclusion to this is to adopt a hub and spoke mode of action, where clients recognise Network staff members as trusted advisors, and are eager to recommend these Network services to others.

In order to efficiently address new economic challenges and help SMEs harness globalisation and digitalisation in Europe, the Enterprise Europe Network shall build on the existing strengths and evolve its structures and services, focusing on the following points:

- 1) Ensure that across its network there is a client-centric approach with consortia working together to support the client to innovate, grow and internationalise, and all Network consortia delivering the full set of international and innovation services;
- 2) Combine a continued "no wrong door" approach of initial access to all SMEs with a more in-depth service for SMEs that have a substantial potential to innovate, compete and grow in the Single Market and more widely, creating jobs;
- 3) Keep common standards and processes across and between consortia paying attention to minimising or reducing administrative burden;
- 4) Increase its support for SME learning, skills and competitiveness, particularly by moving from pure information events to services that include a capacity-building component using interactive and innovative tools;
- 5) Continuously working on putting in place the Scale-up Advisors function to provide high-end and tailored advice to help start-ups and scale-ups grow and innovate internationally;
- 6) Better communicate and coordinate at regional level, feeding more actively into other regional initiatives and strategies such as the Smart Specialisation Platforms;
- 7) Increase its visibility at local, regional and European level to ensure that the Network becomes a natural first port of call for SMEs with innovation and internationalisation potential;
- 8) Build on the experience of its Key Account Management services for innovation to contribute to both SME beneficiaries of the European Innovation Council (EIC) Pilot and the potential beneficiaries of the forthcoming Enhanced EIC Pilot and its successor and help SMEs tap into open innovation ecosystems;
- 9) Help SMEs to export both within the Single Market and more widely, further improve the work and organisation of Business Cooperation Centres in third countries in cooperation with trade promotion organisations when there is a common interest;
- 10) Increase the services that it provides on access to finance.

The objective is that the *Enterprise Europe Network* is recognised by SMEs and stakeholders as the indispensable 'European arm' of regional/national business support systems, with a clear European added value and providing services that are highly valued by clients.

2.2.2. *Target audience*

The Network's primary target audience is small and medium-sized enterprises capable of, or having potential for, engaging in cross-border activities with a European or international dimension, and innovative SMEs. The Network will continue to provide some general services (such as, for example, awareness raising and simple automated information services, including innovative services based on social media) focusing in particular on the needs of this target audience. All SMEs shall be entitled to turn to the Network for assistance, regardless of their size, sector or business cycle, but Network partners should signpost businesses with a purely local or national dimension to other service providers where appropriate.

For more tailor-made services, (the most important component of the Network's advisory/information service area), the Network should primarily target companies with a high potential for internationalisation and/or innovation. Given the aim and nature of the Network, it is expected that the majority of SME clients for the Network's deeper support services will be SMEs with high ambitions and a potential to grow, to innovate, to engage in business and technology partnering activities and to exploit new opportunities in the Single Market and beyond. This can include businesses in traditional sectors.

Building on the initiative started with the pilot action on start-up and scale-up companies in 2017-2018 and carried on as part of the core COSME activities as of 2019 partners shall continue identifying young European SMEs with high-growth potential and help them scale up their activities outside their home country. To this aim, high-calibre Network Scale-up Advisors shall be appointed within the beneficiaries' organisations to provide impact-generating services to scale-ups and to continue developing their capacities and local cooperation arrangements for this purpose. Cooperation across sectors and Network service areas and the move to full service integration is of particular importance for supporting scale-ups.

Network partners may also tailor certain specialised activities to sectors that are particularly important in their region, or to companies with a particularly high potential.

While SMEs (including the SME beneficiaries from the EIC pilot and its successor⁵) remain the primary target audience for the Network, some services might be directed at other organisations⁶. These include:

- Clusters and sectorial cluster organisations. Substantial synergies and efficiency gains can be achieved for certain Network services by working with clusters⁷. Network partners, are also expected to cooperate with the European Cluster Collaboration Platform (ECCP). The Network's Clusters Thematic Group is a key interlocutor in the Network for this cooperation;
- Public and private providers of support services to SMEs;
- Public authorities and public enterprises (for example by strengthening their capacities for innovation- and SME-friendly public procurement), provided the activities are designed to benefit SMEs;
- Research institutes or higher education institutions (only for activities designed to make knowledge, skills and technologies available to SMEs);

⁵ See consultation H2020-EEN-SGA4-2020-2021.

⁶ Organisations may not be Network partners and clients of the Network at the same time.

⁷ Depending on local circumstances, the cooperation might be carried out via the cluster manager/organisation or directly with cluster members.

- Sectorial business associations or other organisations that are part of the SME support infrastructure (e.g. for the organisation of seminars, workshops, information days and trainings).

2.2.3. *Fundamental principles of the Network*

a) **Client-centric approach**

- Network activities shall be based on a client-centric approach. As the individual needs of each client span different service and policy areas, there is a need for continued efforts to break down silos and move towards providing fully integrated services to European SMEs.
- This means that the Network shall continue the effort in moving to a 'hub and spoke' model for designing services around a client/company, and in particular for client SMEs, ensuring that the Network makes the best use of the resources it has and works better together to use and share services across the Network on the one hand, and across the local and/or EU ecosystem on the other.
- This is expressed in a systemic and integrated approach, bringing together knowledge, excellence and competence to deal with the complex challenges the Network clients face. The Network hub is the support integrator for the individual client, providing the core services and pulling together the 'spokes' of other consortium members to provide additional or more specialised services available in the region or across the EU.

a.1) What is the Network's regional 'hub and spoke model'?

A hub and spoke structure is a network structure in which several entities (partners, stakeholders,...), each remaining individually managed, pool their assets together, contributing to one central goal, here rendering service to the Network client. All partners in the system typically have the same objective. The contributing partners/stakeholders are referred to as the "spokes." The partner in the region where the SME is located is the primary contact with the client and is referred to as the "local hub". The Network local hub is the relationship manager for the individual client: this helps to maintain an established relationship of trust and honours the proximity principle: "the organisations that make up the Network ("Network partners") are expected to provide easy-to-access integrated services in close proximity to SMEs". However, at consortium level, whenever the local ecosystem requires it, another support integrator can be identified. A more coordinated involvement of other partners in and/or outside the consortium, or of other relevant stakeholders, will ensure that there is a clear EU added-value. This in turn will enhance the Network's visibility towards both its own clients and other stakeholders. It is obvious that when working with a variety of partners and stakeholders, the overall quality of the services should be safeguarded, so as to meet the quality standards the Network wishes to maintain.

a.2) The Network client journey

The Network client journey is the active contribution of the Network to the SME client's growth journey. It is delivered through a variety of quality services aimed at empowering of SMEs with regard to innovation, enhancing the capacity of SMEs to internationalise successfully, and empowering SMEs to better face the challenges of the Single Market.

In a nutshell, the Network client journey is the company's growth realised with the help of Network services.

The Network client journey is part of the client's overall journey towards growth which can include support provided outside of the Network, starting before and ending after the Network's involvement.

Only SME clients – new or existing – are concerned by the Network client journey.

A full multi-step Network client journey is not expected to apply to all SME clients. It is obvious that in some cases when the needs assessment reveals this the Network can also provide simple support and advisory services or signposts outside of the Network for assistance. It is not always necessary to accompany a client on a full multi-step journey.

The following points should be taken into account to understand the Network client journey:

- In line with the Network's regional presence and the basic principle of the Network's proximity to clients, the needs assessment of a client involved in a Network Client journey is ideally co-developed by the local hub partner where the client is located in close concertation with the contributing partner(s) in and outside the consortium and across the Network. During the Network client journey the hub can change if deemed appropriate to provide the best support to the client.
- A needs assessment is not a mere administrative formality, it needs to be flexible, evolve according to the dynamics of the case concerned and it can be revised. It should specify the purpose of the support provided by the Network in line with the Network's purpose so that the client understands what the Network support contains and that he/she can agree upon it.
- Services refer to partnering (brokerage events, company missions, profiles...) and non-partnering services (advisory services with an advisory plan, provision of relevant EU-related information, EIMC and KAM services).

Achievements such as PAs, ASOs, KAM/EIMC services (or a combination of them) are to be seen as milestones in a multi-step client journey. The successful delivery of a Network service is to be understood as a stage in the Network client's journey; the actions are tools provided through Network services to reach the growth goals of the client company.

The visualisation of the Network client journey concept can be found in Annex 1 to this document.

b) Network effect

Good governance is a key factor for the Network to achieve its goal to foster EU SMEs' growth, competitiveness and innovation capacity in a changing economy.

The Network brings together organisations with a diversity of expertise and skill sets. An individual partner might need the support of more specialised colleagues to best support a client. Therefore, it is important that the hub and spoke principle is applied. The local hub (client relationship manager) is the main actor responsible for preparing the client's needs assessment and action plan. This relationship manager makes the decision whether the action plan will be implemented using its own resources or whether there is a need to involve other consortium partners with relevant expertise or external stakeholders with the required knowledge. The Network client journey should also be reflected in the action plan prepared by the local hub partner who decides which partners to involve to reach the action plan's milestones. The local hub partner is the one able to decide when an action plan and Network client journey are completed.

This approach will allow consortia to be more effectively integrated into the regional ecosystem to their clients' benefit and to achieve a stronger regional positioning with increased visibility.

To provide the highest service quality to Network clients, smart signposting and mutual feedback is essential between partners for all Network services they provide. Such interactions contribute, additionally, to a positive Network image in the eyes of clients as well as building trust and

transparency between consortium and Network partners. To that end, recognising the support given by other Network partners' to a Network partner's client to reach an Achievement helps enhance synergies among Network partners and fosters consortium and Network cohesion to the client's benefit. The other Network partners' contribution needs to be recognised whether they belong to the same consortium or to other consortia and indicated when registering Achievements in the Network's database.

Implementing the client-centric and Network client journey concepts is easier by making full use of the local hub partners' expertise and in-depth integration in the regional economy, as they are best placed to draw upon the specialized know-how of other consortium partners or regional stakeholders when needed and channel it to the clients.

To achieve the goal of providing the best service possible to clients and help them complete their Network client journey, each consortium will need to maintain a detailed overview of the expertise of Network staff and relevant stakeholders' (skills matrix) as it is an essential tool for an efficient, smart signposting system.

Finally, taking into consideration the significant upcoming changes in the ways the Network is expected to operate, the changing nature of Network services and clients' needs, and the need to continuously improve the quality and efficiency of Network services, maintaining existing expertise and developing new expertise is essential. Network partners must ensure that their staff receive the training needed to provide services to clients with the required quality all along their Network client journey. Each consortium needs to program trainings to that end, taking into account the client-centric and Network client journey concepts.

This will help (1) ensure a common mind-set for the Network client journey concept, (2) demonstrate partners' commitment to providing added value services to SMEs and (3) ensure a continuous improvement of partners' levels of knowledge and experience as well as interaction with the Network.

c) Quality management and Code of Conduct

The Enterprise Europe Network is a network of excellence. Consequently, all Network partners are expected to perform to the highest quality standards, both in terms of their delivery of services to client companies and in terms of their compliance with internal procedures and workflows of the Network. Host organisations are required to put in place adequate quality management procedures and are expected to strive to continuously raise the quality and impact of their activities and services.

In 2020-2021 the Network partners shall continue strengthening the quality and impact of their services, e.g. through training, capacity building, and enhancing the approaches for service delivery. This means including a capacity-building dimension in services and events where possible. If necessary, the coordinators may also take advantage of a new peer-to-peer initiative – the Network Coordinators Buddy System – for advice and inspiration to address the different challenges and identify solutions.

In order to support the partners in their efforts to adhere to the common quality standards and enhance their quality management procedures, a Code of Conduct will be included as an annex in the Grant Agreement and shall be respected by all consortia. It forms the basis for a common understanding and is considered as a pre-requisite for an effective and successful operation of the Network as a whole.

By adhering to the Code of Conduct, the Network partners commit to operate with the same core values, to apply the same operational principles and to abide by the quality principles with regard to relationships within the Network and with clients of the Network.

In order to monitor and assess compliance with the set of quality principles, prior to a monitoring visit, designated partners will be invited to carry out an online self-assessment based on the Code of Conduct Questionnaire and submit it to their Project Adviser in a due time preceding the visit.

This self-assessment will become a basis for a dialogue focusing on quality improvement opportunities for individual Network partners. If necessary, partners will be required to participate in ad-hoc assistance meetings, training and mentoring. Benchmarking exercises (including peer-to-peer reviews) may also be set up. The aim is to ensure that the basic quality principles remain central building blocks of all relationships within the Network.

