



**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**

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

Department A – COSME, H2020 SME and EMFF

**Unit A1 - COSME**

**CALL FOR TENDERS**

**Supporting SME Internationalisation**

**Increasing EU SME's readiness to internationalise in target markets**

EASME/COSME/2015/028

TENDER SPECIFICATIONS

Open Procedure

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**INVITATION TO TENDER N° EASME/COSME/2015/028****Supporting SME internationalisation  
Increase SME's readiness to internationalize in target markets****1. TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS****1.1. Introduction**

The Executive Agency Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (henceforth "EASME")<sup>1</sup>, acting under powers delegated by the European Commission, is launching this invitation to tender to support EU SMEs internationalise and become active in target third country markets.

International entrepreneurship among European SMEs is an issue of considerable importance given the demonstrated growth potential that it carries and the capacity of internationalised SMEs to positively contribute to economic development, at regional national and European levels.

Over the last decade the global business environment has undergone significant changes. Different important emerging economies have consolidated their development through strong growth rates becoming major players in the world's economy. 90 % of global economic growth in the next 10-15 years is expected to be generated outside Europe, a third of it in China alone<sup>2</sup>. On the one hand this trend will bring unprecedented challenges to European competitiveness, but on the other it will also open new opportunities for EU companies to seize new growth opportunities overseas.

This is one of the reasons why supporting business activities of SMEs outside the EU has been an important policy priority for the Commission in recent years.

Focus is especially concentrated on fast growing economies such as the "BRIC" countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China)<sup>3</sup>. Recent trends though show that the dynamism of some of these economies has recently been slowing down and that the potential is not as high as expected in the past few years. EU support to SME International activities should therefore not be limited to a restricted group of countries but develop to encompass opportunities where these may arise and where European Commission support to SMEs is already available and can be exploited. The list of target countries is reported under the section "Geographic scope below".

It is clear that internationally active enterprises have been better equipped to mitigate the consequences of the negative European economic conjuncture that has been characterised since the beginning of the crisis back in 2008, by periods of recession and/or weak growth rates.

Although International markets offer important opportunities for European enterprises to become more competitive, increase turnover and grow, SMEs still face substantial difficulties that keep from internationalizing, especially beyond the Internal Market. Compared to large companies, SMEs face particular difficulties such as complying with foreign laws, (contact, customs, technical regulations

<sup>1</sup> EASME was set up by Commission implementing decision of 17 December 2013 establishing the "Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized enterprises" and repealing decisions 2004/20/EC and 2007/372/EC (OJ L 341 of 18.12.2013). EASME replaces and supersedes former Executive Agency for Competitiveness and Innovation (EACI).

<sup>2</sup> "Trade Growth and Jobs". Commission contribution to the European Council  
[http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2013/april/tradoc\\_151052.pdf](http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2013/april/tradoc_151052.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Communication "Small Business, Big world" of 09/11/2011.

and standards), finding business partners, dealing with Intellectual Property Rights, finding adequate funding, experienced human resources, etc...<sup>4</sup>

The purpose of this call for tender is to select a contractor or a consortium of organisations with the experience and expertise needed to carry out a first project providing tailored training and matchmaking support to SMEs located in the EU and COSME participating countries<sup>5</sup>. Actions will be aimed at designing an up to date methodology to support and trigger their readiness to develop international business in the listed Third country markets (see below). Measures will involve only SMEs having an interest and a potential to exploit opportunities within these specific Third country markets but not having developed relevant experience yet.

Several EU projects, programmes and structures aimed at supporting the Internationalisation of European SMEs have been set up in recent years. In this context and for the identification of target third country markets, priority is being given to third countries where project activities subject of this call, can build upon existing EU SME support structures or programmes. Examples are countries where Business Cooperation Centres of the Enterprise Europe Network are present, eventually combined with other European Commission initiatives such EU SME Business Centres and EU Third country collaboration on Clusters.

The Enterprise Europe Network (EEN), especially the Business Cooperation Centres in Third Countries, will play a key role for the purposes of this first project on SME internationalisation training that will be implemented following the outcomes of this call for tenders. The EEN, that started its operations in 2008 and was re-launched for the 2014-2020 period under the COSME Programme, has developed into the world's most important Network providing free of charge services to help SME develop cross border activities in the fields of Business, Innovation and Research. The project can build upon the experience, capacity and good practices available in the EEN. For example, the Network allows SMEs to seize matchmaking opportunities (e.g.: through the exploitation of relevant Partnering databases, Brokerage Events, Company Missions, etc...), within the EU Internal Market, and beyond. Pursuant Article 7 of the COSME regulation, entities established in non-EU countries (other than COSME-participating countries) may also take part to actions under the Programme, including cooperation with the Enterprise Europe Network. However, these entities are not entitled to receive a European financial contribution.

As the result of the last call for expressions of interest, about 100 EEN Business Cooperation Centres (BCCs) are operational in 29 third countries<sup>6</sup>.

Besides the EEN, other European programmes and initiatives are available and relevant for the objectives of this call.

Important EU initiatives are for instance represented by the EU Business Centres present in certain countries and that are capable of providing specialised services to access the markets of a given country directly (e.g. EU Business and SME Centres in China, India, Japan, Indonesia and Thailand, AL Invest 5.0, Elan Network Project, etc...)<sup>7</sup>. These Centres/Programmes could also play a relevant role

<sup>4</sup> Communication of the Commission "Small Businesses, Big world

<sup>5</sup> SMEs belonging to countries that participate to the COSME Programme (Programme for the Competitiveness of Enterprises and Small and Medium Enterprises: ([http://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/cosme/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/cosme/index_en.htm))

<sup>6</sup> Countries other than EU Member States and COSME-participating countries.

<sup>7</sup> - China SME Centre: <http://www.eusmecentre.org.cn/>,

- India European Business and Technology Centre: <http://ebtc.eu/>

- EU-Japan Centre for Industrial Cooperation: <http://www.eu-japan.eu/>

- European Indonesian Business Network EIBN: <http://www.eibn.org/>

- ASEAN Business Centre in Thailand: <http://www.eabc-thailand.eu/>

entering into contact with other existing support providers (e.g.: the EEN) or by making available a wide range of services directly accessible by SMEs from any Member State.

Clusters are also relevant and important for the objectives of this project, as they can act as real "springboards" for SMEs, helping them getting access to global value chains and develop long-term strategic partnerships. Cluster firms benefit from the specialised business support services of cluster organisations. The latter for instance promote international study visits as well as the organisation of partnering or "matchmaking" missions. They facilitate the identification of new partners outside the Regions where Clusters operate for research and prototyping and for bringing products and services to the market.

SMEs have to increasingly integrate themselves into global value chains that are also controlled and managed by foreign companies. The clustering of different competences along a value chain in a region remains an important element for competitive advantages, and the successful participation in global value chains is another condition for economic success. Cluster organisations can help firms, and notably SMEs, to find partners for international cooperation and therefore raise their competitiveness and innovation capacity. The European Cluster Collaboration Platform<sup>8</sup> (ECCP) has been developed in 2009-2012 as a pilot action under the European Cluster Observatory<sup>9</sup> and has been maintained and further developed between 2012-2014 through an ad-hoc grant to promote European and international Cluster cooperation for the benefit of SMEs. The ECCP consists of a web Platform with online tools that offer Cluster organisations and their members the possibility to map their organisation, profile their activities, find partners and promote collaboration in a targeted manner within and beyond Europe. The ECCP currently has over 950 registered Cluster organisations and facilitates cooperation between cluster organisations not only within Europe but also with a number of international partners. To this end, the ECCP has signed Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) with partners in India, Japan, Brazil, South Korea, Tunisia, Morocco, Mexico and Chile. The ECCP can therefore be an important instrument for promoting international cooperation for the benefit of SMEs at EU level.

## 1.2. Background information and context

### Some relevant statistics

Two thirds of jobs in Europe and about 60% of the total value added in the non-financial business economy are created by the 23 million SMEs that operate within its borders. Nevertheless the capacity of EU SMEs to exploit business opportunities beyond domestic and EU markets is still far from being fully exploited. A considerable number of SMEs are involved in activities within the Internal Market while only a small percentage is involved in international business going beyond the EU.

More precisely, 25% of European SMEs export within the EU of which about only half (13%) go beyond EU borders. 29% have import activities within the Internal Market, again, more or less half of them (14%) import from outside the EU.

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: Al Invest 5.0: <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/europeaid/online-services/index.cfm?do=publi.welcome&nbPubliList=15&orderby=upd&orderbyad=Desc&searchtype=RS&aofr=150066&userlanguage=en>

- ELAN Network project: <http://www.elannetwork.org/content/elan-network-project>

<sup>8</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/initiatives/cluster/internationalisation/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/initiatives/cluster/internationalisation/index_en.htm) or [www.clustercollaboration.eu](http://www.clustercollaboration.eu)

<sup>9</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/initiatives/cluster/observatory/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/initiatives/cluster/observatory/index_en.htm)

In addition, statistics show that the larger the company is, the more it tends to have international activities. Besides exporting and importing activities increase with the age of enterprises. The older they are the more they tend to develop business with foreign countries.

The level of internationalisation also depends on the size and population of the country where the company is based. Countries such as Sweden and Denmark, have higher percentage of exporters than France, Italy or the United Kingdom. Companies active in e-commerce, having the possibility to sell products or services on line are more active, as the Internet has eased possibilities for SMEs of all sizes to overcome some of the barriers to internationalisation.

SMEs have a tendency to start international activities by importing. Enterprises tend to start with imports in 39% of cases compared to a figure of 18% of SMEs that start international business with exports<sup>10</sup>.