2.3. **Role of the host organisations. Cooperation with stakeholders and other Networks**

2.3.1. *Host organisations and visibility within the host organisation*

The Host organisations in which the Network partners are embedded are expected to provide strong support for the implementation of the proposed actions and to contribute to the excellence of the Network and the services to be delivered.

Host organisations must ensure coordination between their services and the proposed Network activities in order to contribute to the excellence of the Network and its services.

A strong positioning of the Enterprise Europe Network within the host organisation is essential to ensure a sense of ownership and avoid potential conflicts of interests or overlaps with other departments in the same organisation. The host organisation should demonstrate its interest in the project and highlight how existing host organisation activities can be linked to Enterprise Europe Network services to achieve synergies and added value for SMEs.

The management of Network host organisations⁸ is required to integrate the Network as a strategic element in their organisation's portfolio and to ensure that Enterprise Europe Network activities receive a high degree of visibility and connectivity with other activities carried out by different departments of the same organisation.

At the same time, Enterprise Europe Network staff members are encouraged to maintain a regular flow of information and collaboration with other relevant departments in the host organisation in order to keep them informed and involved in strategic matters, and in order to highlight the added value of the Network vis-à-vis the host organisation.

The Network and its host organisations play an important role as intermediaries between the enterprise community – especially SMEs – and the European Commission.

2.3.2. *Cooperation with stakeholders*

The Network Vision⁹ highlights the importance of the Network services' integration into the regional SME support ecosystems with the ultimate aim to be “recognised by SMEs and stakeholders as the indispensable ‘European arm’ of regional/national business support systems”.

It is therefore necessary that Network services are embedded in the respective regional business and innovation support service infrastructure. Indeed, ensuring the coherence of the Enterprise Europe Network activities and their seamless integration in the regional environment is a priority and a strategic issue for all consortia. In order to address this, the work programme should:

- Seek complementarities and avoid duplication with existing services;

⁸ And host organisation departments, where applicable.

⁹ https://een.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/een_vision_20171006.pdf

- Create a basis for positioning the Enterprise Europe Network as specialists for the European dimension in the regional support environment
- Identify and provide added value services with a European dimension that fit into and complement the existing regional business and innovation support system and contribute to its quality. This should also include transferring good practices developed at the European level to stakeholders in the regions covered by the consortia;
- One special field of interest for Enterprise Europe Network partners is to create synergies/complementarities between Network tools, services and the Managing Authorities, intermediary bodies and other implementing bodies of the ERDF operational programmes;
- These synergies can create win-win situations in several areas, e.g. enhancement of the Network's relationship with main actors of the ERDF operational programmes by providing support for the implementation and feedback for future policy design. Further to that, Network services on internationalisation, access to finance and funding, and on innovation can enrich ERDF funded projects both in pure regional and also in inter-regional context;
- Plan stakeholder meetings on a regular basis to provide an update on current EU-related issues, Commission initiatives and services;
- If applicable, the work programme may lead to the conclusion of formal or informal stakeholder agreements.

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

This could include actors such as local authorities, associations; representative organisations of SMEs; Business and Incubation Centres; universities; certification bodies; regional development agencies; National Contact Points (NCPs) for SMEs (as well as regional and/or thematic NCPs where appropriate) for the EU research framework programme; innovation agencies and chambers not involved in the Network; organisations promoting trade and foreign direct investment; clusters; bodies providing advice on issues such as intellectual property rights, access to finance, internationalisation, energy and resource efficiency, and any other relevant support service providers.

In order to facilitate communication between all relevant actors, each consortium should nominate a staff member, who will coordinate regional collaboration and positioning actions and who will be the first interlocutor for regional stakeholders.

Good collaboration and best practices are already established with Macro-Regional Strategies and Sea Basin Strategies as the long lasting experience of the Network in facilitating cross border and inter-regional partnerships was combined with Strategies' forums and conferences, putting the Network on the foreground during important regional political momenta.

The Network partners are advised to liaise with the Macro-Regional and Sea Basin Strategies' national representatives, whenever applicable. This presents one more opportunity for the Network to be acknowledged as the Strategies' close partner in the implementation of their entrepreneurship and innovation policy priorities.

Network consortia are also recommended to take advantage of existing regional initiatives, among others the thematic partnerships of the different Smart Specialisation Platforms, Digital Innovation Hubs, Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs), and Key Enabling Technology Centres (KETs) to assist the SME clients in having access to innovative technologies, infrastructure, skills and

knowledge. The Commission in collaboration with EASME intensified the dialogue with other EC services to support the Network in its regional integration, positioning and visibility exercise.

2.3.3. *Cooperation with other European networks or initiatives*

Enterprise Europe Network consortia are encouraged to work closely with representatives of other European networks (for example Europe Direct¹⁰, EURES¹¹, SOLVIT¹², the European Business and Innovation Centres¹³, or relevant macro-regional strategies¹⁴) in their region and to liaise with them on a regular basis, in order to provide a coherent European support service to citizens and businesses. Mutual agreements to signpost clients to the most suitable service provider and to mutually broadcast each other's information to SME-clients should be considered where appropriate.

One priority for the forthcoming period is to build up stronger cooperation between the Network and SOLVIT networks at national level and achieve better outcomes and results. There are good opportunities for signposting from and to both networks. In particular, signposting from SOLVIT to the Network can be reinforced and is a potential source of interesting cases and new clients for Enterprise Europe Network. Some signposting activities are coordinated at European level (for example, questions from SMEs to the European Investment Advisory Hub may be referred to regional the Network consortia).

The future “Single Digital Gateway” service will provide comprehensive information on single market, access to related assistance and problem-solving services, and support the gathering of feedback. The EU Regulation establishing this service¹⁵ was adopted in October 2018 and it is expected to come into operation in December 2020. In the following months the relationship between the Enterprise Europe Network and the Single Digital Gateway for the future Network from 2022 onwards will be clarified.

In the period from 2020-2021, the Network will not be directly linked to this gateway, but Network consortia are requested to promote this service to SMEs as soon as it comes into operation and make use of it in order to deliver their own information services more efficiently, which will free up more resources for higher end the Network services in this field. The Network partners may also be consulted for feedback on the development of this service through the relevant Network Thematic Group.

The EC Representations are also useful interlocutors for the Enterprise Europe Network and may help ensure the coherence of different European initiatives in the Member States. Where possible, it is therefore recommended that Network consortia, in cooperation with their national Enterprise Europe Network communication correspondent, agree on a national or regional approach (depending on national circumstances) for liaising and cooperating with the EC Representation(s) in their country. Similarly, Network consortia in non-EU countries participating in the COSME programme should cooperate with their EU Delegation.

¹⁰ http://europa.eu/europedirect/index_en.htm

¹¹ <http://ec.europa.eu/eures/>

¹² <http://ec.europa.eu/solvit/>

¹³ <http://www.ebn.eu>

¹⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/cooperate/macro_region_strategy/index_en.cfm

¹⁵ Regulation (EU) 2018/1724 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 2 October 2018 establishing a single digital gateway to provide access to information, to procedures and to assistance and problem-solving services and amending Regulation (EU) No 1024/2012. OJ L 295, 21.11.2018.

2.3.4. *Cooperation partners at European level*

The Commission has also concluded a number of separate bilateral agreements with other organisations acting at European level that are in a position to support the operations of the Network as a whole. These Associate Members provide specific services to the Network and are not entitled to provide Enterprise Europe Network services directly to SMEs, nor to enter into competition with the Network. They are also available for collaboration with Network partners in the specific areas of their technical and/or sectorial expertise. Network partners are encouraged to embrace this support service where this can help make their service delivery more efficient.

In addition, specific Memoranda of Understanding may be concluded with international organisations that provide the Enterprise Europe Network with a substantial input, for example of new technologies or innovation opportunities.

Particularly, close collaboration between the Network and the respective bodies promoting the uptake and exploitation of such opportunities is encouraged.

2.4. **Work Programme**

2.4.1. *Scope and structure of the work programme*

The **work programme** must be in line with the objectives, the justification and the implementation strategy of each Consortium. It must cover all services described in and supported by COSME. The work programme shall cover the operations, translating the implementation strategy into concrete and detailed activities in 2020-2021, including a corresponding estimated budget. Realistic performance targets for all indicators shall be included in the description of the action. Furthermore, the impact on European SMEs generated by the project in terms of their competitiveness, their capability to evolve in the Single Market and their innovation capacities should be demonstrated.

The content of the work programme must respect the principle of subsidiarity and demonstrate a European dimension and European added value for the activities and achievements described therein. Furthermore, the impact generated by the project should be described in terms of the competitiveness and innovation capacities of European SMEs and their ability to better act and evolve in the Single Market.

The principles of excellence, proximity of services to SMEs as well as the 'no wrong door' principle and the mechanisms of signposting and follow-up of target audience inside the Network remain at the core of the Network.

2.4.2. *Structure of the work programme*

The work programme of each Consortium will set out the objectives to be achieved and the means to be used according to the following sequence: activities -> outputs -> outcomes -> impacts.

The work programme will include quantitative information for a standard list of common types of activities, outputs and outcomes. The consortia will submit the targets to be achieved in the two- years period covered by the work programme for the common list of outputs and outcomes.

The monitoring and reporting activities carried out in the framework of the Performance Enhancement System (PES) are set out in section 2.10 below.

The objective of collecting the generated data is to understand how activities are balanced, how activities lead to outputs and outcomes, how tools are used for partnering services (POD database, brokerage events, direct contact...), how outcomes of brokerage activities are balanced between

technology, commercial and research partnerships, and how impact ultimately emerges from the underlying outputs and outcomes of partnering activities and advisory activities.

Impact will be measured over time according to the indicators explained in section 2.10.

2.5. **Activities**

2.5.1. *Main scope, principles and range of service activities*

a) General approach

The description of activities must be in line with the objectives, the justification and the implementation strategy of the consortium.

All consortia must carry out the following six types of activity ("standard activities") and describe these in their work programme:

1. Advice, support and information activities;
2. Cross-border partnering activities for business cooperation, technology transfer, innovation and research;
3. NOT APPLICABLE TO KOSOVO*¹⁶: SME feedback activities;
4. NOT APPLICABLE TO KOSOVO*¹⁷: *Specific activities in the context of innovation support (Horizon 2020)*¹⁸;
5. Promotion of the Network's services and communication activities;
6. Network building and reinforcing the Network.

These six types of activities are mandatory. Every consortium must guarantee that the full range of activities is provided in the region covered by the proposal. It is understood that within a consortium, individual partners are not obliged to run all types of activity. Partners may focus on and specialise in a limited number of activities, but overall service delivery must be cohesive and seamless from the client's point of view (service integration). Clients must always be guided to the most appropriate service provider for their needs.

Standard activity 4 (specific activities in the context of innovation support) is not covered by this invitation to submit a proposal and shall not be addressed in any proposal.

The work programme should clearly identify the role of each partner in the consortium in order to ensure compliance with the 'no-wrong-door' principle described in the Code of Conduct. This concept lays down basic rules for service delivery to clients, signposting of clients and building synergies with complementary service providers.

It specifies that all necessary arrangements must be made to provide fully integrated services across the regional consortium.

¹⁶ This activity is not applicable to Kosovo* and should not be addressed in the proposal. Nevertheless, the description of this activity is in the call text for the purpose of information and to provide applicants with a full overview of Enterprise Europe Network activities.

¹⁷ This activity is not applicable to Kosovo* and should not be addressed in the proposal. Nevertheless, the description of this activity is in the call text for the purpose of information and to provide applicants with a full overview of Enterprise Europe Network activities.

¹⁸ See consultation H2020-EEN-SGA4-2020-2021.

a) Balance of activities

Although the requirements of the target audience vary from region to region, it is important for the overall coherence of the Network that all consortia maintain a similar balance of activities and services. Consortia are, therefore, required to respect certain minimum thresholds in terms of the share of total full time equivalent (FTE) commitment for each of the individual service types listed below.

1. Advice, support and information activities (at least 20% of the total FTE effort; advice and support should account for three quarters of the FTE assigned to this activity);
2. Cross-border partnering activities for business cooperation, technology transfer and innovation (at least 25% of the total FTE effort);
3. NOT APPLICABLE TO KOSOVO*: SME feedback activities (between 3% and 5% of the total FTE effort);
4. NOT APPLICABLE TO KOSOVO*: *Specific activities in the context of innovation support (Horizon 2020)*;
5. Promotion of the Network's services and communication activities (between 10% and 20% of the total FTE effort);
6. Network building and reinforcing the Network (between 10% and 20% of the total FTE effort).

In addition, management activities accounting for up to approximately 5% of the total FTE effort must also be planned.