### Advantages of internationalisation

The capacity of SMEs to be internationally active clearly increases their capacity to grow and create or maintain jobs. A direct link exists between internationalization and increased performance of SMEs. International activities reinforce growth, enhance competitiveness and support the long-term sustainability of companies, triggering the creation of new jobs or enabling companies to maintain jobs when the economic conjuncture is less favourable.

There is also a strong link between activities in international markets and different forms of innovation. Available figures show that 26% of internationally active SMEs introduced products or services that were new for their sector in their countries, for other SMEs this was only 8%. Internationally active SMEs are also more active with process innovations that are new for their sector in their country<sup>11</sup>. In this context innovation support services made available by Transnational Technology Transfer processes within the EEN represent an example of great relevance and importance.

### Barriers to Internationalisation

Not many of the SMEs not having had international experience are planning to start importing or exporting in a foreseeable future. Only about 4% have concrete plans to start such activities<sup>12</sup>.

The most important barriers reported by SMEs are: 1) the price of their own product, often considered to be too high to allow a competitive presence in foreign markets. 2) The high costs of internationalisation as such due for instance to the need to recruit highly specialised, expensive employees (shortage of working capital). 3) Lack of financial resources. 4) Lack of adequate information, for instance in relation to the inability to locate and contact potential overseas companies or in relation to the knowledge of third markets as such. 5) Costs and difficulties linked to administrative burden. 6) Excessive transportation costs 7) Lack of adequate public support<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> Internationalisation of European SMEs European Commission – EIM report pages 5-6-7

<sup>11</sup> Internationalisation of European SMEs European Commission – EIM report page 8

<sup>12</sup> Internationalisation of European SMEs European Commission – EIM report page 6

<sup>13</sup> Internationalisation of European SMEs European Commission – EIM report page 6, OECD 2009 report On Barriers and Drivers to SME Internationalisation.

These barriers appear to have validity across sectors. However, these barriers appear essentially perceptual/psychological as their overall incidence tends to decrease as enterprises develop exposure to international markets.<sup>14</sup>

In relation to point 7) above, SMEs are generally not aware of the existing public support programmes made available to them at regional, national, European, and International levels.

As a consequence also the actual use of available public support is generally low, even if there appear to be significant difference from country to country.

Therefore, a priority in adequately supporting SMEs to access international markets would be to make them aware about existing programmes, their characteristics and the kind of support they can provide.

#### Encouraging SMEs to internationalise. Main possible motivations

The possibility to grow through expansion in foreign markets and seize opportunities to increase profit is obviously the most important driver to push enterprises to expand their activities beyond their domestic markets. Overseas business opportunities enable companies to expand their market size, built as a consequence a stronger market position and reduce dependence on their domestic markets or on a reduced number of markets. The recent crisis in Europe, made it clear that SMEs having international activities had by far better opportunities to overcome the negative conjuncture compared to enterprises with activities limited to their domestic markets. Among motivations there is also as a consequence, a clear national/regional market driver that pushes SMEs towards internationalisation to compensate stagnating or slow growing conjunctures at home.

Motivation can be also knowledge based. Entrepreneurs can for instance develop an interest to internationalise to improve the knowledge assets of their company on issues such as for instance their capacity to innovate through the exploitation of new technologies or new productive processes, to deal with intellectual propriety and R&D investment. Even the improvement of language skills is sometimes a driver.

Internationalisation can besides improve connections with companies based in other countries through business networks enhancing their capacity to identify adequate partners for different purposes. For instance Supply Chain Links can indeed be improved through networking that provides companies with better possibility to identify the right manufacturers, suppliers or retailers. (The EEN and Commission activities to foster the international collaboration between clusters are relevant initiatives in this context).

Even social ties can play a role. A study among fish exporters from the Azores Islands in Portugal, highlighted for instance the importance of family and social ties emigrant communities in driving SME internationalisation in the islands<sup>15</sup>.

#### The importance of the concepts of "Proximity" and One Stop Shop" to provide support services to SMEs willing to exploit International opportunities for the first time.

Experience shows that the whole set of training and support ("one stop shop" concept) needed for SMEs to have a first effective introduction to internationalisation, should be delivered "at home" (concept of proximity). Companies should receive the indispensable basic mentoring as close as

<sup>14</sup> OECD 2009 report On Barriers and Drivers to SME Internationalisation section II.

<sup>15</sup> OECD 2009 report On Barriers and Drivers to SME Internationalisation section III.



possible to their home office before contacting or visiting their potential counterparts in target countries. It is therefore important for a mentoring process to start locally in the regions where interested SMEs are based. Relevant local support organisations that represent the first point of contact are often part of or connected to the EEN.<sup>16</sup>

The purpose of this call for tenders is to target and train SMEs with a potential and an interest to go international but without international experience in Third countries. These companies will have to be identified on a national/regional basis.

***The project should make sure that the great majority of targeted SMEs have already built cross-border business experience within the Internal Market, but have not so far been involved in commercial interactions with Third countries, while being interested and having the potential to do so.***

Cooperation with EU initiatives in Third countries is of great relevance and importance. This is for example the case with the Enterprise Europe Network (from now on EEN) Business Cooperation Centres (from now on EEN BCCs) based beyond EU borders<sup>17</sup>.

#### The Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) and its Business Cooperation Centres (EEN BCCs)

The Enterprise Europe Network is an initiative of the European Commission that started operating in 2008. The EEN nowadays the biggest Network in the world providing services aimed at supporting companies (essentially SMEs) increase their competitiveness mainly by helping them expand into new markets (within and beyond EU borders), innovate and participate to EU funded Research programmes.

The Network is currently present in 63 countries (28 EU, 6 COSME, 29 Third). It is run by approximately 600 partner organisations, organised in consortia that provide a wide set of support services, based on a principle of proximity to SMEs (In the EU the consortia are with some exceptions organised in macro Regions – NUTS 1 level "Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics").

Network Partners are typically hosted by business or innovation support organisations like Chambers of Commerce, Regional Development and Innovation Agencies, Research Agencies and Universities. These organisations count on an overall man power of approximately 4500 professionals with different backgrounds and experiences that cover a quite complete set of relevant services.

These include inter alia:

- *Information on EU legislation, policies and initiatives relevant for SMEs*
- *More Specialised advisory services covering for instance Access to Finance and IPR*
- *Business support services aimed at helping companies make the best out of commercial opportunities within the EU and beyond.*
- *Innovation support services mainly implemented through the Transnational Transfer of Technologies*
- *Support services to help SMEs take part to EU funded Research programmes. In this context support is provided also to ease the participation of enterprises to the SME Instrument.*

<sup>16</sup> Opportunities for the Internationalisation of European SMEs. Final report. Page 105, § 3.3.2

<sup>17</sup> <http://een.ec.europa.eu/>

EEN Services are meant to increase the competitiveness of SMEs by helping them access markets, access knowledge, develop innovative capacities mainly through transnational technology and knowledge transfer and participation to EU funded research programmes. The objective is to reinforce their potential, to increase sales and investments and as a consequence create or maintain jobs. Network partners organise Brokerage Events or Company Missions that allow entrepreneurs to meet and discuss business in person.

This methodology is typically used by the Network Sector Groups that bring together partners that have spontaneously decided to provide services to enterprises active in a given productive or service sector.

Currently 17 Sector Groups are active and covering almost all Industries and Services<sup>18</sup>.

While the core mandate of the EEN is to ensure companies make the most out of the exploitation of possibilities made available by the EU Internal Market, the presence of the Network beyond EU borders is steadily increasing and the participation of third countries through EEN BCCs has already exceeded in numbers that of EU Members (29 BCCs vs. 28 EEN EU Centres). This is a clear proof of the growing interest of European SMEs to tie business connections beyond the Union and vice-versa the interest of third countries to cooperate with European enterprises through the Network. This very strong interest is confirmed by the fact that in spite of not receiving any financial contribution from the European Union to operate within the EEN, the number of BCC candidates has been steadily growing in time.

EEN BCCs can play a very important role when the time will come to make trained SMEs acquainted with the characteristics (laws, regulations, contracts, constraints, potential...) of the market(s) of their choice, identify possible partners, be informed about important business events, etc...

### **1.3. General and specific objectives**

To date, many studies have been carried out and documents published by the EU and other International organisation in relation to the topic of Internationalisation of Small and Medium Enterprises. (Several of these papers/documents are mentioned as references in these tender specifications).

The work carried out so far has allowed to frame a broad picture of the topic and very useful intelligence has been gathered on the advantages that internationalisation processes can trigger for SMEs and the development of the economy at local, regional, national and European level. Barriers and constraints to Internationalisation have also been identified and proposals to policy makers have been suggested to pave the way to the adoption of measures to encourage the involvement of European SMEs into business going beyond the EU borders. This because, as mentioned above, the degree of involvement of European SMEs in business activities outside the Internal Market is still low and has important margins to grow and to positively contribute as a consequence to the growth of the economy.

The purpose of this call for tender is to move a step forward compared to the important academic work done so far. In this case the goal is to provide concrete assistance to SMEs in helping them develop their activities in target markets located in third countries (the indicative list of countries is provided below under the section "geographic scope"). Target markets should be selected, referring

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<sup>18</sup> <http://een.ec.europa.eu/about/sector-groups>

to the mentioned list, taking into account the potential that these may have and the interest that they may trigger for selected COSME SMEs.

This initiative is therefore meant to implement a first test project aimed to empirically identify all elements, processes, obstacles in the path that SMEs need to follow to internationalise their business. The aim is to select a proportionally representative number of enterprises in the EU and other COSME participating countries and assist them from the very first steps of the process into achieving concrete, measurable and documentable result(s) in expanding activities with one or more partners located in one or more Third country markets.

Therefore, the target SME audience of this call for tenders will be SMEs that have a potential and show an interest to "go international" but that have never developed any experience beyond the COSME participating countries.

The selected contractor will be expected to identify an adequate representation of suitable SMEs, carry out the needed business and/or technology audits to assess their potential and interest to go international and the reasons and barriers that have prevented them to do so. A second step will consist in providing the needed training and information such that SMEs can prepare a business plan aimed at allowing them to access targeted international markets for the first time. The purpose of the process will not be for companies to achieve a single result (necessary but not sufficient condition), but to help them develop skills and gather know how that will make their international activities sustainable in time.

At the end of the project, the contractor(s) will be expected to prepare a report describing and analysing the whole process that was implemented to support in practice the targeted SMEs for them to successfully access/interact with markets situated outside the EU. The report will indicate how the outcomes were achieved describing the information tools and sources used, the kind of specialised knowledge that was needed (e.g.: IPR, contractual aspects, information on custom & regulatory barriers...), ways used to find financial resources and human skills, etc... In other words, the contractor(s) will be expected to describe in detail all aspects related to the assistance that was provided during the implementation of the test project that were useful/indispensable to coach targeted SMEs into their first international experience. A sound analysis of problems and obstacles encountered will be very useful and is therefore also to be considered as part of the report.

The ultimate objective for the project subject of this call for tenders is for the findings to be sustainable i.e.: replicable in time. Therefore the successful contractor(s) will be asked to prepare a Guide Book on Internationalisation training for SMEs not having yet developed relevant experience. The contents of this Guide Book should be such to allow its exploitation by the Commission to develop future relevant policies and its findings to be mainstreamed into EEN activities for the Network to increase its commitment to deliver "ad hoc" support services.

SMEs targeted by this project are enterprises based in the EU Member States and other countries that have joined the COSME programme.

The selection of SMEs should be carried out according to budget availability. Where possible, the selection should be balanced over the participating countries and take into account parameters such as the dimension of countries in terms of population, density of SMEs, needs, economic productive and social characteristics and levels of internationalization of companies. Priority should be given to countries/regions where the services subject to this call are most needed/useful, for example because of a lower concentration of internationalised SMEs. The tenderers shall suggest the exact

number of SMEs they intend to target considering the selection criteria explained above. Each COSME country should possibly be represented by at least one SME.

In any case, it will be up to the tenderers, based on their experience and expertise to propose a balanced repartition of the number of enterprises.

#### **1.4. Scope and description of tasks**

##### **1.4.1 Geographic scope**

- 1) EU and COSME participating countries
- 2) THIRD COUNTRIES (Indicative list)

The following list includes all third countries where the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) is present with Business Cooperation Centres (BCCs).

Targeting opportunities in countries where EEN BCCs are present may ease processes for the organisation of the Brokerage events in third countries.

Resources are limited and this may influence the possible choices of countries that imply particularly high costs to implement the actions within the scope of this project. The only contribution from the project budget to costs for activities of selected SMEs in Third countries (participation to Brokerage events) will consist in the reimbursement of 50% of travel costs (see section 3 on the financial offer below).

Travel and subsistence costs for the contractor(s)' employees accompanying SMEs to third countries will be instead covered by the contract (see section 3 on the financial offer below).

The budget of the contract will instead cover all training activities for selected SMEs, including travel and subsistence expenses they will face to participate to the collective trainings foreseen to prepare them for the Brokerage events that will be organised in Third countries.

#### EUROPE

Armenia, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Norway, Russia, Serbia, Switzerland, Ukraine.

#### EUROMED

Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Tunisia

#### AFRICA

South Africa,

#### ASIA

China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan,

#### NORTH AMERICA

Canada, USA

LATIN AMERICA

Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru,

OCEANIA

New Zealand

(Additional BCC Centres may join in 2016)

#### **1.4.2 Sectoral scope**

The following sectors may be considered for the purposes of the pilot project

Agro-food

Biotechnologies

Chemicals

Crafts (e.g.: ceramics, jewellery, decorations, "haute gamme" tailors,, pottery, etc...)

Creative Industries

Environment

Healthcare & Pharmaceuticals

ICT

Intelligent Energy

Key Enabling Technologies<sup>19</sup>

Materials

Nano and Micro-technologies

Retail & Services

Sustainable Construction

Textile & Fashion

Wood and Furniture

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<sup>19</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/growth/tools-databases/ketsobservatory/kets-ti-inventory/map>

As mentioned, a significant number of partners of the Enterprise Europe Network specialised or interested in a given sector have come together to provide tailored support services to enterprises active in a given productive or service area. Should any sector specific issue arise during the implementation of the project, selected SMEs will have the possibility to seek assistance from EEN partners active in one or more of the 17 Network Sector Groups.

### 1.4.3 Description of tasks

N.B.: the working language for the implementation of tasks will be English.

The implementation of tasks within the project subject of this call for tender will be divided in four subsequent phases:

- Phase 1)
  - Identification/selection of the SMEs that will undergo internationalisation training within the EU and COSME participating countries.
- Phase 2)
  - Training of enterprises with an approach respecting a principle of proximity to them. Identification of third country target markets based on list provided above and the interests manifested by selected enterprises.
  - Setting up contacts with companies and relevant Business organisations/intermediaries in Third countries with a potential to start business/technology interactions with the selected SMEs.
  - The process leading to the conclusion of a first business and/or technology/knowledge deal using partnering tools (databases) that allow the conclusion of matchmaking agreements.
- Phase 3)
  - Collective training on general issues of common interest for all SMEs involved.
  - Concrete implementation of the project with the organisation of Business to Business (B2B) events in five (5) major Third countries markets selected by the contractor on the basis of consolidated SME's needs and budget availability.
- Phase 4)
  - Wrap up, final reporting to the Commission and preparation of a Guide Book/ Operational Manual on the internationalisation of SMEs.

#### Phase 1)

It will be very important to target the right companies. The project will not consider companies that are already successfully involved in Third country international activities. Nevertheless, it should neither consider enterprises with a weak performance or in difficulties. The target companies should be represented by healthy, dynamic SMEs that show an interest and have the potential to succeed in developing business in international Markets.

Targeting suitable companies in clusters appears also appropriate as SMEs in clusters tend to be more innovative, growth more and create more jobs.

SMEs that successfully internationalise are in the majority of cases the ones of greater dimensions (more “medium” than “small”). Micro companies are the category that needs and would benefit the most from support programmes yet the paradox is that they are the ones that are least aware about available support and are also the lowest users<sup>20</sup>. It would be very useful to verify how dynamic micro-enterprises could react to the opportunity to develop international activities if properly supported. The contractor will therefore be expected to target an adequate number of them. Envisaged numbers should be mentioned in the tender.

## Phase 2

To avoid forcing SME managers to leave their home office for a relatively long period of time, it is important that the basic training is delivered “on the spot”, i.e.: at companies premises, or if this is not possible in the area where the SMEs are based.

Training and coaching in this phase will be delivered taking into account the characteristics of the company in terms of dimensions, turnover, profit, human resources employed, management skills, and the productive or service sector of activity. In other words during this first stage, the training will need to be tailored on the single selected SME.

The target Third country market or markets will already be decided in this phase prior relevant counselling on the subject provided by the contractor(s), who will also get in touch with the potential Third country partners/organisations liaising them to the selected SMEs.

Companies will be provided with all the relevant information to prepare for their international experience. In particular they will be made aware of possible relevant support and financial/credit opportunities available at regional, national and European levels. They will be advised on the criteria to be followed and the profiles to consider. They will be informed on ways to deal with customs and other possible barriers (administrative/bureaucratic, regulatory, contractual, etc...) characterising the chosen third country market(s). It will also be important for SMEs to learn how to correctly deal with the paper work needed for example for transport or customs.

SMEs should be made aware of the advantages of e-commerce. Having the possibility to sell or buy products online has a positive correlation with import or export activities. The Internet has in fact made it easier for SMEs of all sizes to overcome some of the barriers to internationalisation.

There is a strong correlation between activities on international markets and innovation. Innovation is a key to business growth and it should be protected as soon as possible. The main intellectual property concepts from a business point of view should be introduced to participants in order for them to be able to identify specific IPR problems and assets and how to take advantage of the latter.

Most often SMEs start international activities by importing. If SMEs are both importing and exporting, they start with import twice as often compared to exports. Therefore the training should prepare companies also for importing and not be only focused on exports<sup>21</sup>.

Companies should be prepared to properly assess the risks as well as the advantages they would benefit from going international according to their sector of activity and the business choice they will make during the implementation of the project.

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<sup>20</sup> Internationalization of European SMEs, page 8

<sup>21</sup> Internationalisation of European SMEs pages 6 & 9

In this phase work should be carried out to exploit existing possibilities to achieve matchmaking results implemented at distance by exploiting tools that allow partnerships to happen. (e.g. online matchmaking tools).

The outcomes of phase 2 should lead to the conclusion of at least a successful business/innovation deal per each participating company. Should this not be possible, at least the process leading to the future conclusion of an agreement should reach an advanced stage in proceedings.

### Phase 3

Training related to this phase will cover issues of interest for all selected enterprises preparing for a specific third country market and will therefore bring them together, divided in groups according to the chosen third country and chosen sectors if and when possible. A maximum of five (5) different collective training events should be foreseen. The training actions will be set up in Brussels or any another easy to reach European city.

Training in this phase should be aimed at enabling participants to acquire the necessary tools to understand the general dynamics of international markets and to understand how to successfully market a product abroad. In order to have a positive impact internationalisation processes require complex planning. The contractor will therefore provide selected companies with the means to understand and deal with the different steps of strategic planning and identify its key components.

In modern business, networking and communication skills can be even more important success factors than a product. Knowledge of cultural differences and different business standards is essential for a positive approach to the global market. The specific business cultures should be brought to the attention of participating SMEs.