The remaining share of the total amount of FTE may be distributed to any of the activity types as the consortium sees fit. Regional requirements and conditions should be taken into account and explained.

A separate budget will be made available from Horizon 2020 for services covered under activity 4 (not applicable to Kosovo*). Therefore, specific activities in the context of innovation support within Horizon 2020 should not be included in the calculation outlined above.

c) Activities carried out in collaboration with other organisations

A limited range of specialised services that are part of the six standard types of activity of the Enterprise Europe Network can be provided by organisations that are not formal members of the consortium. This is primarily the case where Enterprise Europe Network services would duplicate an existing service available in the region or if the expected demand for an individual service is so limited that a full integration of the provider into the consortium would not be justified.

Collaboration with local organisations in order to give access to (rather than provide) specialised services could for example be organised along the following lines:

- Service level agreement without financial implications: these often reciprocal agreements ensure that clients are “handed over” from one service provider to another in a smooth way and at the appropriate juncture.
- Subcontracting could be used to provide Enterprise Europe Network clients with highly specialised services that are not normally available within the consortium. Proposals have to explain clearly why subcontracting would be the most beneficial solution.

2.5.2. *Range of service activities*

Activity 1 – Advice, support and information activities

The Network's primary aim is to provide added-value services that help European SMEs to enhance their competitiveness and innovative capacities grow and do business in Europe and beyond. In this context, Network partners will provide advice, support and information services focusing on EU programmes, policies and legislation that are relevant to SMEs, and other advisory services to support innovation, internationalisation and access to finance.

a) Value-added advice and support activities for SMEs and other relevant target audiences on matters related to EU policies, legislation and programmes

The Network will offer advisory services on innovation and technology transfer, EU legislation and standards, EU policies and programmes, access to finance, internationalisation and access to markets, enhancement of management capacities, and cooperation with clusters.

In line with the Commission's commitment to mainstream climate-related actions in EU programmes, the Network shall also address resource and energy efficiency, climate and environmental issues and help SMEs to move towards circularity and implement low-carbon, climate-resilient and energy and resource efficient business models. Where appropriate and in the client's interest, the Network should also promote open innovation models and guide SMEs through the related processes. The Network shall focus on the European dimension of these topics.

Activities in this context could include:

- Tailor-made, value-added advice and support to clients or to other Network partners. This will focus on resolving specific issues/challenges that clients need to overcome during the client journey), moving beyond a question/answer based approach;
- Tailor-made services to overcome barriers for internationalisation of innovation-oriented and technology-driven European SMEs with high-growth potential and help them scale up their activities in the Single Market and/or COSME participating countries;
- Business, technology and innovation reviews of companies to ascertain their support requirements;
- Events with a capacity building element (including clinics and workshops where customised individual advice, training and other relevant Network services are provided to businesses);
- SME peer-to-peer learning;
- Preparatory visits and discussions with clients to establish their requirements in the framework of the project;
- Other relevant activities designed to increase the capacity or knowledge of SMEs with regard to their internationalisation or innovation performance and their competitiveness in the Single Market;
- Services to other providers of SME support and activities contributing to the quality of the regional SME support system, in particular activities connecting them to European quality initiatives and encouraging them to take up good practices. Introducing new and better practices in the regions would support the investments done by the European Structural and Investment Fund (ESIF) and the European Social Fund.

Advisory services provided by the Network focus on EU topics and the other service areas described below. The ultimate aim always remains to increase the competitiveness of SMEs, and/or to support growth and internationalization in Europe and beyond. Value-added services in the subject areas listed below must be included in the service range of all consortia. Topics covered in this context should include:

- EU legislation and policies, standards in the Single Market, tender opportunities, public procurement, etc.; In this context Network consortia can provide impact by working together to help SMEs to overcome challenges and exploit opportunities abroad in the single market.

- EU programmes and European funding opportunities (in particular COSME, programmes for research and innovation, internationalisation and the Structural Funds¹⁹);
- Innovation and technology transfer services to facilitate cross-border innovation and technology transfer activities. Services guiding companies in open innovation processes, design-driven innovation, eco-design and innovation management processes may be included. The primary target audience includes SMEs engaged in innovation and SMEs with a high potential for innovation and technology adoption;
- In order to help companies access international markets and business opportunities, advisory services supporting the partnering process are required, focusing for example on market intelligence, identification of suitable growth markets, local business conditions, and on capacity building for SMEs;
- Access to finance for SMEs: provide advice on EU funding including the financial instruments of COSME, Horizon 2020 and other initiatives such as the European Structural and Investment Fund and the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), in particular funding specifically available for SMEs under this fund. Additionally, Enterprise Europe Network consortia should also provide services and information about public finance schemes and alternative sources of finance for SMEs in their country, and ensure that SMEs can access specialised advice.

The Network consortia providing advanced advisory services in this field are advised to carry out a more detailed mapping of sources of finance in their region. Advanced services include complex individual advice, advice to SMEs on investment readiness, and advice on related matters such as business planning, and partnership activities to put SMEs into contact with potential investors and sources of finance. 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 regional services.

- Support for improving the management capacities of SMEs in order to raise business performance and achieve sustainable growth - in particular with a view to withstanding the competitive pressures on the Single Market and on international markets;
- Raising awareness of intellectual property (IP) issues, advice to businesses on how to manage their know-how and information internally and with their external partners for open and collaborative innovation, support to facilitate the use of IPR (intellectual property rights) and to help SMEs trade and exploit their intellectual assets at international level;
- Furthermore, the Enterprise Europe Network will have privileged access to and relations with the European IPR Helpdesk and the IPR Helpdesks for South-East Asia, China and Latin America. In their capacity of Associate Members of the Enterprise Europe Network, these helpdesks provide the Network with training, guidelines and other services. Cooperation with them is strongly encouraged. The Network will also act as a multiplier for these Helpdesks, providing 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 (as described below);
- Circular economy and resource efficiency: Network partners should provide services that help SMEs understand and embrace the long-term benefits of implementing circularity and improving their resource efficiency. This also includes advice on access to finance and

¹⁹ Proposal writing is explicitly excluded from the range of eligible Enterprise Europe Network activities.

technology transfer in the areas of the REACH Regulation, circular economy, eco-innovation, green entrepreneurship, energy efficiency and clean energy. The European Commission will also involve Enterprise Europe Network partners in the European Resource Efficiency Knowledge Centre (EREK) and may also carry out communications actions related to resource efficiency in SMEs in cooperation with the Network;

- Digitalisation support services to SMEs: Network partners should act as enablers to drive the digital transformation of companies. Services promoting the use of digital technologies can bring value as they help SMEs modernise their business models and processes and enhance their capacity to innovate and go international;
- Other advisory services on topics identified by Network partners as relevant in the respective regional context.

In addition to the services listed above, Network partners are encouraged to carry out some of the following services, reflecting the needs of their local client base:

- Organise study visits, seminars or workshops for specific sectors, where associations and clusters may also be involved;
- Provide value-added technology and/or legislation watch services.

b) Information activities

All Enterprise Europe Network consortia are required to provide some general information services on EU subjects that are relevant to SMEs. It is expected that the majority of these services will be delivered electronically. Network partners shall use the most adequate technological solution to increasingly enable clients to benefit from highly customisable (automatic) electronic information services. Information services should focus on the priorities defined for the Network and should attempt to reach out to a broad base of SMEs likely to be suitable for the Network services.

As general information on EU subjects for businesses is readily available on the internet, Network partners shall focus on more added-value information services and shall exploit synergies with existing complementary platforms such as the Your Europe – Business portal²⁰. Regionally relevant EU information, taken from various sources, should be filtered and processed by Network partners in order to provide real added value. The communication should be targeted a) on a case-by-case basis to those SMEs it is best suited for (this could be supported by an on-demand approach) and b) to those SMEs that receive a larger number of services from the Network.

SMEs may be re-directed to the Enterprise Europe Network from general information sources such as the Your Europe – Business portal. Network partners shall provide them with support on EU subjects. Network partners receiving such re-direction requests have to reply within their normal response time. Closer synergies with and input from Enterprise Europe Network consortia have been organised to enhance the quality and usability of the Your Europe – Business portal.

Information on the new Single Digital Gateway service due to come into operation in 2020 is given in point 2.3.3 above. In 2020-2021 Enterprise Europe Network will not be directly linked to this gateway, but Network consortia are requested to promote this service to SMEs as soon as it comes into operation and make use of it in order to deliver their own information services more efficiently. This will free up more resources for higher end Network services in this field. Network partners may also be consulted for feedback on the development of this service through the relevant Thematic Group.

Joint information services developed in collaboration between several partners and/or consortia should also be considered in order to ensure a high degree of cost-efficiency.

²⁰ <http://europa.eu/youreurope/business/>

Furthermore, Enterprise Europe Network consortia will act as key communication channels to SMEs for the European Commission, the EASME and other related services. Consortia should therefore foresee to promote and participate in a small number of European campaigns on EU policies, legislation and actions. Potential activities include acting as a multiplier, media relations, identifying businesses as candidates for awards. Information campaigns and events to be implemented in cooperation with the Network will be included in annual guidance for the Network established by the European Commission. Network partners should also enhance awareness about information sources about COSME, Horizon 2020 and other European programmes relevant for SMEs (including the European Structural and Investment Funds).

From time to time, Network partners may also be consulted on suitable promotional messages and/or other aspects of the organisation of a campaign in their region.

Delivery channels to be used by the Network include:

- Consortium website as well as all other suitable media (for example newsletters, e-mails, newsletters, social media, other suitable online tools, radio, TV, etc.);
- Events and other local actions drawing a large audience, organised by a Network host organisation or by other bodies, where European topics could deliver added value. Network partners should increasingly add an advisory/capacity building dimension to these events.

Involvement in the campaign may also involve:

- Answers to general questions on EU matters from businesses;
- Provision of documentation to SMEs about relevant EU topics;
- Cooperation with information multipliers and stakeholder networks;

Activity 2 – Cross-border partnering activities for business cooperation, technology transfer, innovation and research

Partnering services are at the core of the Enterprise Europe Network. The aim is to help clients (primarily SMEs) engage in successful partnering processes in:

- Business / commercial collaboration;
- Innovation / technology transfer;
- Collaboration fostering R&D activities of SMEs and leading to the participation of SMEs in European research programmes (such as Horizon 2020 or Eureka Eurostars).

The Network's assistance covers the entire partnership 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).

Some of the activities carried out in this context may be aimed at:

- Supporting contacts between SMEs and potential investors (as part of the Network access to finance services);
- Increasing circularity and resource efficiency in SMEs, thereby working towards a triple benefit: 'greener' SMEs, increased competitiveness and new innovation and business opportunities.

The Network's partnering services comprise:

- Searching the Partnering Tools to find profiles that suit their clients' needs and creating expressions of interest on their behalf;

- Drafting of high quality partnering profiles (offers and requests), following a prior in-depth analysis of client's needs and capacities, Entry of these into the Network's partnering opportunities database in order for them to be disseminated and Internal Review of the profiles. The focus should be on quality not quantity;
- Timely response to expressions of interest about their own profiles once they have been published;
- Active dissemination of profiles entered by other Network partners to local companies and potential business partners, as well as an active search for matching companies;
- Contribution to the POD Database external review process;
- Assistance and advice in the conclusion of transnational partnership agreements and follow-up of the partnering process from start to end, including cross-border cooperation with other Network partners to clarify the partnership needs of their clients and integrated services to help Network clients resolve other matters related to their cooperation venture (legal and administrative formalities, standards, etc.);
- Organisation of transnational brokerage and matchmaking events for SMEs, including sectorial events and large brokerage events that might be linked to international fairs. Such events should be organised in cooperation with other Network partners. Sector Groups are likely to play a coordinating role;
- Organisation of inward and outward company missions for SMEs from/to other countries covered by the Network;
- Use of the Network's central brokerage tools in the organisation of the events or activities, as well as assistance to SME participants with the necessary preparations;
- Follow-up: ensure that feedback on the outcome of the activities is provided by participating SMEs and that a track record of the impact on the company is kept and duly reported to the EASME as required. Particularly successful cases can be highlighted in success stories;
- Help SMEs exploit and use research results from public programmes, in particular the European programmes. To this end, the Commission may conclude collaboration agreements with relevant European or international bodies. This activity should primarily be aimed at bringing new products to the market or at significantly improving existing processes or products.

Specific priorities for innovation partnering activities include:

- Inward transnational technology transfer partnerships with foreign suppliers and related services to help businesses acquire the necessary competences to manage the technology transfer process;
- Outward transnational technology transfer aimed at opening new international markets for solutions produced in the region of an Enterprise Europe Network consortium;
- International cooperation for innovation and technology based on networking and open innovation;
- While these services primarily address SMEs, they may also involve cooperation between SMEs and research organisations, clusters, large corporations or other actors in technology-based industries.