The EU has several trade agreements with different countries. The most important of them should be presented and explained (especially in terms of possible advantages and disadvantages) during the training.

Tenderers should be aware that training actions mentioned so far are only indicative. It will be up to the selected contractor(s) to draw up the individual and collective training plans based on his/their expertise and experience.

Presenting success stories is always useful. In this case showing international trade new comers examples of the advantages of exporting or importing and how these activities can become sustainable in time would be very relevant.

One of the results of this collective training should consist in enabling participating SMEs to autonomously prepare an international Business plan. To this end the presentation of concrete examples would also be very useful.

Once the theoretical part is achieved, selected enterprises should receive the practical training necessary for them to participate to Brokerage events and to successfully conclude business/technology/knowledge transfer deals in the context of the B2B meetings set up within them.

The contractor will select five (5) different Third country markets, dividing targeted SMEs in five (5) corresponding groups possibly bringing enterprises with compatible sector profiles together (e.g.: Agro-food with Biotech, Intelligent Energy with Environment, etc...).



Moreover the contractor should identify suitable cluster organisations in the EU, and these should identify suitable counter-parts in the targeted countries in order to allow enterprises belonging to clusters to take part to B2Bs and when feasible and organisationally convenient to Cluster-to-Cluster (C2C) match-making events in those markets.

The organisation of the Brokerage events and when possible of cluster to cluster meetings will be a task for the contractor(s). Assistance will have to be provided to SMEs and to companies from cluster organisations to ensure their successful participation to the B2B and when appropriate to the C2C meetings. To implement this task, the contractor(s) should seek support in the 5 selected countries from local EU initiatives such as the EEN BCCs and from the European Cluster Collaboration Platform.

N.B.: to avoid disturbing each other, the five third country Brokerage events should not be contiguous. They should be scheduled at reasonable intervals in time.

As mentioned, in this phase, the budget of the contract will only cover half the travel costs sustained by the selected SMEs and SMEs proceeding from cluster organisations (see section 3 financial offer below). Therefore, it will be very important for the SMEs to have a very high chance to conclude a deal before leaving. The contractor will be expected to select Third country companies with profiles compatible with the ones of targeted SMEs making sure that the conditions for the positive conclusion of an agreement indeed exist.

Given that the contractor is expected to provide assistance through the whole partnering process, two (2) highly competent professionals from the contractor(s) should be present at each one of the 5 envisaged brokerage events to provide on-site assistance when needed.

Related travel and subsistence expenses will be reimbursed (see section 3 financial offer below).

#### Phase 4

The outcomes of this project are meant to be sustainable for participating enterprises for which the international business experience should only be the first in a process that should become part of the companies' normal activity. Results should also be publically disclosed to European organisations dealing with SME internationalisation (including the European Cluster Collaboration Platform), mainstreamed into the Enterprise Europe Network and made available as a consequence to a vast audience of SMEs.

At the end of the matchmaking phases of the project, the contractor will be expected to prepare:

I) A draft final report summarising all project findings, like difficulties encountered, obstacles, tools and methodologies used, best practices, individual and collective results achieved, recommendations to the Commission for future similar initiatives, etc... The draft final report should be structured according to the 4 phases in which this first project will be articulated. A full copy and a summary will be made available to the Commission/EASME.

II) A final report

III) A Guide book outlining all processes and steps required for the internationalisation of SMEs from the planning phase to the signature of business deals or technology partnerships with enterprises in third countries. This includes internal processes within the company itself but also external processes with regard to the consultancy work done by internationalisation advisers of business intermediary

organisations on national or European level (such as Enterprise Europe Network partner organisations).

The different processes and steps should be described and presented with the help of flow charts, info-graphics or other any suitable visual forms. There should also be concrete recommendations how the main barriers to internationalisation (explained above) could be addressed by the SME management.

With regard to the description of the required processes, the offer should also include proven methodologies and tools to help SME management staff and internationalisation advisers of business intermediary organisations to initiate the internationalisation process. The Guide book should contain learning modules, examples, exercises and a best practices compendium resulting from the piloting phase implemented by the most successful participants.

The entire Guide book must be presented in a reader-friendly way so that it can be easily absorbed by SME management staff as well as internationalisation advisers of business intermediary organisations. A purely 'academic' description of the processes cannot be accepted by DG GROW and EASME.

It should be ensured that other major business intermediary consultation will be consulted on the completeness and accuracy of the information contained in the Guide book. For example, partner organisations of the Enterprise Europe Network specialised on SME internationalisation could be involved when drafting the Guide book.

Besides the guide, a set of training support resources (such as PPT presentations, audio and video files, info-graphics, flow charts, etc...) should also be made available. The Guide book should be delivered in electronic (MS Word, PowerPoint and PDF) and paper form. It must be possible for Commission services or other users to update and/or complement the guide after the service contract expired. A draft version shall be submitted to the Commission/EASME for verification.

As the Guide book on SME internationalisation is of central importance for the purposes of this call. The offer should include a detailed description of the content of the Guide book and how it could be used for training purposes and how it could be disseminated to SMEs or internationalisation advisers of the business intermediary organisations. It should be possible for readers and regular users to supplement or update the guide book at a later stage.

N.B.: All reports (including the Guide Book on internationalisation) and other possible relevant documents shall be presented using Microsoft Word, PowerPoint compatible support.

### **1.5. Indicative methodology**

The methodology to be followed to reach the objectives of the project will be carried out by implementing the envisaged individual and collective trainings and the matchmaking activities. The latter via two different channels:

- A) Distance Matchmaking with third country enterprises using available electronic tools and databases.
- B) Matchmaking in 5 targeted third countries through Brokerage Events organised locally.

### **Phase 1**

The selection of companies in Phase 1 will have to be done locally via the contractor(s)' nodes/branches/partners/contacts present in the EU and COSME participating countries and /or Regions.

For the identification of suitable enterprises, the contractor should exploit its ramifications (nodes, partners, branches) in Europe.

Besides, the contractor should select companies in clusters by checking on the European Cluster Collaboration Platform and by liaising directly with cluster organisations as appropriate.

Once the potential candidate companies are identified, sound business and/or technology audits should be carried out to verify their actual interest and potential to successfully develop international activities beyond EU borders and achieve relevant measurable outcomes.

Based on the results of these audits, a careful screening of companies with suitable characteristics should be carried out to select the ones that will enter into Phase 2 of the test project.

## **Phase 2**

Relevant training activities will be carried out according to tasks described above. Nevertheless, these are only indicative and the contractor(s)' experience and skills will play a key role in delivering support tailored on the specific characteristics of the single selected enterprises.

### ➤ Distance Matchmaking

Tasks related to distance matchmaking should be implemented making use of matchmaking tools. The contractor is advised to work in close cooperation with EU initiatives in the Regions such as the EEN in Europe and EEN Business Cooperation Centres based in third countries as they can help SMEs exploit the Enterprise Europe Network Partnership Opportunity Database (POD). Several of the profiles in the database can be used to identify Third country companies with characteristics that can be suitable to the needs of the European selected SME(s).

Profiles posted in the POD by client SMEs may consist in demands or offers that can be matched automatically within the POD via an Automatic Matching Tool (AMT) that brings profiles together based on key words. Should the match not be found automatically then direct assistance from EEN partners can be sought.

When a match is found, the SME's profile should trigger one or more Expressions of Interest which can represent the beginning of the negotiation phase between companies. The goal consists in the achievement of a business or transnational technology or knowledge transfer deal ("Partnership Agreements") that represents the outcome of the matchmaking process.

## **Phase 3**

### ➤ Training activities. Will be carried out according to tasks described above.

The contractor(s) will be expected to organise and bear the costs (under the contract budget) of all logistical aspects involved (renting of training facilities, equipment, organisation and payment of trips and subsistence for selected SMEs, etc...).

Again, training activities are only indicative and the contractor(s) experience and skills will play a central role in delivering support tailored on the specific characteristics of the single targeted enterprises.

- Matchmaking in 5 targeted Third countries through Brokerage Events organised on site.

In order not to disperse actions too much, the Brokerage events will be organised in 5 Third countries. The target countries will be selected by the contractor(s) according to his (their) expertise among the most important Third markets, taking into account the needs, preferences and sector mix of clients companies. Selected SMEs will therefore be divided in 5 sets of companies and participate to these B2Bs grouped as far as possible by compatible areas of activity (e.g.: Agro-food with Biotech and Environment; Environment with Intelligent Energy; Sustainable constructions with Materials, etc...). Each SME should be coached into the participation to at least one of these 5 events.

Based on the characteristics of the selected SMEs, the contractor(s) will identify Third country compatible business and/or technology profiles (business offers, business demands; technology/knowledge offers, technology/knowledge demands) and contact the relevant "owner companies" to enable the beginning of the matchmaking process. The search for company matches should be done involving EEN BCC partners based in the 5 targeted Third countries. Nevertheless the contractor(s) shall bear the direct responsibility for the selection of the right Third country companies notwithstanding the role played by EEN BCCs in this context.

The contractor should identify suitable cluster organisations ask them to identify suitable counterparts in the targeted countries, to allow companies active in clusters to take part to the foreseen B2Bs and when possible and appropriate to C2C match-making events.

The contractor(s) will be expected to organise and cover (through the available project budget), the costs of all logistical aspects involved in setting up the Brokerage Events (registration of European and Third country SMEs organisation and scheduling of the B2Bs, and when relevant C2Cs, booking of meeting rooms, renting of technical equipment, catering, interpretation if needed, etc...) in the Third countries that will be chosen for the purposes of the project. In other words selected SMEs will have to find everything predisposed and ready when meeting their potential business partners. This is a particularly important issue as B2Bs imply setting up multiple meetings in the same venue and more or less at the same time.

N.B.: As already mentioned it will be very important to set up the meetings once negotiations between counterparts are at an advanced stage of proceedings and when as a consequence, the conclusion of an agreement is practically certain.

As explained, two representatives from the contractor(s)' shall accompany the SMEs to the B2B events in Third country to provide constant assistance and advice.

The contractors will have to set up a Website (together with a professional matchmaking environment available in the market for this purpose), for each of the 5 Brokerage events to be organised in Third countries. See footnote for examples<sup>22</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup> <https://www.b2match.eu/expo2015>; <https://www.b2match.eu/m4g-spain-andalucia-extremadura>; <https://www.b2match.eu/m4g-portugal/pages/home>; <https://www.b2match.eu/m4g-wallonia>.

## **Phase 4**

The final reporting and the learning Guide book will be drafted according to explanations provided above within the paragraph "Description of tasks".

### **1.6. Expected results and performance indicators**

#### **1.6.1. Expected results**

The purpose of this call for tenders is to carry out a first test project to enable the European Commission to implement strategies, policies and actions aimed at helping European SMEs without international experience, seize opportunities for growth beyond the borders of the European EU Internal Market.

Therefore, on the one hand actions under this call are not expected to have a direct impact on trends related to the overall capacity of European SMEs to exploit commercial opportunities in Third countries. On the other hand though, the medium-long term objective is to enable the Commission to mainstream findings and methodologies into the SME support structures it finances (notably the Enterprise Europe Network) and to ease the development of policies aimed at enhancing the capacity and willingness of enterprises to go international.

To this end, part of the ultimate result and the success of the project will be measured on the quality, usefulness and user friendliness of the Guide book on internationalisation that the successful contractor(s) will prepare at the end of the implementation phase.

This said, the training provided to individual SMEs that will be selected through the project is meant to have a measurable impact for them and to be sustainable in time. In other words, the support provided should aim at equipping targeted companies with the needed expertise to continue developing international activities way beyond the end of the training provided and the results achieved during the project.

In relation to this aspect, each one of the selected SMEs should be coached into reaching the conclusion of at least a business or technology/knowledge transfer deal with a Third country partner (or partners) as an outcome of the training and matchmaking opportunities made available by the contractor(s).

Nevertheless, not all processes leading to commercial deals are alike and depending on the characteristics of the partnering, certain agreements may take more time than others to achieve envisaged outcomes. It is for instance known that the time between the beginning of procedures leading to a Transnational Technology Transfer agreement and the signature of the deal, exceeds on average a period of 12 months.

In the light of these considerations, for the more complex partnering (i.e.: those addressing innovation via the transfer of technologies, exploitation of Research results, knowledge and/or innovative processes in production or service management), targets will be considered as achieved if the contractor(s) can provide evidence that negotiations have reached a stage where the conclusion of an agreement in the short period can be considered as practically sure.

N.B.: Given the importance of interrelations and synergies between internationalisation and innovation, one third of agreements concluded by the group of selected SMEs, should address partnering with innovative characteristics triggered via the transnational transfer of technologies, the transnational exploitation of research results, the transfer of knowledge and/or innovative elements in the management of production or services processes.

### 1.6.2. Performance indicators

The service contract will be assessed taking into account the implementation of tasks according to the following performance indicators and the achievement of expected results:

#### Phases 1 & 2

- Number of selected companies and criteria used for their selection based on geographic criteria, needs and socio-economic characteristics according to the objectives of the call.
- Number of SMEs receiving technology audits or business reviews
- Number SMEs proceeding from clusters.
- Results of the training and assistance provided to enable SMEs achieve international matchmaking deals implemented at distance.

In this context:

- Number of Partnership profiles produced (business and/or technology/knowledge demands of offers).
- Expressions of Interest (Eois) made
- Expressions of Interest (Eoi) received
- Number of possible business and/or technology/knowledge deals achieved "*at distance*" (using EEN terminology for "deals", number of business and/or technology/knowledge Partnership Agreements signed). And/or: number of Partnership Agreements in an advanced state of negotiation for which a positive conclusion is practically certain.
- Number of companies for which support obtained with the project develops into sustainable activities (i.e.: number of SMEs that will continue with international activities after the conclusion of the project).

#### Phase 3

- Following "ad hoc" training provided, assistance in identifying adequate partner companies in third countries, number of target SMEs taking part to the Brokerage events organised beyond EU borders.
- Number of SMEs receiving technology audits or business reviews (if not already done in phase 1 - 2).
- Number of Brokerage Events organised in the five target Third country markets.
- Number of SMEs participating in the Brokerage events.
- Number of meetings held.

- Number of Partnership profiles produced (business and/or technology/knowledge demands of offers).
- Expressions of Interest (EoIs) made.
- Expressions of Interest (EoI) received.
- Number of business and/or technology/knowledge deals achieved (n° of Partnership Agreements signed). And/or: number of Partnership Agreements in an advanced state of negotiation for which a positive conclusion is practically certain.

N.B.: Deals between European and Third country SMEs will have to be documented.

Therefore enterprises involved will be expected to sign a document proving the

Conclusion of the Partnership Agreements (one per each Partnership Agreement achieved signed by both companies). A copy of this document will be made available to the contractor(s) and through the contractors to EASME.

EASME will make the needed templates available to the contractor(s).

- Number of companies for which support obtained with the project develops into sustainable activities (I.e.: number of SMEs that will continue with international activities after the conclusion of the project).

N.B: The contractor(s) will be expected to regularly monitor the effectiveness, positive aspects as well as problems/difficulties encountered while implementing the pilot project by keeping in constantly in touch with selected SMEs. The collection of feedback from SMEs should enable the swift adoption of corrective measures or adaptations when and if needed.

### Questionnaires

The contractor(s) will prepare and distribute two (2) questionnaires to selected SMEs: one after the end of phase 2 the second after the end of phase three. The questionnaires are meant to measure the level of client satisfaction. 1) with the training delivered 2) with its effectiveness in triggering commercial interactions and deals between selected SMEs and enterprises based in Third countries.

The two questionnaires should enable to gather the following information/answer the following questions:

End of Phase 2 – training and distance matchmaking through on-line tools:

- *Last name*
- *First name*
- *Gender*
- *Company*
- *Country*

- *Level of satisfaction with the proximity, individual training delivered*
- *Usefulness of the training*
- *Level of satisfaction with online matchmaking tools made available*
- *N° of profiles posted by the selected SME on the online matchmaking tool*
- *N° of EoIs made by the selected SME over Third company available profiles*
- *N° of EoIs proceeding from Third country enterprises received by the selected SMEs*
- *N° business/innovation deals under negotiation (specify if business or innovation)*
- *N° of business/innovation deals (Partnership Agreements) signed (specify business or innovation)*

End of Phase 3 – collective training in European cities. Matchmaking through participation to Brokerage events organised in Third countries:

- *Last name*
- *First name*
- *Gender*
- *Company*
- *Country*
  
- *Level of satisfaction with the collective training delivered in selected European cities*
- *Usefulness of the training*
- *Level of overall satisfaction with online matchmaking tools made available*
- *Verify if the SME would participate to similar Brokerage events in the future*
- *SME's perceived quality of the websites and online B2B matchmaking tool used for the events*
- *Level of satisfaction with the assistance provided before and during the events*
- *Satisfaction with the general organisation of the Brokerage Events (venue, logistics, comfort, technical support, etc...)*
- *Relevance of the meetings organised*
- *Management of the appointments*
- *Duration of the meetings*
- *Quality and relevance of suggested profiles*
- *N° business/innovation deals under negotiation (specify business or innovation)*
- *N° of business/innovation deals (Partnership Agreements) signed (specify business or innovation)*
- *Verify if overall SME expectations were met*

### **1.7. Required Experience and Competencies of the contractor(s)**

Tenderers should have a proven professional capacity to carry out the tasks listed in these tender specifications. These capacities should build on a longstanding experience (at least 10 years) in providing support, advice and information to assist SMEs internationalise by helping them to enhance their potential to seize international business and innovation opportunities beyond the European Union's Internal Market.

A sound knowledge of Commission policies and programmes related to the SME Internationalisation, is needed. Tenderers should notably be familiar with the Communication "Europe 2020 - A strategy



for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth"<sup>23</sup>, with the Communication "Small Business, Big World"<sup>24</sup>, with the Small Business Act and its reviewed version<sup>25</sup> with the COSME Programme<sup>26</sup> and with the Enterprise Europe Network<sup>27</sup>.

Applicants must explicitly describe their skills and experience in providing assistance to SMEs in the processes leading to the conclusion (signature) of long term (sustainable in time) international and innovation deals. Skills also include the ability to work with foreign SME support organisations in European and international business and innovation/technology oriented environments. The technical capacity to manage and exploit Business to Business tools needs also to be demonstrated. E.g.: capacity to organise Brokerage events in Third countries (including the know-how needed to motivate and recruit Third country enterprises to the B2B meetings that will be organised in this context).

Knowledge of and access to the necessary data sources in the Member States and the Third countries identified for events covered by these specifications are indispensable.

Furthermore to demonstrate their expertise, applicants are required to provide evidence that they have the capacity to reach out to an adequate number of SMEs (including services and crafts) not having developed yet international activities in third country markets but showing the potential and interest to do so.

Besides, applicants are also required to provide evidence that they are able to reach enterprises in the most relevant Third markets and recruit them for the international business and innovation pilot partnering processes that are the core of the project.

Applicants will therefore have to provide evidence that they are familiar with the relevant legislation existing at national and EU levels, that of targeted third countries as well as with general and specific Trade agreements in force.

- **Staff**

Tenderers must demonstrate that they will be able to assign sufficient resources with the skills and experience needed to implement project requirements. The following staff profiles should be appointed in numbers adequate to efficiently and effectively cover all project tasks and fulfil objectives.