The provision of partnering services may evolve over time as new methodologies or technologies may change the way businesses get in touch with each other. Network partners are invited to adapt their

services to changing client requirements throughout the programme period²¹. In some cases, this may mean that Network services shift away from the traditional one-to-one contact brokering towards guiding and animating international groups of potential business partners. Network partners may therefore also explore the possibility of new forms of partnering services. This should, however, not occur at the detriment of the Network's standard partnering services as long as these are in sufficient demand.

NOT APPLICABLE TO KOSOVO*: Activity 3 – SME Feedback activities

The Enterprise Europe Network is a key communication channel for SMEs towards the European Commission. It will therefore gather feedback from SMEs on selected EU policies, actions and legislation, in response to specific priorities announced by the European Commission and complementing the role of other business organisations in this context. All consortia have to nominate at least one SME feedback contact person who will act as an intermediary in relation of the above mentioned activities.

Network consortia are expected to:

- Contact, inform, invite and consult SMEs in the framework of SME consultations;
- Collect problem cases related to Single Market clients and submit it to the SME Feedback database and/or redirect to SOLVIT;
- Promote on-line 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;
- Disseminate the results of this feedback in their region, when applicable (for instance to sector-specific organisations, regional and national authorities, etc.);

Where possible, carry out other types of actions helping to collect feedback from SMEs on EU matters (ad-hoc roundtables with participation of EU experts, etc.).

NOT APPLICABLE TO KOSOVO*: Activity 4 – Specific activities in the context of innovation support (Horizon 2020)

Activity 5 – Promotion of the Network's services and communication activities

Each consortium must enhance the visibility of the Network and its brand, highlighting the quality and the value to SMEs of its services, and the successful results and impacts on SMEs.

This should incorporate the regular use of cost-effective external communication, including social media and online services as well as 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.

All Network consortia are expected to use the Network's visual identity and messaging as part of their daily work. They must also develop and implement a clear communication strategy with a specific and up to date work plan. They are furthermore required to take part in Enterprise Europe Network communication activities and to coordinate communication activities at national level.

²¹ Coherence with the Network's common approach and any joint European scheme that might be used for this purpose shall be ensured.

Participation in EU-wide activities reinforcing the visibility of the Network as a whole is expected from each consortium.

In order to facilitate promotional activities for the entire Network, all consortia should regularly submit success stories that demonstrate the impact of the Network's services on SME clients.

Activity 6 – Network building and reinforcing the Network

Interactive support between Network partners is a key factor for the quality and success of the Network as a whole. Therefore, Network partners should dedicate sufficient resources to collaborating with other Network partners.

a) Participation in Network activities

All Network partners must provide adequate resources for participating in Enterprise Europe Network meetings, giving and taking part in training sessions, groups addressing specific interests within the Network, conferences and other events. This includes an active participation in relevant structures of the Network and direct, swift and professional collaboration with other Network partners.

- **All professional staff working for the Network are expected to include their contact data in the Network Directory and keep it up-to-date.** This is an internal directory set up specifically for facilitating contacts across the Network. Each consortium is required to sign the declaration in annex that they will ensure that their staff comply with this requirement. Non-compliance can lead to exclusion from certain Network events and services;
- All participating countries shall organise national Enterprise Europe Network meetings to which each partner should send at least one representative. In larger countries, additional coordination meetings involving only project management or coordination staff (or their representatives) may also be organised;
- Each consortium has to appoint one Thematic contact person in each of the thematic areas defined by the European Commission (see below);
- Participation in Annual Conferences of the Enterprise Europe Network;
- Participation in staff exchange or receiving mentoring within the dedicated mentoring scheme;
- Participation in meetings of *ad hoc* or standing Network groups, for example working groups or steering groups which create added value for the whole Network. Such groups will be convened by the EASME if and when the need arises;
- Participation in Sector Group meetings and activities;
- Exchanges and use of good practices, knowledge and/or tools; contributing own expertise for strengthening the Network as a whole; knowledge-sharing within internal Network communities; quality reviews of working tools such as partnering profiles (carried out by Network partners selected by the EASME);
- Maintain constant links with other Network partners and extend mutual know-how;
- Joint transnational activities of Network partners;
- Participation in internal Network events at regional, national and European level (i.e. events organised for the benefit of the Network, not for clients);
- Contribution to the POD database external review process (this activity is linked with Activity 2 as in operational terms it falls under the Partnering Activities. However, in terms of reporting the reviews will still be included in Activity 6 (60 reviews = 1st contribution, 260 reviews = 2nd contribution etc.).

b) Participation in and contribution to learning and development activities

Considering the knowledge intensive activity, continuous learning is essential for increasing the quality of Network services. Consortia should encourage a learning culture in their Network teams and ensure that staff members have access to, can participate in and contribute to the various ways to improve knowledge and skills. These include informal learning methods such as peer-to-peer learning, internal mentoring and skills transfer, as well as sharing best practice across the different organisations.

EASME will complement this with a number of activities, including a formal training programme. Activities carried out in this context include face-to-face training events in Brussels and other locations where the Network is present, as well as staff exchange, mentoring, webinars, online training tools and communities of practice. Associate Members of the Network will also provide a number of learning opportunities.

Staff members are expected to commit to active follow-up of all learning activities, including putting new skills into practice, giving feedback, disseminating information and sharing the knowledge they have gained within the consortium.

Consortia should foresee induction for new staff members and they are also invited to attend a centralised newcomers' induction course organised by EASME. Other learning opportunities include skills such as profile writing and reviewing, innovation management and specific training paths for certain staff categories, such as coordinators, IT champions, communication champions or team managers. Network partners should give a brief overview of their approach to the learning & development of their teams, and particularly newcomers.

Consortia are particularly encouraged to organise training events in their regions which are open to the whole Network. Priority operational topics will be outlined in the Network's learning and development strategy, available on the Network intranet. Priority policy topics are indicated by DG GROW each year in its Annual Guidance Note to the Network. (Training sessions must be included in the annual work programmes; see the eligibility guidelines on the intranet).

Experienced Network members are encouraged to contribute to the learning activities by participating in the preparation of materials and/or delivering training.

National Communication Champions in particular are expected to pass on the learning and development they have gained from their regular meetings and exchanges. This should be carried out in a structured way across the Network in their country with a view to raising the standard of communication and the Network's visibility.

Working groups and thematic groups will also contribute to learning by producing guidelines, tools and training material.

EASME may also identify particular skills gaps and invite consortia to bridge these by organising workshops and training activities tailored to the specific needs.

Consortium management

In order to ensure efficiency, clear internal procedures and rules for internal consortium governance are needed. This includes a minimum number of consortium meetings, the definition of activity leaders²² in each partner organisation and at consortium level, efficient communication flows, clear

²² A staff member who is in charge of ensuring the delivery of the respective activity.

internal workflows to ensure effective cooperation between partners, and mechanisms for a systematic feedback from other Network events to all relevant Network staff members (such as Network training events, national Network meetings, meetings of a consultative steering group representing Network partners, etc.).

Each consortium should hold regular consortium meetings in order to discuss the common strategy and actions for implementing the project.

It is essential for each consortium to ensure a proper management of client relations in line with the principles of the Network's partnership process. To this end, a common mechanism for recording and following up on service delivery to clients is required in each consortium²³.

b) Consortium coordinators

Each Network consortium has nominated one organisation as consortium coordinator. The staff member (and a back-up) in charge of consortium coordination is also defined. This person will be the EASME's main interlocutor in contractual and financial issues.

The consortium coordinator oversees the general functioning of the consortium and ensures that the procedures laid down in the consortium agreement and the common workflows between consortium partners, other Network partners and the EASME are respected. It is also the consortium coordinator's role to make sure that there is a constant and adequate flow of information between all consortium partners and to promote a collaborative working environment within the consortium.

The consortium coordinator is requested to monitor the production of contractual deliverables by the consortium, ensure that deadlines are kept, raise any risk of delays or underperformance with the partner(s) concerned and inform the EASME in case the issues cannot be settled within a reasonable time within the consortium. However, all consortium partners remain responsible for carrying out the agreed work programme. This role of the coordinator does not in any way affect the role or responsibilities of the EASME with regard to monitoring the quality and service delivery of the Network.

The consortium coordinator is also in charge of raising any need for contract amendments with the EASME in good time.

Additional activities and services

Enterprise Europe Network consortia may carry out a range of additional activities that go beyond the mandatory range of service activities every consortium is required to deliver (see below). Such additional activities have to fall within the overall scope of the Enterprise Europe Network and can only be carried out by clearly identified Network partners. No subcontracting or other types of service delivery through third parties are allowed. Additional services can address gaps in existing local services, respond to requirements of the European Commission, or contribute to the quality of the Network.

EU-driven additional activities will generally be subject to a separate restricted call within the Enterprise Europe Network, and will be launched by the European Commission or the EASME. Proposers should therefore only foresee the possibility of carrying out such additional activities, rather than providing a detailed planning. They can be deployed to:

- Adjust the Enterprise Europe Network's existing services to changing political priorities at EU level;

²³ The chosen procedures should take into account applicable legislation on data protection.

- Include new services in the range of Enterprise Europe Network activities to respond to changing political priorities at EU level;
- Carry out larger scale activities in cooperation with other EU programmes not specified in the present call.

EU-driven additional activities are typically funded through a specific action with a separate budget.

1. Additional activities may also be proposed by Network consortia in order **to address specific requirements of their local client base**. Such additional activities have to stay within the overall scope of Enterprise Europe Network activities and should be fully connected to the standard integrated services provided by the Network. They must not overlap with existing services in the respective region and may consist of:

- Provision of deeper support services to address specific needs of local companies or particular sectorial needs that have a high economic relevance in the region. These services could also reflect a particularly high level of expertise of a host organisation that might allow the consortium to provide more extensive services in that area than the service range covered in the Network's types of activities 1-4;
- The organisation of technical missions allowing SMEs to give their feedback to policy- and decision makers;
- Reinforce the local business and innovation support infrastructure if significant gaps are identified (provided that the proposed Enterprise Europe Network services retain a sufficiently strong European dimension);
- If compatible with the mandate of the host organisation and desirable in the regional context, Network partners are also encouraged to provide services for enhancing the quality of the existing business and innovation support infrastructure, for example by acting as an intermediary between European programmes or networks and local actors (e.g. promoting good practice, assisting the uptake of proven methodologies from other regions, supporting the integration in European quality initiatives, or establishing links with other European initiatives).

Additional activities of this type need to be clearly identified in the work programme and are considered as eligible activities funded within the normal Enterprise Europe Network budget.

2. The third type of additional activities covers **substantial contributions to the operation and quality of the Network**, including (but not limited to):

- Chairing Sector Groups and/or working groups in order to provide a coherent framework for the members, to ensure the efficient operation of the group and to liaise with the EASME;
- Acting as mentor (with the Network's formal mentoring scheme) for other Network partners, including third country partners;
- Provision of (advanced) trainers: the EASME may set up a pool of trainers, consisting of staff members who will be called upon to contribute to the Network's training programme;
- Network partners are invited to take part in the implementation of the Vision for the Network²⁴ through the different action groups;
- Participation in special actions led by the EASME and designed to enhance the Network.

Additional services addressing internal Network needs that require a strong contribution and significant involvement of an individual staff member of the Network are usually subject to an

²⁴ https://een.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/een_vision_20171006.pdf

expert contract with the EASME. The need for these activities arises sporadically throughout the lifetime of the Network. Proposers should therefore only foresee the possibility of participating in such activities.

Notwithstanding the possibility of carrying out additional activities designed to enhance the quality of the Network, every Network partner is expected to ensure the involvement of their staff members in standard networking activities that are standard procedure for all partner organisations and therefore cannot be considered as additional activities (for example participation in national Network meetings or the Annual Conference, participation in Sector Groups, thematic groups or working groups (as a member), responding to enquiries from Network colleagues, etc.).

2.6. **Visibility and promotion of the Enterprise Europe Network**

The Enterprise Europe Network has the potential to reach a much wider audience of SMEs and achieve higher visibility than in its first phase. All consortia must demonstrate how they will achieve this, taking into account the situation in their region.

The Network needs to communicate regionally/on a national level in order to reach intermediaries (journalists, bloggers, politicians, (potential) co-financing bodies, "other" service providers etc.) and locally in order to reach SMEs directly. Communication needs to be a natural element of each Network partner's work; therefore communication expertise is needed at Network partner level and at the regional/national level.