The following three categories should be considered:

- 1) Project leader
  - Education: at least up to Master Degree and or equivalent professional experience.
  - Professional experience: at least 10 years in areas relevant to the purposes of the pilot project.
- 2) Senior experts
  - Education: at least up to Master Degree and or equivalent professional experience.

<sup>23</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/eu2020/pdf/COMPLET%20EN%20BARROSO%20%20%20007%20-%20Europe%202020%20-%20EN%20version.pdf>

<sup>24</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52011DC0702&from=EN>

<sup>25</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/business-friendly-environment/small-business-act/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/business-friendly-environment/small-business-act/index_en.htm)

<sup>26</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/cosme/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/cosme/index_en.htm)

<sup>27</sup> <http://een.ec.europa.eu/>

- Professional experience: at least 10 years in areas relevant to the purposes of the pilot project.

### 3) Junior experts

- Education at least up to Master Degree or equivalent professional experience
- Professional experience: at least 3 years in areas relevant to the purposes of the pilot project.

N.B.: Should the tender be presented by a consortium at least one Senior expert should be appointed per each contractor involved.

Tenderers will have to specify the number of Full Time Equivalents (FTEs) they intend to dedicate to the pilot project's implementation. The tenderers should specify the percentage of time that will be dedicated to the pilot project by non FTE personnel.

The tenderers must demonstrate that they are able to assign sufficient resources and staff members with relevant competences for project activities. They shall commit to allocate sufficient, suitably experienced staff to the pilot project, making sure that all staff members have adequate qualifications to fulfil their tasks to high quality standards. The staffing requirements are expressed in terms of competence (qualification, experience and skills). Staff members should all have experience in working directly with SMEs in providing support for cross border business and innovation activities. They should be able to analyse the needs of SMEs and help them develop international activities according to the objectives of the project.

The working language will be English. Additional language skills will be considered an asset.

CV outlines must be provided in the proposal for all staff assigned to the project, with the exception of administrative, secretarial and other support staff. The contractor(s) shall ensure that the staff members listed in their proposal are effectively available and assigned to the project when it begins.

CVs should be provided in the Euro-pass format<sup>28</sup>.

## **1.8. Starting Date of the Contract and Contract Duration**

It is expected for the contract to be signed during the first quarter of 2016.

The contract shall enter into force on the date on which it is signed by the last contracting party. The duration of the tasks shall be of twenty-seven (27) months from the date of entry into force. The execution of the tasks shall start immediately after the delivery of the Inception Report, i.e.: 30 days after the signature of the contract. The implementation of tasks will be done according to the timetable detailed below.

Amendments may be made to the contract only in exceptional cases where the amendment is considered by The European Commission/EASME to be necessary for the completion of the project and following the provisions of the draft contract.

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<sup>28</sup> <http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/en/home>

## **1.9. Place of performance**

The tasks are to be performed at the premises designated by the service provider, with the exception of travel needed to implement tasks in phase 2 (SME premises or cities in EU and COSME countries), as well as in phase 3 for training and on site assistance to companies in the 5 selected Third Markets and travel that will be necessary to meet in European Commission/EASME premises. Six (6) coordination meetings with the European Commission and EASME are foreseen. They will all take place in Brussels.

### **1.10. Reports, Presentations and Planning**

The service provider shall make available the required reports and documents accompanying the requests for payments in accordance with the conditions of the standard service contract.

The contractor must ensure that all reports under the contract are clear, concise, understandable, user friendly and ready to be exploited by Enterprise Europe Network partners or other service providers to continue delivering support services to SMEs not having yet had international business and or innovation experience.

An executive summary must be included in each report, accompanied by an introduction an overview the reports. Interim Reports must describe the progress of the work under the contract, including any deviations from the foreseen tasks and timetables explaining/justifying the reasons for the possible delays. They must also make the point on the status of any findings/conclusions/recommendations (i.e.: if these are to be considered provisional or final) and report any problems encountered during the training and/or operational phases.

The contractor must ensure that all reports under the contract, are drafted in professional/high-quality English using a clear, concise, understandable, user friendly language. Once adapted according to input from the European Commission/EASME, Reports should be delivered in publishable quality, ready for exploitation.

All Reports shall be delivered to EASME both in printed and electronic format compatible with Microsoft Word according to the indicative timetable (see below). The final report and the executive summary accompanying it shall also be provided in the Adobe portable document format (pdf) and in two (2) hard copies.

The European Commission/EASME will comment on the documents submitted within given deadlines. I.e. the European Commission/EASME (Contracting Authority) will have four (2) weeks of time to formulate these comments/considerations/amendments/recommendations). Should the Contracting Authority fail to react within given deadlines, the respective report shall be considered as tacitly approved.

Should the Contracting Authority consider the final report not acceptable, the service provider may be invited to amend it; in this case liquidated damages will be applied according to provisions under Article II.12 of the contract. Should the Contracting Authority reject the final report, EASME may terminate the contract according to provisions under Article II.14 of the contract.

### **1.10.1. Inception report**

The inception report will be due one (1) month after the signature of the contract by the last of the parties involved. It shall illustrate the overall strategy that the contractor(s) intend to carry to implement all four phases of the project starting with the criteria that will be used to identify Client SMEs in the EU and COSME countries. It will be articulated in a detailed work programme referring to all aspects of tasks to be implemented in the 4 phases, describe all the subjects that will be taught (during the first 3 phases) and the methodology used to implement the different matchmaking processes and events (organised at distance as well as Brokerage events in Third countries). The report will specify the number of SMEs that will be targeted, the productive/service Sectors that will be considered and the 5 Third country markets that will be chosen from the list provided under the section "Geographic scope" in this document. It will include a detailed planning in relation to the calendar of all activities and events in the 4 phases, as well as the envisaged results in terms of outputs (deliverables) and outcomes (Partnership Agreements), based on the Performance Indicators listed above. The report will also provide an introduction on the methodology that will be followed to prepare the Guide book on Internationalisation training, explain the information it will contain and the criteria/information sources that will be used to draft it.

The contractor will be able to proceed to the operational phase once the approval by the EASME of the Inception Report has been given.

The European Commission/EASME will have two weeks one month following the presentation of all reports to make observations, corrections, recommendations.

### **1.10.2. 1st Interim report (Phase 1)**

The first interim report will be due five (5) months after the presentation of the Inception Report, i.e.: six (6) months after the signature of the contract. This Report will describe methodologies followed and actions implemented to comply with specification under phase1 related to the identification and selection of enterprises considered as suitable to continue into phase 2. The report will inter-alia" explain the outcomes of business and technology audits carried out as well as what done to help companies seek financial assistance when needed and how and if relevant needs in terms of resources have been solved (via local, national, EU sources of funding, etc...

It will also explain the reasons that led to a positive outcome allowing the recruitment of companies as well as difficulties, shortcomings, obstacles, lack of sufficient interest/motivation that kept contacted but non-participating SMEs from taking part to the project.

N.B.: The 5 selected Third country Markets should be disclosed with this Report.

### **1.10.3. 2nd Interim report (Phase 2)**

The second Interim Report will be due six months after the presentation and approval of the first by the European Commission/EASME and will illustrate tasks carried out to provide selected SMEs with proximity tailored training according to their sectors of activity and interest. It will also explain how interactions with SMEs have led to the identification of partners based in Third countries and how

relevant contacts have been established. The report is expected to provide a thorough description of elements and circumstances leading to a positive matchmaking and subsequent conclusion of Partnership Agreements.

The Report should describe obstacles, problems and difficulties encountered.

#### **1.10.4. 3rd Interim Report (Phase 3)**

The third Interim Report will be due six (6) months after the approval of the 2nd Interim Report by the European Commission/EASME. It will explain how the collective training in Brussels (or other European city easy to reach for participants) has been carried out and the results of it in motivating Client SMEs to travel abroad and take part to one or more of the Brokerage events organised in the targeted Third Country markets. It will explain the outcomes in terms of outputs (deliverables) involved the processes and in terms of outcomes (Partnership Agreements signed). The Report will also collect considerations/comments/recommendations from Client SMEs involved as well as from enterprise counterparts in third countries, in relation to positive aspects as well as to the shortcomings and difficulties encountered.

#### **1.10.5. Draft final report**

The Draft Final report shall follow the structure of the Final Report and include all the elements specified in the above paragraphs on the Indicative methodology and Expected results. It will cover all the phases of pilot project implementation, including its context, purpose, objectives and results. It shall include all findings, analysis, and factually based conclusions. A very important part will be dedicated to recommendations and advice to be provided. On the one hand the Report will refer to advice tailored for enterprises and aimed at improving their capacity to go international. On the other hand it will formulate recommendations and advice for the European Commission/EASME as well as partners of the Enterprise Europe Network for them to improve the conception, design and implementation of support actions aimed at helping SMEs start international activities. The Draft Final Report will take on board all remarks, considerations and recommendations made from the European Commission/EASME, with a view to include them in the Final Report. The Draft Final Report will have to be submitted three (3) months after the approval by the Commission of the 3rd Interim report.

The Draft Final Report will also include a draft executive summary.

#### **1.10.6. Draft Guide-book on Internationalisation for SMEs**

The Guide book prepared according to explanations provided above will be presented in its draft version (paper and electronic formats) together with the Draft Final Report to allow possible consideration/comments/modifications suggested by the European Commission/EASME.

**1.10.7. Final Report**

The Final Report will take on board all inputs made by the European Commission/EASME on the Draft Final Report. It shall be delivered together with an executive summary three (3) months after the approval of the Draft Final Report.

**1.10.8. Final version of the Guide-book on Internationalisation for SMEs**

The final Guide book will be presented in paper, pdf and electronic formats together with the final report.

**1.11. Management of the Contract/Calendar for meetings and reports****1.11.1. Steering group**

The Contracting Authority will appoint the officials that will join the Steering group. The Steering group will be in charge of contract management, monitoring, control and supervision. It may make suggestions, recommendations and formulate indications that will be binding for the contractor.

The Steering group will be composed by representatives of the European Commission, EASME, the contractor(s) Project leader and other Contractor relevant experts.

**1.11.2. Indicative timetable for meetings and reports**

<b>Timetable</b>	<b>Meetings</b>	<b>Actions/Deliverables</b>
<i>Reference date</i>		Date of contact signature from the last of parties involved.
<i>Month A = (Ref. date + one month)</i>	Kick-off meeting & presentation of the Inception Report	The project is launched at the meeting between the contractor and the steering group. European Commission, and EASME officials will be represented in the steering group. The contractor will present the Inception Report during this kick off meeting, to enable the Commission/EASME to make sure that the contractor has a clear understanding of the terms of the contract, the objectives of the project and the methodology to be followed.
<i>Month A + two weeks</i>		Acceptance by Commission/EASME of the Inception report
<i>Month A + 6 months.</i>		The contractor submits a <b>first Interim Report</b> (without invoice).

<i>Month A + 6 months + two weeks.</i>	Coordination meeting 1	The first Interim Report will be discussed in a coordination meeting with the steering group <sup>29</sup> .
<i>Month A + 6 months + 2 weeks + 2 weeks</i>		European Commission/EASME acceptance of the 1 <sup>st</sup> Interim Report
<i>Month B = (Ref. date + 12 months)</i>		The contractor submits the <b>second Interim Report</b> accompanied by the <b>first interim invoice (including request for reimbursable expenses and supporting documents)</b> .
<i>Month B + 2 weeks</i>	Coordination meeting 2	The second Interim Report will be discussed in a coordination meeting with the steering group <sup>30</sup> .
<i>Month B + 2 weeks + 2 weeks.</i>		European Commission/EASME acceptance of the second Interim Report
<i>Month C (Ref. date + 18 months)</i>		The contractor submits a <b>third Interim Report</b> (without invoice).
<i>Month C + 2 weeks</i>	Coordination meeting 3	The third interim report will be discussed in a coordination meeting with the steering group <sup>31</sup> .
<i>Month C + 2 weeks + 2 weeks</i>		European Commission/EASME acceptance of the 3 <sup>rd</sup> Interim Report
<i>Month D (Ref. date + 24 months)</i>		The contractor submits a <b>Draft Final Report, a draft executive summary and a draft Guide book on the Internationalisation of SMEs.</b>
<i>Month D + 4 weeks</i>	Coordination meeting 4	The Draft Final Report will be discussed in a coordination meeting with the steering group. If required by the European Commission/EASME. The contractor shall submit a new version of the report within 15 days after the meeting, addressing all comments from the steering group.
<i>Month D + 4 weeks +2 weeks</i>		Acceptance by Commission/EASME of the Draft Final Report

<sup>29</sup> If required by the European Commission/EASME, the Contractor shall submit a new version of the report within 10 days after the meeting, addressing all comments of the steering group

<sup>30</sup> If required by the European Commission/EASME, the Contractor shall submit a new version of the report within 10 days after the meeting, addressing all comments of the steering group

<sup>31</sup> If required by the European Commission/EASME, the Contractor shall submit a new version of the report within 10 days after the meeting, addressing all comments of the steering group

<i>Month D + 4 weeks + 2 weeks + 4 weeks</i>	Wrap up meeting	The contractor submits the <b>Final Report, the Final Executive Summary and the Final Guide Book on the Internationalisation of SMEs</b> accompanied by the <b>final invoice (including request for reimbursable expenses and supporting documents)</b> . During this period the <b>Contractor will be expected to adapt relevant documents to possible comments/input from the European Commission/ESAME</b>
<i>Month D + 4 weeks + 2 weeks + 4 weeks + 2 weeks</i>		European Commission/ EASME acceptance: approval of the Final Report (2 weeks from receipt of Final Report).
<b>END</b>		<b>27 Months</b>

### 1.12. Payment terms

In drawing up their tenders, tenderers should take account of the provisions of the enclosed (annex 1) which include the "General terms and conditions applicable to service contracts".

Payments under the contract will be made upon receipt of the corresponding invoices in accordance with the provisions specified in Articles I.4 and II.15 of the draft service contract.

### 1.13. Confidentiality, data protection matters and penalty clauses

Confidentiality is required of all persons working or collaborating directly or indirectly to the performance of tasks following this call for tender, as they might come into contact with confidential information during the course of their work. Any breach of confidentiality will be treated as professional misconduct and could lead to the termination of the contract as set out in Article II.5 of the draft service contract. The institutions reserve the right to instigate any legal proceedings for breach of confidentiality necessary.

Specific requirements relating to personal data and the protection thereof are set out in the contract. The contractor is responsible for ensuring that all data to which he/she or his/her staff become party during the execution of the contract are treated confidentially and in conformity with EC regulation No 45/2001.<sup>32</sup> The contractor is equally responsible for ensuring the application of this obligation in respect of any of his/her direct or indirect sub-contractors.

<sup>32</sup> Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2000 "on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data by the Community institutions and bodies and on the free movement of such data", OJ L 8 of 12.01.2001.



## 2. INFORMATION ON TENDERING

### 2.1. Legal basis

The present Call for tenders is based on the Regulation (EU) No 1287/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 establishing a Programme for the Competitiveness of the Enterprises and small and medium-sized enterprise (COSME) (2014-2020) and repealing Decision No 1639/2006/EC. More specifically, it is based on the Commission Implementing Decision concerning the adoption of the Work Programme for 2015 and the financing for the implementation of Programme for the Competitiveness of Enterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises (C(2014) 8044 final of 29.10.2014, revised by C(2015) 3767 )<sup>33</sup>.

### 2.2. Eligibility

This invitation to tender is open to tenderers from all the countries participating in the COSME programme<sup>34</sup>. Participation in tendering procedures is open on equal terms to all natural and legal persons in a third country which having a special agreement with the EU in the field of public procurement on the conditions laid down in that agreement.

### 2.3. Volume of the market

The estimated maximum amount for the execution of all the tasks referred to in this call for tenders is 1,000,000 EUR including all charges and expenses, the travel and subsistence expenses and the reimbursable expenses. This covers the total duration of the contract (27 months). No contract offer above this amount will be considered.

The financial proposal must include a budget planning with all relevant costs, i.e. costs related to the selection of Third country enterprises, communication costs, renting of premises, renting of technical equipment, hostesses, catering, etc. An overview on reimbursable costs is provided under 2.12.3 'Section 3 – Financial offer'.

### 2.4. Lots

Not applicable to the present invitation to tender.

### 2.5. Variants

Tenderers may not submit tenders for only part of the services required. Variants are not allowed.

### 2.6. Tenders from Consortia

A joint tender is a tender submitted by several legal entities, regardless of the link they may have between them. If awarded the contract, these legal entities will have an equal standing towards the contracting authority in executing the contract. The contract is signed by all legal entities, or by one of them which has been duly authorised by the others (a power of attorney is to be attached to the contract).

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<sup>33</sup> See COSME Work programme 2015 at [http://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/cosme/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/cosme/index_en.htm)

<sup>34</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/international/competitiveness-innovation/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/international/competitiveness-innovation/index_en.htm)

The group of legal entities submitting a joint tender is sometimes referred to as "consortium". In some countries, "consortium" is a legal form. In the present document, "consortium" is used for joint tenders.

The EASME will not request consortia to have a given legal form in order to be allowed to submit a tender, but reserves the right to require a consortium to adopt a given legal form before the contract is signed, if this change is necessary for the proper performance of the contract. This can take the form of an entity with or without legal personality but offering sufficient protection of the EASME's contractual interests (depending on the Member State concerned, this may be, for example, a consortium or a temporary association).

If a consortium is envisaged, its composition should be specified, and the documents necessary to demonstrate fulfilment of the exclusion and selection criteria (see below) must be provided for each individual member of the consortium. In addition, one of the consortium members must be designated as "lead contractor", who will have full authority to bind the consortium and each of its members, and will be responsible for the administrative management of the contract (invoicing, receiving payments, etc.) on behalf of all other entities. The contract will be signed with the designated "lead contractor". The tender must clearly indicate the lead contractor and the relationship and roles of all members of the partnership or consortium.

Any change in the composition of the consortium during the procurement procedure may lead to the rejection of the corresponding tender. Any change in the composition of the consortium after the signature of the contract may lead to the termination of the contract.

Partners in a joint offer assume joint and several liability towards the EASME for the performance of the contract as a whole, despite any statements in the offer assigning responsibility to specific members of the consortium. Should such statements appear in the tender, the EASME reserves the right to reject it without further evaluation, on the grounds that it does not comply with the tender specifications.

## **2.7. Sub-contracting**

Subcontracting is the situation where a contract has been or is to be established between the contracting authority and a contractor only and where the contractor or tenderer, in order to carry out that contract, enters into legal commitments with other entities for performing parts of the contract. The contracting authority has no direct legal commitment with the subcontractor(s). In practice, any third party involved in the contract implementation which has no legal link with the contracting authority but with the contractor will be considered as subcontractor (e.g. any other company which does not participate in the contract execution but provides financial capacity).

Subcontracting is allowed but the contractor shall retain full liability towards the contracting authority for implementation of the contract.

An economic operator may, where appropriate and for a particular contract, rely on the capacities of other entities, regardless of the legal nature of the links which it has with them. It must in that case prove to the contracting authority that it will have at its disposal the resources necessary for

performance of the contract, for example by producing an undertaking on the part of those entities to place those resources at its disposal.