Network partners should also promote the Network and its services to their host organisations and to wider business support system in the region and organise joint promotion activities with key local partners. Promotion messages should highlight the Network's services (including services to other organisations and transfer of best practice to the regions), stressing that the Network is there to provide added value, not to create competition.

a) Communication strategy and work plan

Network partners must coordinate their communication activities in order to attract the widest number of potential clients in their region. A communication strategy at consortium level and a work plan at partner level are therefore required. This should include:

- A commitment from host organisations to give adequate visibility to the Network and its services and to ensure that the Network is clearly featured on the host organisation's website;
- A commitment to follow the Network's branding guidelines in full and align to the overall communication strategy and messaging;
- A commitment to seek the guidance of and cooperate with the national member of the Network's Communication Champions group;
- A clear definition of Network-related promotional and public relations activities, as opposed to host organisation activities;
- Target audiences, messages, proposed tools, channels, resources and indicators;
- A description of how the core messages of the Network will be used at local and regional level (for one-consortium-countries also at national level) and how additional local core messages will be developed and used;
- A description of how effectiveness will be evaluated.

The plan should be reviewed on an annual basis.

Each consortium is furthermore obliged to maintain a common consortium website, providing a clear first access point for integrated services.

Consortia are also encouraged to put in new ways of enhancing interaction with customers via their web sites, social media and other suitable tools.

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

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

A National Communication Champion must be nominated by Network partners in each country and should work with a national communication working group. These champions were appointed in 2015. Their role is to raise the standard of communication across the Network, act as national interlocutors for the EASME and DG GROW's communication activities and promote good communication within their own country. The champions must have sufficient experience and seniority to ensure good collaboration.

A common **national Enterprise Europe Network website** is required (in countries where there is only one Network consortium, one website with a national reach is sufficient). The website should be available in the national language(s) and in English.

b) Branding

The Network visual identity supports the Network's messaging and they should be implemented together to ensure greater clarity and coherence for the brand.

It is mandatory that all communication materials be fully in line with the visual identity that was launched in May 2016. Tools, templates and guidance are available via https://www.dropbox.com/sh/xh0krtz5bayka3c/AAAVA1o4R6_SoLM4kbl-eWXRa?dl=0 or on request at EASME-EEN-COMMUNICATION@ec.europa.eu.

Consortia are required to follow the Enterprise Europe Network's branding rules in full and to give prominence to the name and emblem of the European Commission and the Enterprise Europe Network on all their publications, electronic communication products, posters, programmes and other communication and event material realised under the co-financed project.

Each Network partner shall also place the Enterprise Europe Network logo and an explanatory text of the project on a principal and widely visited page of their website. The full range of Network services must be described on dedicated regional and national Enterprise Europe Network webpages.

Furthermore, partners shall show their membership in the Enterprise Europe Network by placing the Network logo in an easily and publicly visible place outside their premises and advertise the related services in an adequate fashion.

Host organisations are required to comply with the co-branding guidelines between the Network and host organisations as outlined in the visual identity guidelines, tools and templates.

c) 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 (at least twice a week) to the Network's intranet, which is the main communication channel within the Network and

with the EASME. Furthermore, an online directory of Network staff members providing professional and contact details will be made available. All Network partners are required to enter the relevant information of their staff members in this online directory and keep this information up to date.

d) Contribution to EU campaigns

Network partners and Communications Champions may also be asked to play a specific role in European campaigns (helping to define messages, promoting the campaigns in their regions, providing feedback). Priorities will be defined in annual guidance to the Network.

2.7. Sectorial and thematic specialisation

a) Sector Groups

The sectorial knowledge of Enterprise Europe 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.

Sector Groups are groups of Network partners (represented by nominated Enterprise Europe Network staff members) who commit to work together in order to meet the specific needs of their clients operating in a particular sector. Sector Groups enable collaborative activities to be planned and implemented in a particularly efficient way.

The primary aim of Sector Groups is to give a specific sectoral focus to Enterprise Europe Network activities while at the same time recruiting clients for Network services and contributing to the defined outcomes and objectives of the Network. Sector Groups play a strong role in the implementation of annual (sectoral) priorities set by the Commission for the Network. They are also designed to enhance cooperation and to pool the resources the Network has at its disposal to address a specific segment of clients.

Although Sector Groups unite Network partners with experience and expertise on the same economic sectors, particular attention should be paid to promoting cross-sectorial business and innovation opportunities.

Membership in Sector Groups is voluntary, but conditional on a sufficient degree of activity, which is monitored by the chairperson of the Sector Group in cooperation with the EASME. Host organisations should therefore be willing to allow Enterprise Europe Network staff members to use an adequate proportion of their working time for Sector Group activities.

All Sector Groups follow the same common guidelines and procedures.

b) Thematic groups

In addition to specialised sectorial issues, a number of cross-cutting topics concern all Network consortia. They range from internal Network matters to broad issues concerning most clients of the Network. In order to create a better networking environment and to encourage contacts between experts in the Network, contact persons specialising in those topics will have been appointed by each consortium. Staff members should be appointed on the basis of their professional expertise and their

role within the Network²⁵. 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 EASME and the European Commission. Suitable internal online communication channels will be made available.

2.8. Cooperation with third countries²⁶

Emerging and established third country markets hold a significant but underexploited potential for European SMEs. The Enterprise Europe Network therefore comprises a number of partner organisations in third countries, known as Business Cooperation Centres who participate in the Network without European Union funding from COSME under Article 7 of the COSME Regulation. These BCCs have been selected under a separate procedure. A small number of additional BCCs may still join in the near future, but the main emphasis is on consolidating the current BCCs. The current list of countries and partners is published on the Network website²⁷ as well as the Network directory and will be updated progressively as new members join the Network.

Furthermore, and in line with the Commission's approach to supporting the access of SMEs to international markets²⁸, the Network will work together with other business support organisations outside the EU to help European SMEs access selected third country markets. Duplication of existing national and European services shall be avoided.

While the standard tasks of the Network remain focused on countries participating in COSME (in particular Member States of the European Union), Network partners are also expected to carry out some activities targeting other countries.

The European Commission encourages the Network partners to inform their clients about opportunities provided by other EU programmes fostering SME internationalisation (e.g. Gateway programme, ELAN etc.), to invite their clients to make best use of such programmes and – upon request – to provide Network services to the participants of such programmes upon their return to Europe.

The activities of the Enterprise Europe Network in third countries will mainly focus on commercial, technological and research partnering activities, as well as provision of market information. Consortia should explain and justify their respective approach clearly.

The following activities could be considered for eligibility, provided they aim to help European companies exploit new opportunities in third country markets:

- Activities targeting countries that do not participate in COSME but where Enterprise Europe Network partners are present are only eligible under this project if they are carried out in close collaboration with at least one of the local Enterprise Europe Network partners in the target country;
- Activities targeting third countries where there are no Enterprise Europe Network partners are not normally eligible under this project. They can only be considered in the work programme if they are duly justified and substantiated in terms of objectives and added value for the Network;

²⁵ Enrolment modalities and an indicative list of topics are available at the Enterprise Europe Network intranet (<https://een.ec.europa.eu/my>). The list may be amended at any time in order to accommodate changing priorities for the Network.

²⁶ "Third countries" in this context are defined as countries outside the European Union that do not participate in the COSME programme.

²⁷ <https://een.ec.europa.eu/about/branches>

²⁸ Commission Communication "Small Business, Big World – a new partnership to help SMEs seize global opportunities"; COM (2011) 702 final.

- Purely bilateral activities (e.g. company missions) organised by host organisations that are not explicitly related to Network activities will not be eligible under the Enterprise Europe Network agreement.

Furthermore, Network partners may from time to time be invited to contribute to business partnering activities in third countries to specific events or trade missions organised by the European Commission under the European Union's economic diplomacy policy. In those cases, Network partners throughout the EU are requested to promote such missions and encourage European businesses to participate. These missions may take place in countries not covered by the Network. In this case, activities are eligible under this project, provided the EASME has given prior notification to this effect.

2.9. **Output, outcome and impact indicators**

The Network's performance will be measured on the basis of output, outcome and impact indicators and various performance and efficiency ratios. Output indicators are designed to measure the level of activity of Network partners and consortia, while outcome indicators are used to measure the concrete results of support activities triggered by outputs. Impact indicators measure the positive effects of Enterprise Europe Network activities and services on businesses; this will be a primarily qualitative assessment.

a) Output and outcome indicators

The six common types of activities will lead to outputs and outcomes that will be measured by a common set of 13 indicators, which are listed below and explained in detail in Annex 2 to this document.

Each consortium shall include two-years targets for outputs and outcomes 2, 3, 5, 6 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13 in the description of the action (work programme) and the PES Data tool. For Data Items 1, 4 and 12 no targets are required but consortia will have nonetheless to report on them at the end of the contractual period. The minimum requirement for these targets is that they must take into account the relative size of the consortium and the region it covers.

The outcomes of Network activities are called Achievements. They can either be Partnership Agreements (for partnering activities) or Advisory Services Outcomes (for advisory activities). As results of two different types of services, outcomes are not interchangeable.

- Network partners involved in Activity 1 should indicate, in the work programme, a target for Advisory Services Outcomes;
- Network partners involved in Activity 2 should indicate, in the work programme, a target for Partnership Agreements.

The target figure for Achievements of a Network partner is the sum of Advisory Services Outcomes and Partnership Agreements they expect to reach by the end of the activity period.

List of outputs and outcome indicators by activity (PES Data Items)²⁹

I. PES Data Items (DI) with targets

²⁹ Mandatory source specified when relevant.

Outputs	
Activity 1. Advice, support and information activities	
DI02	SMEs/clients receiving individual advisory support
Activity 2. Cross-border partnering activities for business cooperation, technology transfer, innovation and research	
DI03	SMEs/clients receiving individual partnering support
DI05	Meetings at brokerage events/company missions*
DI06	Expressions of interest received
DI07	Expressions of interest made

Outputs	
Activity 3. SME feedback activities (not applicable to Kosovo*)	
DI08	Clients in feedback related actions
Outcomes	
Activities 1 and 2	
DI09	Achievements (PAs + ASOs)*
Outputs	
Activity 5. Promotion of the Network's services and communication activities	
DI10	SMEs/clients using digital services provided by the Network
DI11	Cooperation with local stakeholders
Activity 6. Network building and reinforcing the Network	
DI13	Active contributions to Network activities

II. PES Data Items (DI) without targets but also to be reported

Outputs	
Activity 1. Advice, support and information activities	
DI01	Participants in regional/local events
Activity 2. Cross-border partnering activities for business cooperation, technology transfer, innovation and research	
DI04	Brokerage events/company missions organised*
Activity 6. Network building and reinforcing the Network	
DI12	Contributions to other partners' achievements*

* For reporting, the source of these PES Data Items will exclusively be MERLIN.

Achievements Process



Reporting shall be done at aggregated consortium level and at the level of individual partners.

b) Impact indicators

Impact indicators should provide information about the positive effects of the Network's activities and services on businesses in terms of results (products, services, market shares, etc.), efficiency (cost reduction), employment (job creation or preservation), quality improvement (goods or services, client satisfaction, etc.) or innovation. This will demonstrate the positive impact of the Network and its contribution to promoting growth and strengthening the competitiveness and sustainability of enterprises.

Consortia shall measure five impact indicators during the lifecycle of the project:

1. Market improvement

How has the support of the Network contributed to improving the position of the client company on the market? Typically, this would be shown by an increase in market share or turnover. Support actions by the Network in this context include:

- a. Helping clients reach new markets or customers, or
- b. Helping clients bring new or improved products or services to the market; or
- c. Helping clients enhance internal business processes (or create new ones);

2. Cost savings

How has the support of the Network contributed to reducing production costs (cost of material, energy or labour inputs) linked to a products or service of the client company? Have the cost savings helped the client company become more competitive and have they improved its ability to increase the added value associated to its products/services, to enter into new markets or to consolidate its position on its current markets?

3. Job creation or maintenance

To what extent has the support of the Network contributed to the creation or maintenance of jobs in the client company?

4. Quality improvement

In how far has the support of the Network had a positive impact on the client company in terms of the quality of goods and services, the satisfaction of clients or business partners, or the improvement of the

company's environmental record, working conditions, or health and safety standards? Improvements in these areas should result in increased sustainability.

5. Innovation

Has the Network's support enabled the client to improve their competitiveness or sustainability by means of embracing an innovation or an innovative technology or process, or by improving its innovation strategy or innovation (management) capacities?

The data required to ascertain the Network's impact in these areas shall be gathered in one qualitative questionnaire submitted by the Network partner to each client receiving an in-depth Network service which have registered an Achievement in the Network's Achievements Database.

- **Questionnaire on the expected impact**

The Questionnaire shall be filled in online by the Network partner **together with the client** after implementation of the advisory plan or conclusion of the partnership agreement. The answers to the questionnaire will be registered in the Network's Achievements Database as part of the Achievement.

Client Satisfaction

To complete the evaluation of the quality and efficiency of Network services in achieving its goal, assessing the client satisfaction from the delivered services is essential.

Client satisfaction will be assessed via a Client Satisfaction Survey (CSS) having **service excellence** as fundamental principle. The goal of the CSS will be to contribute to establish a culture of customer service and of delivery of services that are responsive to the SMEs' needs in practice.

The responsibility to inform the client about the CSS will remain with the Network partner, but the follow-up and analysis of the provided information should be undertaken by the EASME.

The client would fill in the survey independently from the Network partner and submit it directly and voluntarily to the EASME. Based on the given answers, the Agency would be able to obtain an independent feedback on Network partner's performance and evaluate its positioning vis-à-vis the clients. This feedback will complement the information provided by Network partners via the reporting exercise.

2.10. **Monitoring and reporting**

Network consortia shall use a common system to report to the EASME at regular intervals, giving details on the activities carried out on the basis of their work programmes. The processes of reporting and monitoring shall be managed by every partner and consortium. At Network level, the EASME will put in place common processes. The purposes of reporting and monitoring are:

- For project management:
 - To verify whether the work done justifies payment of the stated costs;
 - To justify the good use of funds and secure co-funding;
 - To enhance performance and stimulate continuous improvement of the services provided.
- For external communication:
 - To gather key consolidated data showing the main outputs of the Network.

a) **Monitoring**

A multi-layered monitoring system will be put in place once the Network is established:

1) Continuous monitoring where:

- Consortium coordinators have the responsibility to oversee the implementation of their work programmes and to monitor whether all partners carry out their deliverables. They shall raise any risk of underperformance with the partner(s) concerned and notify the EASME if the concerns are not addressed swiftly;
- The EASME will monitor selected indicators very closely in order to provide a report on the Network's outcomes at regular intervals. Should performance problems become apparent at this stage, ad hoc support actions will be taken;
- The EASME will collect the data items available in the IT systems (POD) at six months intervals for reporting to DG GROW.

2) On-site monitoring visits where:

- The progress with project implementation will be assessed and discussed during periodic on-site monitoring visits performed by the EASME. Field monitoring visits will follow a **structured programme** agreed in advance with the Enterprise Europe Network coordinator and will generally consist of meetings with the management and the staff of the partner. The concerned partner will be **notified** at least 2 (two) months in advance and the precise time and date will be agreed. At that point, he will be requested to carry out an online self-assessment based on a Code of Conduct Questionnaire.

In the framework of the above actions, the EASME will monitor quality indicators in the form of ratios to be used to analyse the efficiency and effectiveness of the services delivered. Compliance with the Code of conduct will also be monitored to take into account quality and appropriateness of the procedures and means deployed by the Network partners.

b) Reporting

At the end of each reporting period, the EASME 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.

The goal of the Network's reporting exercise is *to gather evidence to evaluate* (1) the progress of Network partners towards their objectives set out in the consortia's work programmes and (2) the efficiency of processes implemented to achieve these results; (3) *to identify* performance drivers as well as (4) potential weaknesses which need to be addressed.

The system for monitoring and evaluating the quality, performance and impact of Network activities and results is designed as a Performance Enhancement System (PES).

The PES includes *quantitative and qualitative* information which will be used in combination to evaluate and provide feedback to Network partners

In addition to the data collected via the PES Data Items, information available in the Network IT platform will also be used for monitoring and reporting purposes. Network partners should therefore enter information accurately in the Network IT platform. Specifically, data will be taken from the POD database (e.g. number of POD profiles), from the Events Database (number of brokerage events (BE) and company missions (CM) organised DI04, number of meetings at BE/CM, number of meetings at BE/CM (DI05)).

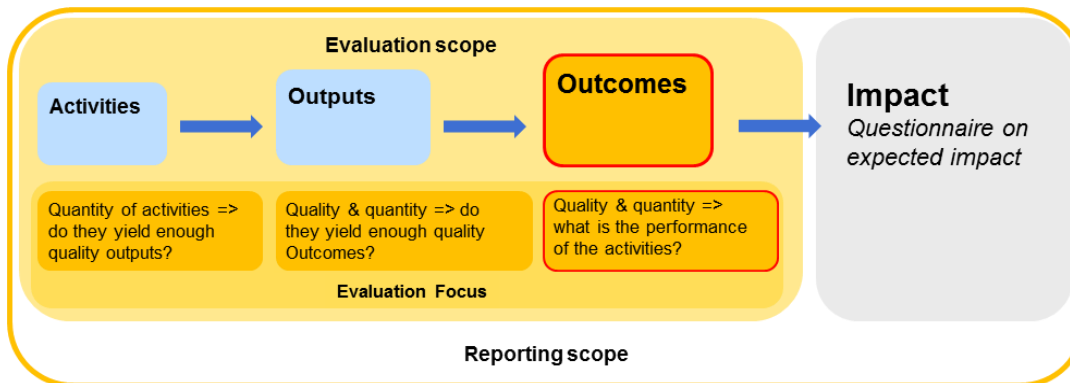
1. Performance enhancement system

The common set of 13 output and outcome indicators (data items) listed below in conjunction with the five impact indicators form the basis of the Performance Enhancement System (PES). The PES aims at measuring the results of the Network partners for the purpose of monitoring, reporting and enhancing overall Network performance.

The two-year target for the 13 output and outcome indicators will be included in the Grant Agreement of each consortium.

Information and data collected at different stages of the projects will be checked, consolidated and analysed by the EASME. Summary reports will be made available and discussed with the Network consortia. They will be encouraged to gradually enhance their performance.

The EASME will provide statistics for the two-year targets and the results after 12 and 24 months. These will be made available on the intranet of the Network. **Network partners will be evaluated on performance and outcomes**, using qualitative information (such as the Code of Conduct, the result of monitoring missions etc.) to interpret and put into context the quantitative results of the PES Data Items reports.



Key Performance

To support this increased focus of monitoring and reporting on performance and outcomes, a new tool, Key Performance Ratios (KPR), is introduced to provide a better appreciation of the performance of some activities from the related PES DI figures they have achieved: KPRs are based on PES Data items, which are compared to obtain ratios used as indicators of an activity's performance.

2. Main elements of the reporting system:

- Automatic collection of data items available in the IT systems (POD, Events Database, Achievements Database) every six months (no intervention needed from the Network).
- After 12 months, each consortium shall submit a quantitative progress report on the actual values of data items and the self-assessment of the consortium.
- After 24 months, each Consortium shall submit a technical implementation report on activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts. This report consists of three components:
 - Quantitative report: the actual values of the 13 data items on outputs and outcomes,
 - Descriptive part: the narrative report shall include the overview of the Implementation of the Code of Conduct;
- Impact assessment questionnaire:
 - After the conclusion/service of the Partnership Agreement, Network partners will input the answers to the Questionnaire on expected impact of the Achievement on the client's business

Reporting documents	Timing in months
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	6	12	18	24
Quantitative report with the actual values of 13 data items		X		X
Self-assessment of the consortium.		X		X
Questionnaire on expected impact	Continuous, with the registration of Achievements			
Narrative report		X		X

3. TIMETABLE

Stages	Dates
a) Deadline for submitting the application	05/11/2019
b) Evaluation period*	November 2019 *
c) Information to applicant *	End November 2019*
d) Signature of grant agreement*	December 2019 - January 2020*
e) Starting date of the action*	1 January 2020

* indicative

4. BUDGET AVAILABLE AND FUNDING OF PROJECTS

The budget earmarked for the co-financing of the implementation of the project in Kosovo* is estimated at **156.000 EUR**.

The total budget available for the co-funding of all Network projects in the period 2020-2021, subject to the yearly revision of the COSME work programme, is **EUR 108,390,000**. This figure refers to the participation of organisations from the Member States of the EU and COSME participating countries. Additional amounts may be made available to cover the potential needs of additional countries joining the COSME programme under Article 6 of the COSME Regulation.

The allocation of the available EU funding budget to individual consortia will essentially be based on the population of the geographic area covered by the Network partners and will also take into account the cost of living in the country and the resources needed to ensure the operation of a basic service.

The EU grant is limited to a maximum **co-funding rate of 60%** of the total **eligible costs** of the work programme.

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

5. ADMISSIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

The following requirements must be complied with:

- Applications must be submitted no later than the deadline for submitting applications referred to in section 3;
- Applications must be submitted in writing, as explained in section 16;
- Applications must be drafted in one of the EU official languages.

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

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

6. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

6.1. Eligible applicants

This call for proposals is addressed exclusively to legal entities established in “Kosovo*³⁰” for applications to set up Enterprise Europe Network operations in Kosovo* under the COSME regulation and the list of third countries participating in COSME: <https://ec.europa.eu/docsroom/documents/34263>.

Applicant organisations can be fully or partly public or private bodies; private bodies must be properly constituted and registered under the law.

Applicants can be single legal entities or legal entities forming a consortium of two or more parties.

In order to assess the applicant's eligibility, the following supporting documents are requested:

- **private entity:** extract from the official journal, copy of articles of association, extract of trade or association register, certificate of liability to VAT (if, as in certain countries, the trade register number and VAT number are identical, only one of these documents is required);
- **public entity:** copy of the resolution or decision establishing the public company, or other official document establishing the public-law entity;
- **consortium:** in addition to the supporting documents referring to their legal status, consortium members will submit letters confirming their participation to the project,

6.3 Implementation period

Activities must not start before 1 January 2020. The starting date shall be the same for all consortium partners.

³⁰ *This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSC 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.’

Activities are to be completed by 31 December 2021.

The maximum duration of projects is 24 months.

7. EXCLUSION CRITERIA

7.1. Exclusion

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

- (a) the applicant is bankrupt, subject to insolvency or winding-up procedures, its assets are being administered by a liquidator or by a court, it is in an arrangement with creditors, its business activities are suspended, or it is in any analogous situation arising from a similar procedure provided for under EU or national laws or regulations;
- (b) it has been established by a final judgment or a final administrative decision that the applicant is in breach of its obligations relating to the payment of taxes or social security contributions in accordance with the applicable law;
- (c) it has been established by a final judgment or a final administrative decision that the applicant is guilty of grave professional misconduct by having violated applicable laws or regulations or ethical standards of the profession to which the applicant belongs, or by having engaged in any wrongful intent or gross negligence, including, in particular, any of the following:
 - (i) fraudulently or negligently misrepresenting information required for the verification of the absence of grounds for exclusion or the fulfilment of eligibility or selection criteria or in the performance of a contract, a grant agreement or a grant decision;
 - (ii) entering into agreement with other applicants with the aim of distorting competition;
 - (iii) violating intellectual property rights;
 - (iv) attempting to influence the decision-making process of the Agency during the award procedure;
 - (v) attempting to obtain confidential information that may confer upon it undue advantages in the award procedure;
- (d) it has been established by a final judgment that the applicant is guilty of any of the following:
 - (i) fraud, within the meaning of Article 3 of Directive (EU) 2017/1371 of the European Parliament and of the Council and Article 1 of the Convention on the protection of the European Communities' financial interests, drawn up by the Council Act of 26 July 1995;
 - (ii) corruption, as defined in Article 4(2) of Directive (EU) 2017/1371 or Article 3 of the Convention on the fight against corruption involving officials of the European Communities or officials of Member States of the European Union, drawn up by the Council Act of 26 May 1997, or conduct referred to in Article 2(1) of Council Framework Decision 2003/568/JHA, or corruption as defined in the applicable law;
 - (iii) conduct related to a criminal organisation, as referred to in Article 2 of Council Framework Decision 2008/841/JHA;
 - (iv) money laundering or terrorist financing within the meaning of Article 1(3), (4) and (5) of Directive (EU) 2015/849 of the European Parliament and of the Council;

- (v) terrorist offences or offences linked to terrorist activities, as defined in Articles 1 and 3 of Council Framework Decision 2002/475/JHA, respectively, or inciting, aiding, abetting or attempting to commit such offences, as referred to in Article 4 of that Decision;
 - (vi) child labour or other offences concerning trafficking in human beings as referred to in Article 2 of Directive 2011/36/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council;
- (e) the applicant has shown significant deficiencies in complying with main obligations in the performance of a contract, a grant agreement or a grant decision financed by the Union's budget, which has led to its early termination or to the application of liquidated damages or other contractual penalties, or which has been discovered following checks, audits or investigations by an authorising officer, OLAF or the Court of Auditors;
 - (f) it has been established by a final judgment or final administrative decision that the applicant has committed an irregularity within the meaning of Article 1(2) of Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 2988/95;
 - (g) It has been established by a final judgement or final administrative decision that the applicant has created an entity in a different jurisdiction with the intent to circumvent fiscal, social or any other legal obligations of mandatory application in the jurisdiction of its registered office, central administration or principal place of business;
 - (h) it has been established by a final judgement or final administrative decision that an entity has been created with the intent referred to in point (g);
 - (i) for the situations referred to in points (c) to (h) above, the applicant is subject to:
 - (i) facts established in the context of audits or investigations carried out by European Public Prosecutor's Office after its establishment, the Court of Auditors, the European Anti-Fraud Office or the internal auditor, or any other check, audit or control performed under the responsibility of an authorising officer of an EU institution, of a European office or of an EU agency or body;
 - (ii) non-final judgments or non-final administrative decisions which may include disciplinary measures taken by the competent supervisory body responsible for the verification of the application of standards of professional ethics;
 - (iii) facts referred to in decisions of persons or entities being entrusted with EU budget implementation tasks;
 - (iv) information transmitted by Member States implementing Union funds;
 - (v) decisions of the Commission relating to the infringement of Union competition law or of a national competent authority relating to the infringement of Union or national competition law; or
 - (vi) decisions of exclusion by an authorising officer of an EU institution, of a European office or of an EU agency or body.

7.2. Remedial measures

If an applicant declares one of the situations of exclusion listed above (see section 7.4), it must indicate the measures it has taken to remedy the exclusion situation, thus demonstrating its reliability. This may include e.g. technical, organisational and personnel measures to correct the conduct and prevent further occurrence, compensation of damage or payment of fines or of any taxes or social security contributions. The relevant documentary evidence which illustrates the remedial measures taken must

be provided in annex to the declaration. This does not apply for situations referred in point (d) of section 7.1.

7.3. **Rejection from the call for proposals**

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

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

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

7.4 **Supporting documents**

Applicants and linked third parties, where applicable, must provide a **declaration on their honour** certifying that they are not in one of the situations referred to in Articles 136(1) and 141 of the EU Financial Regulation (FR)³¹, by filling in the relevant form attached to the application form accompanying this invitation to submit a proposal.

8. SELECTION CRITERIA

8.1. Financial capacity

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

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

- a declaration on their honour.

- b) Grants \geq EUR 60 000:

- a declaration on their honour and,

EITHER

³¹ See Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 July 2018 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union, amending Regulations (EU) No 1296/2013, (EU) No 1301/2013, (EU) No 1303/2013, (EU) No 1304/2013, (EU) No 1309/2013, (EU) No 1316/2013, (EU) No 223/2014, (EU) No 283/2014, and Decision No 541/2014/EU and repealing Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012, (OJ L 193/30.07.2018, p.1).

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

OR

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- request further information;
- decide not to give pre-financing;
- decide to give pre-financing paid in instalments;
- decide to give pre-financing covered by a bank guarantee (see section 12.4 below);
- where applicable, require the joint and several financial liability of all the co-beneficiaries³²;

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

8.2 Operational capacity

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

In this respect, applicants have to submit the following supporting documents for new staff (i.e. CVs which EASME has not previously assessed):

³² The beneficiaries are advised to define this situation also in the consortium agreement (see Article 25 of the model Grant agreement).

- curriculum vitae (CV), preferably in European CV format³³, or description of the profile of the persons responsible for managing and implementing the different activities of the action. The CV should be accompanied, where appropriate, (like in the field of research and education) by a list of relevant publications/projects managed).

9. AWARD CRITERIA

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

The Agency will organise an assessment process in order to ascertain that the quality of the proposals is sufficient to justify the awarding of an EU financial contribution.

The assessment will be based on:

1. Whether the activities of the work programme are clearly described and the full range of services is provided according to the principles governing the Network.
2. Whether the outputs and outcomes proposed in the work programme are adequate and how they contribute to the achievement of the specific objectives of the project.
3. Whether the proposal shows that the work programme will be run in a cost effective way. Particular attention will be paid to the value for money of the activities provided by the Network partners.

The following table includes all award criteria to be considered for the preparation of the work programme.

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Max. score</i>
<p>Relevance of the actions in view of the objectives of this invitation to submit a proposal (<i>meeting objectives of the action; appropriate results; appropriate partnership (if any): competences and European dimension</i>)</p> <p><i>What is the importance of the proposed action in relation to EU policies and priorities identified in the invitation to submit a proposal?</i></p> <p><i>To what extent are the actions proposed by the applicant strategically chosen to meet the objectives of this invitation to submit a proposal?</i></p> <p><i>How relevant is the project proposed in view of the objectives of the action?</i></p> <p><i>How well does the project fit with the expectations/needs of the identified target group?</i></p> <p><i>How strategically chosen are the project partners (relevance of the partners to the project if applicable)?</i></p> <p><i>To what extent do the proposed activities, composition of the partnership if applicable and the selected target group(s) demonstrate a European added value?</i></p> <p><i>Is there any complementarity between the proposed project and other actions being taken at European level?</i></p>	30

³³ <http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu>

<p>Quality of the proposed actions (<i>clear and feasible description of actions; appropriate allocation of resources, including management</i>)</p> <p><i>How clear, coherent and ambitious is the work plan?</i></p> <p><i>How appropriate, practical and innovative are the activities proposed (including the internal plan of action/work packages)?</i></p> <p><i>To what extent is the work plan clearly defined in terms of schedule, milestones and deliverables?</i></p> <p><i>Is there a logical link between identified needs, specific objectives, proposed actions and expected results? Is this link well described and justified?</i></p> <p><i>How suitable is the contribution of each partner to the activities proposed if applicable?</i></p> <p><i>Is the level of effort (hours and budget) appropriate, per work package, per task and per partner if applicable, considering their skills and responsibilities?</i></p> <p><i>To what extent can the methodology and management set up be effective and ensure the high quality of the action proposed?</i></p>	<p>30</p>
<p>Impact on target audience (<i>appropriate impact indicators; dissemination; project continuation</i>)</p> <p><i>Is the proposal suggesting clear, realistic and practical impact indicators? To what extent does the project contribute to creating a real, measurable impact on the sectors concerned?</i></p> <p><i>To what extent is the project likely to have a tangible impact on the target groups?</i></p> <p><i>How effective, innovative and convincing are the promotional and communication activities? Does the proposal contain a comprehensive communication strategy?</i></p> <p><i>Are the expected multiplying effects reasonable? To what extent does the proposal include elements of follow-up and transferability (including lessons learnt and good practices) at EU level?</i></p> <p><i>Are concrete measures planned in order to ensure that the project can be continued after the termination of EU funding?</i></p>	<p>20</p>
<p>Cost-effectiveness (<i>coherence, detail and clarity between actions proposed and budgeted resources</i>)</p> <p><i>To what extent the detailed budget is coherent with the work plan of the proposal?</i></p> <p><i>To what extent is the budget clear and detailed, as well as effective, to implement the action? Does the breakdown of the budget, category by category, offer a way of ensuring that the amount of the grant awarded is reasonable in relation to the expected results?</i></p>	<p>20</p>

<p><i>To what extent is the proposed expenditure necessary for the implementation of the project?</i></p> <p><i>Do the expected results stand in a reasonable relationship to the amount of the grant?</i> <i>Does the budget seem justified when compared to the expected impact?</i></p>	
TOTAL:	<i>100</i>

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

If the proposal does not pass the award criteria, EASME reserves the right to request the submission of a new proposal.

10. LEGAL COMMITMENTS

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

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

11. ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW PROCEDURES

Unsuccessful applicants may request the review of the admissibility and eligibility procedure and the evaluation procedure with regard to their proposal as specified in section V.1 of the Guide for Applicants.

12. FINANCIAL PROVISIONS

12.1 General principles

a) Non-cumulative award

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

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

b) Non-retroactivity

No grant may be awarded retrospectively for actions already completed.

A grant may be awarded for an action which has already begun only where the applicant can demonstrate the need to start the action before the grant agreement is signed.

In such cases, costs eligible for financing may not have been incurred prior to the date of submission of the grant application

c) Co-financing

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

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

d) Balanced budget

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

The budget must be drawn up in euros.

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

e) Implementation contracts/subcontracting

Where the implementation of the action requires the award of procurement contracts (implementation contracts), the beneficiary must award the contract to the bid offering best value for money or the lowest price (as appropriate), avoiding conflicts of interests and retain the documentation for the event of an audit.

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

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

Beneficiaries may sub-contract tasks forming part of the action as described in the proposal. If they do so, they must ensure that, in addition to the above-mentioned conditions of best value

³⁴ Directive 2014/24/EU of the European Parliament and the Council of 26 February 2014 on public procurement and repealing Directive 2004/18/EC (OJ L 94/65, 28.03.2014).

³⁵ Directive 2014/25/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 February 2014 on procurement by entities operating in the water, energy, transport and postal services sectors and repealing Directive 2004/17/EC (OJ L 94/243, 28.03.2014).

for money and absence of conflicts of interests, the following conditions are also complied with:

- (i) subcontracting does not cover core tasks of the action;
 - (ii) recourse to subcontracting is justified having because of the nature of the action and what is necessary for its implementation;
 - (iii) the estimated costs of the subcontracting are clearly identifiable in the estimated budget;
 - (iv) any recourse to subcontracting, if not provided for in description of the action, is communicated by the beneficiary and approved by the Agency. The agency may grant approval:
 - (i) before any recourse to subcontracting, if the beneficiaries requests an amendment
 - (ii) after recourse to subcontracting if the subcontracting:
 - is specifically justified in the interim or final technical report and
 - does not entail changes to the grant agreement which would call into question the decision awarding the grant or be contrary to the equal treatment of applicants;
 - (v) the beneficiary ensure that certain conditions applicable to beneficiaries, enumerated in the grant agreement (e.g. visibility, confidentiality, etc.), are also applicable to the subcontractors.
- f) Financial support to third parties.

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

12.2 Funding forms

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

➤ **Maximum EU contribution requested**

The EU contribution is limited to a maximum co-financing rate of eligible costs indicated in section 4. Consequently, part of the total eligible expenses entered in the estimative budget must be financed from sources other than the EU grant (see section 12.1.c).

➤ **Eligible costs**

Eligible costs shall meet all the following criteria:

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

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

- ✓ they are indicated in the estimated budget of the action;
- ✓ they are necessary for the implementation of the action which is the subject of the grant;
- ✓ they are identifiable and verifiable, in particular being recorded in the accounting records of the beneficiary and determined according to the applicable accounting standards of the country where the beneficiary is established and according to the usual cost accounting practices of the beneficiary;
- ✓ they comply with the requirements of applicable tax and social legislation;
- ✓ they are reasonable, justified, and comply with the requirements of sound financial management, in particular regarding economy and efficiency.

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

In addition for **unit costs**:

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

Further details are included in the model grant agreement.

Eligible costs may be direct or indirect.

Eligible direct costs

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

A. Direct personnel costs

Types of eligible personnel costs

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

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

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

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

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

The costs of the personnel of **national administrations** are eligible to the extent that they relate to the cost of activities which the relevant public authority would not carry out if the project concerned were not undertaken;

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

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

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

C. Other direct costs

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

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

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

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

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

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

D. Direct costs of providing financial support to third parties are not eligible

E. Eligible indirect costs (overheads)

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

Indirect costs are eligible if they are declared on the basis of the flat-rate of 25% of the eligible direct costs, from which are excluded:

- (a) costs of subcontracting.

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

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

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

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

➤ **Ineligible costs**

- (a) costs related to return on capital;
- (b) debt and debt service charges;
- (c) provisions for future losses or debts;
- (d) interest owed;
- (e) doubtful debts;
- (f) currency exchange losses;
- (g) bank costs charged by the beneficiary's bank for transfers from the Agency;
- (h) excessive or reckless expenditure;
- (i) deductible VAT;
- (j) costs incurred during suspension of the implementation of the action;

³⁶ For the definition, see Article 180(2)(b) of EU Financial Regulation 2018/1046 : '**operating grant**' means financial contribution, to the functioning of a body which has an objective forming part of, and supporting an Union policy, by means of a financial contribution to its work programme.

- (k) in-kind contributions provided by third parties;
- (l) costs declared under another EU or Euratom grant (including grants awarded by a Member State and financed by the EU or Euratom budget and grants awarded by bodies other than the Agency for the purpose of implementing the EU or Euratom budget); in particular, indirect costs if the beneficiary is already receiving an operating grant financed by the EU or Euratom budget in the same period, unless they can demonstrate that the operating grant does not cover any costs of the action;
- (m) costs for staff of a national (or local) administration, for activities that are part of the administration's normal activities (i.e. not undertaken only because of the grant);
- (n) costs (especially travel and subsistence costs) for staff or representatives of EU institutions, bodies or agencies.

Further details are included in the model grant agreement.

➤ **Calculation of the final grant amount**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Step 2 — Limit to the maximum grant amount.

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

³⁷ Not applicable for low value grants.

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

The following are considered ‘receipts’:

- (a) income generated by the action;
- (b) financial contributions given by third parties to the beneficiary, specifically to be used for costs that are eligible under the action.

The following are however not considered ‘receipts’:

- (a) financial contributions by third parties, if they may be used to cover costs other than the eligible costs;
- (b) financial contributions by third parties with no obligation to repay any amount unused at the end of the action period.

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

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

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

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

Further details are included in the model grant agreement.

12.3 Payment arrangements

Pre-financing payment

A pre-financing payment corresponding to 70% of the grant amount will be transferred to the beneficiary within 30 days, either from the entry into force of the Grant Agreement or from 10 days before the starting date of the action, whichever is the latest.

Final payment

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

12.4 Pre-financing guarantee

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

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

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

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

13. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

The beneficiaries will be requested to submit the following reports:

- A technical progress report covering the first 12 months not linked to a request for payment;
- A final technical and financial report, linked to the request for the payment of the balance.

Further details are included in the model grant agreement.

14. PUBLICITY

14.1 By the beneficiaries

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

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

To do this they must use the text, the emblem and the disclaimer in accordance with the details provided in the grant agreement.

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

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

14.2 By EASME

With the exception of scholarships paid to natural persons and other direct support paid to natural persons in most need, all information relating to grants awarded in the course of a financial year shall

be published on an internet site of the European Union institutions no later than the 30 June of the year following the financial year in which the grants were awarded.

EASME will publish the following information:

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

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

15. DATA PROTECTION

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

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

16. PROCEDURE FOR THE SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

➤ Preparation of proposals

Applicants will find the instructions on all relevant templates for the preparation of the proposals in the Guide for Applicants and its annexes.

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

³⁹ OJ L 295/39 of 21.11.2018.

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

➤ Submission of proposals

Proposals must be submitted in accordance with the requirements of section 5 and by the deadline specified in section 3.

Proposals must be submitted electronically via the Funding & Tenders Portal through the following link:

<https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/submission/manage/secure/createdraft?callId=COS-EEN-GA4-2020-2021&sfs=COSME-GA&preregtype=Topic&preregvalue=COSME-EEN-GA4-Kosovo>

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

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

➤ Contacts

EASME is available to answer questions relating to the content of the present call for proposals. All questions must be sent by e-mail to:

EASME-COSME-EEN-SGA4-2020-2021@ec.europa.eu.

Answers will be published regularly on the FAQs page of the Funding & Tenders Portal.

17. ANNEXES

ANNEX 1 – Guide for applicants

Annex 2 – Template for Work Programme (Technical Annex 1)

Annex 3 – Template for detailed Budget (Technical Annex 2)

Annex 4 – PES encoding table

Annex 5 – Model Grant agreement v.4

ANNEX 6 – Network client journey of a European SME



ANNEX 8 – Definitions of output and outcome indicators by activity (PES Data Items)

Outputs	
Activity 1 – Advice, support and information activities	
DI01	Participants in regional/local events
<p>Number of participants attending regional/local events (see <i>definition for regional/local event</i>). The participants are the individual people attending the event. The number to report by each partner should be the number of people of organisations that are in their client database or customer relation management (CRM) tool.</p> <p>Local/regional events can include virtual events such as webinars.</p> <p><i>If an event is co-organised by several Network partners, each Network partner should report a share of the total number of participants. The sum of the number of participants reported by each partner should not exceed the total number of participants at the event. The participating Network partners should agree on how to divide the number of participants, based on their respective involvement.</i></p> <p><i>If an event is co-organised with a third party, the Network partner(s) involved should report the total number of participants attending the event.</i></p> <p>Documentation</p> <p>Signed participants' list for each event (on paper or electronically).</p>	
DI02	SMEs/clients receiving individual advisory support
<p>Clients of Network partners who have received advisory support to increase their competitiveness and their knowledge of financing, EU initiatives and legislation.</p> <p>Clients having received multiple advisory support services in a given reporting period should be counted once.</p> <p>Documentation</p> <p>List of clients having received individual advisory support kept in the partners' own records (e.g. CRM) over a given period, with an indication of the advisory service(s) received.</p>	
Activity 2 – Cross-border partnering activities for business cooperation, technology transfer, innovation and research	
DI03	SMEs/clients receiving individual partnering support
<p>Clients of Network partners (primarily SMEs) who have received Network partnering support with the objective to engage in successful cooperation with foreign cooperation partners (primarily SMES).</p> <p>The cooperation(s) pursued can be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business / commercial collaboration(s); • Innovation / technology transfer(s); • Collaboration(s) fostering the R&D activities of SMEs and leading to the participation of SMEs in European research programmes. <p>Clients having received multiple partnering services in a given reporting period should be</p>	

counted once.

Partnering services include (non-exhaustive list): clients for which profiles have been published in the Network's POD database, clients attending Network Brokerage Events and Company Missions (BE/CM), clients for which queries for POD profiles or for Network BE/CM have been registered in the Network IT platform or in Network partners' own automatic matching systems, clients making expressions of interest on profiles published in the POD database.

Documentation

List of clients having received partnering services kept in the partners' own records (e.g. CRM) over a given period, with an indication of the service(s) received.

DI04

Brokerage events/company missions organised

Number of brokerage events (BE) or company missions (CM) registered in the Network's Events' Database in which a Network partner is organiser or co-organiser as defined in the Eligibility Guidelines⁴¹.

Organisers and co-organisers should be identified as such in the Network's Events' Database.

Network partners who support clients taking part in a BE/CM but are not organisers or co-organisers should not report a BE/CM organised but only report clients (DI04) and meetings (DI06).

BE and CM are organised together with Network partners, either in a partners' geographic region with companies from abroad visiting and meeting local clients, or abroad, and are events in which one or more of clients from a Network partner participate, visit and meet foreign companies.

Documentation

BE and CM should be registered in the Network database well in advance and should be labelled and promoted as BE/CM of the Network.

Network partners have to ensure that their participation in BE/CM is accurately reflected in the Network's Events Database: if a partner is not involved in the organisation of a BE/CM but has clients attending the event, the organisation should be registered in the database as "other partner involved".

DI05

Meetings at brokerage events/company missions

Total number of face-to-face meetings which clients, supported by a Network partner to attend a brokerage event (BE) or company mission (CM) registered in the Network's events database in the reporting period, had at those BE/CM.

Documentation

The total number of meetings the clients a Network partner supported for a given BE/CM had at that BE/CM must be registered in the Feedback form for the event in the Network's Events Database.

The total number of meetings at BE/CM reported by a Network partner should be equal to the sum of the number of meetings indicated for the Network partner in the feedback reports of all the BE/CM registered in the Events' Database in which they were involved as organiser, co-organiser or other partner involved⁴².

⁴¹ <https://een.ec.europa.eu/my/intranet/contractual-notes>.

⁴² See the Eligibility Guidelines.

DI06	Expressions of interest received
<p>Total number of expressions of interest received on profiles published by a Network partner organisation in the Network's Partnering Opportunities database in the reporting period.</p> <p>Documentation</p> <p>Partners' own CRM and/or Network IT platform if EoIs received are registered there.</p>	
DI07	Expressions of interest made
<p>Total number of expressions of interest made on profiles published by a Network partner organisation in the Network's Partnering Opportunities database in the reporting period.</p> <p>Documentation</p> <p>Partners' own records (e.g. CRM) and/or Network IT platform if EoIs made are registered there.</p>	
Activity 3 – SME feedback activities (not applicable)	
DI08	Clients in feedback related actions (not applicable)

Outcomes	
DI09	Achievements
<p>Total number of Achievements – Partnership Agreements (PA) or Advisory Services Outcomes (ASO) – registered in the Network's Achievements Database for the reporting period, following the Network's Achievements Guidelines for PAs and ASOs respectively.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicating a source(s) (i.e. which Network service(s) led to the Achievement) in the registered Achievement is mandatory; • All Achievements should indicate if the client(s) involved is (are) new clients of the type of service leading to a registered Achievement (see <i>definition for "new client"</i>); • PA and/or ASO targets should be defined at Network partner level in the consortium's work programme for all Network partners involved in the provision of Partnering Services (DI04) and/or Individual Advisory Services (DI02); • The <i>Achievement date</i> falls in the activity period (regardless of the Achievement's registration date). <p>Documentation</p> <p>Achievements <i>registered</i> in the Achievements database for the reporting period.</p>	

Outputs	
Activity 5 – Promotion of the Network's services and communication activities	
DI10	SMEs/clients using digital services provided by the Network
Number of SMEs/client subscribers, followers, fans, members, etc., receiving information	

via newsletters, business alerts and automated matching tools, tender alerts, RSS feed, or other service provided through social media (Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, etc.).

The total figure should be aggregated from the following:

- Number of SMEs registered to regularly receive from Network partners via newsletters information linked to Network activities or topics covered by the Network.
- Number of SMEs receiving selected POD profiles via the Network central Automatic Matching Tool or a local Automatic matching tool.
- Number of followers in the different networks (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn or similar)
- Web stats: number of users over the past 12 months (Users that have had at least one session within the selected date range. Includes both new and returning users)

Documentation

List of clients receiving those services with indication of service received kept in each Network partner organisation's own records.

DI11

Cooperation with local stakeholders

Number of active collaboration with stakeholders in the reporting period. An active collaboration is defined as a collaboration providing a noticeable result on activities carried out or results achieved in the reporting period.

Documentation

List of stakeholders with which an active collaboration was ongoing during a reporting period kept in each Network partner organisation's own records (e.g. CRM).

Activity 6 – Network building and reinforcing the Network

DI12

Contributions to other partners' Achievements

Number of contributions to Achievements of other Network partners acknowledged by the partner(s) registering the Achievement in the Achievements database.

The contribution must be indicated in the Achievement database by:

- Adding the partner to the “Other partner involved” section of the Achievement, (and/or)
- Adding an event in the “source” section, (and/or)
- Indicating the contribution in the “other source” field, (and/or)
- Explaining the contribution(s) in the Achievement report.

Documentation

Achievements registered in the Achievements database for the reporting period.

DI13

Active contributions to Network activities

Number of contributions to Network activities as speaker, trainer, chairperson, coordinator, rapporteur, evaluator, or participation in activities designed to increase the performance, quality and identity of the Network.

Examples:

- Participation in Sector Groups, Working Groups, centralised Network trainings and induction courses,
- Participation and/or organisation of decentralised training events,
- Following an e-learning modules provided by EASME,
- Participation in official Network events: Annual Conference, Steering & Advisory Group (SAG) (national co-ordination, SAG meetings), Info Days, National meetings, EASME ad-hoc and contact groups,

- Participation in EU wide promotion campaigns and other events launched by the Commission (not including here EU consultations),
- Participation in Staff exchange,
- Participation in a Mentoring scheme,
- Participation in consortium meetings,
- To be active as POD External Reviewer,
- To have submitted or implemented a validated Network good practice.

Documentation

List of contributions to, or participation in activities kept in each Network partner organisation's own records (e.g. CRM).

For Sector Groups, Working Groups, centralised Network trainings and induction courses, as well as for all official Network events organised directly by EASME, Network partner need to have been properly registered as requested for each type of activity. For other Network activities not directly organised by EASME, Network partners need to keep a record of their participation (confirmation of registration and/or attendance) and its purpose.

Other definitions

New client

Client receiving a Network service in the GA reporting period who had not previously received any kind of service (such as advice, support and information activities).

Regional/local events organised

Regional or local events are organised by the Network partner(s)/consortia themselves in their geographic area for existing and potential Network clients with the objective to raise their awareness about Network services, EU policies, EU programmes and funding opportunities, or to train them to enhance their skills and their capacity for internationalisation and innovation.

They can be co-organised with third parties.

Regional/local events can have different forms: Workshops, seminars, trainings, webinars etc. The event and its objectives should be published in advance and feature one or more speakers. Participants are mainly SMEs, but could also be other kinds of organisation, such as SME support organisations, universities, institutes, business organisations, regional/local authorities and stakeholders when relevant to achieve the objectives of the project.

The participants are the individual people attending the event. The number to be reported by each partner should be the number of people of organisations that are in their client database or customer relation management (CRM) tool.