The tenderers must indicate clearly in their methodology, which parts of the work will be sub-contracted, and the identity of all subcontractors undertaking more than 20% of the work by value.

Service providers must ensure that Article II.7 of the draft service contract can be applied to subcontractors. Once the contract has been signed, Article II.18 of the aforementioned contract will apply to subcontractors.

During contract execution, the change of any subcontractor identified in the tender will be subject to EASME's written approval.

## 2.8. Costs

Tenderers themselves will bear the costs of drawing up their tenders and EASME will not be liable to pay any compensation if a tender is rejected or if no tender is selected.

## 2.9. Contractual conditions

The tenderer shall bear in mind the provisions of the draft service contract specifying the rights and obligations of the contractor, notably those on payments, performance of the contract, confidentiality and checks and audits.

## 2.10. Form and Contents of the tenders

- All tenders, including the forms annexed to this document, must be signed by an authorised person or by the tenderer's legal representative.
- Tenders must be clear and concise, with continuous page numbering, and assembled in a coherent fashion (e.g. bound or stapled, etc.). Since tenderers will be judged on the contents of their written bids, these must make clear that they are able to meet the requirements set out in the specifications.
- Tenders may be drafted in any official language of the European Union<sup>35</sup>. Should a language other than English be used, EASME requests the inclusion of a summary in English to facilitate and speed up the selection process.
- Tenders must be delivered according to the requirements set out in the letter of invitation to tender and the present specifications before the date and time indicated in that letter.

Tenders must include the following information:

- All the **information and documents requested by EASME, duly filled in and signed**, in order to assess the different criteria. A checklist of the documents to submit is provided in Annex 8;
- for the appraisal, the written submission shall include a clear and detailed description of the organisation, resources and methodology proposed. The tenderers will provide a practical

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<sup>35</sup> Bulgarian, Croatian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Estonian, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Irish, Italian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Maltese, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Slovak, Slovene, Spanish, Swedish.

and detailed description of the resources and services proposed to achieve the objectives and results set out in points 1.3 and 1.5 above;

- the **price in Euro**.

## **2.11. Submission of tenders**

**Tenders must be submitted in triplicate (one clearly marked "Original" and two copies) in paper form. In order to facilitate the work of copying the tenders where necessary, it is requested that one of the copies (identical to the original) is presented in a non-bound format allowing it to be duplicated more easily. A copy of the tender documents must also be submitted in electronic format (PDF or compatible) on a CD USB stick.**

Tenderers shall observe precisely the indications in points 3 and 4 of the invitation to tender in order to ensure that their tenders are admissible.

Evidence of timely submission by post or courier service will be constituted by the date of dispatch, the postmark or the date of the deposit slip. In the case of hand delivery, the signed and dated receipt will serve as evidence.

Late submission will lead to the non-admissibility of the tender and its outright rejection. Tenders sent by e-mail or by fax will also be non-admissible.

## **2.12. Structure of tenders**

Tenders must contain the following sections:

- Section 1: Administrative proposal and presentation of the tenderer;
- Section 2: Technical proposal, addressing technical specifications and selection and award criteria;
- Section 3: Financial offer.

### **2.12.1. Section 1 – Administrative proposal**

This section must provide the following information, set out in the standard forms attached to these tender specifications:

- **Tenderer's identification**

The tender must include a letter of submission of tender (see Annex 2) presenting the name of the tenderer (including all entities in case of joint offer) and identified subcontractors if applicable, and the name of the single contact person in relation to this tender.

All tenderers must provide proof of registration, as prescribed in their country of establishment, in one of the professional or trade registers, or provide a declaration or certificate.

If the tenderer is a natural person, he or she must provide a copy of the identity card or passport and proof that he or she is covered by the social security scheme as self-employed person.

In case of a joint tender, the letter of submission of tender must be signed by a duly authorised representative for each tenderer, or by a single tenderer duly authorised by other tenderers with power of attorney (model provided under Annex 6).

If applicable, the letter of submission of tender must indicate the proportion of the contract to be subcontracted.

Subcontractors whose share of the contract is above 20% must provide a letter of intent (model provided under Annex 7) stating their willingness to provide the service foreseen in the offer and in line with the present tender specifications.

In case of a joint tender, the letter of submission of tender must be signed by a duly authorised representative for each tenderer or by a single tenderer duly authorised by other tenderers with power of attorney (model provided under Annex 6).

- **Legal entities**

In order to prove their legal capacity and their status, each tenderer (including subcontractors whose share of the contract is above 20%, or any members of the consortium or grouping) must provide a signed Legal Entity Form with its supporting evidence. The form is available on the URL address specified in the letter of submission form (Annex 2). This form will be accompanied by a number of supporting documents available on the web site:

[http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts\\_grants/info\\_contracts/legal\\_entities/legal\\_entities\\_en.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts_grants/info_contracts/legal_entities/legal_entities_en.cfm)

In case of joint tender, the supporting evidence requested will only be submitted by the consortium member designated as lead contractor.

Tenderers and subcontractors that are already registered in the contracting authority's accounting system (i.e. they have already been direct contractors) must provide the form but are not obliged to provide the supporting evidence.

- **Financial identification**

The tenderer (or the appointed representative in case of joint tender) must provide a Financial Identification Form and supporting documents. Only one form per offer should be submitted (no form is needed for subcontractors and other joint tenderers). The form is available on the URL address specified in the letter of submission form (Annex 2)

Tenderers must provide the following information if not included in the Legal Entity Form:

1. For legal persons, a legible copy of the notice of appointment of the persons authorised to represent the tenderer in dealings with third parties and in legal proceedings, or a copy of the publication of such appointment if the legislation which applies to the legal entity concerned requires such publication. Any delegation of this authorisation to another representative not indicated in the official appointment must be evidenced.
2. For natural persons, where applicable, a proof of registration on a professional or trade register or any other official document showing the registration number.

### 2.12.2. Section 2 – Technical proposal

The technical proposal must cover all aspects and tasks required in the technical specifications and provide all the information needed to apply the award criteria. Offers deviating from the requirements or not covering all requirements may be excluded on the basis of non-conformity with the tender specifications and will not be evaluated.

### 2.12.3. Section 3 - Financial offer

Tenderers must complete Annex 5 with the data of their financial offer.

The price for the tender must be quoted in euro even for tenderers from countries outside the euro zone. The price quoted may not be revised in line with exchange rate movements. It is for the tenderer to assume the risks or the benefits deriving from any variation.

Prices must be quoted free of all duties, taxes and other charges, including VAT, as the European Union is exempt from such charges under Articles 3 and 4 of the Protocol on the privileges and immunities of the European Union of 8 April 1965 (OJ L 152 of 13 July 1967). The amount of VAT may be shown separately. Exemption is therefore granted to the EASME by the governments of the Member States, either through refunds upon presentation of documentary evidence or by direct exemption.

For countries where national legislation provides an exemption by means of a reimbursement, the amount of VAT is to be shown separately. In case of doubt about the applicable VAT system, it is the tenderer's responsibility to contact his/her national authorities to clarify the way in which the European Union is exempt from VAT.

The quoted price must be a fixed amount. That price should include all charges (fees, meetings, administrative expenses, overheads, travel and subsistence expenses for the contractor(s) and selected SMEs). No additional refund request in respect of the above mentioned charges will be accepted.

#### Reimbursables

##### *Within the EU*

- On-site training for SMEs. Reimbursables for contractor(s)' experts

*The contractor's experts travel and subsistence expenses to provide the individual, tailored training to SMEs participating in the programme will be reimbursed up to a maximum of 1.200€ per trip per training (covering the total number of days needed to carry out the training). Costs include travel, hotel, meals and local transport costs for one expert.*

*N.B.: Local contractor(s) representatives close to the SMEs should be used where possible.*

*N.B.: Should more than one SME trainee be based in the same city, travel costs will be reimbursed only for one trip.*

- Collective training for SMEs in one or more European cities reimbursables for contractor(s)' experts.

*The contractor(s) experts' travel and subsistence expenses to provide the collective trainings to SMEs participating in the programme, will be reimbursed up to a maximum of 1.200€ per trip per training, for a maximum of 5, corresponding to 5 possible European cities involved (reimbursable costs cover the total number of days needed to carry out the training). Costs include travel, hotel, meals and local transport costs.*

Collective training for SMEs in one or more European cities reimbursables for selected SMEs.

*For the participation of selected SMEs to the collective trainings organised in Europe as specified above, travel (by airplane, train or car) and hotel costs (including breakfast) will be reimbursed up to a maximum of 900€ per trip per training per SME. Each SME can be represented by one person.*

- *Matchmaking (Brokerage) events organised in Third countries. Reimbursable costs for experts.*

*For the Matchmaking events organised in the 5 targeted Third countries the contractor(s)' experts that will accompany SMEs to the Brokerage events will be reimbursed for up to 2.500€ per person with a maximum of two experts per trip.*

- *Matchmaking (Brokerage) events organised in Third countries. Reimbursable costs for selected SMEs*

*A maximum of 750€ per selected SMEs will be paid under the budget of the project to reimburse 50% of the travel costs that will be incurred for the enterprises in question to take part to the Matchmaking events organised in the selected 5 Third countries. All other costs (Hotel, subsistence, local transportation, etc...) will be borne by the selected SMEs.*

*The overall total maximum amount of reimbursable costs for all training activities, trips missions organised under this contract cannot in any case exceed a total of 350.000€.*

Flight tickets: *These are economy class tickets (and include airport tax and, where appropriate, any charges for making the tickets available for collection at the airport of departure). Flight tickets are to be arranged from the nearest available airport of the place of work/residence of the invitee and/or the capital city of the respective country to the airport of the city where the event takes place. Bookings for any but the usual routes, and tickets for any class other than economy, must be authorised in writing beforehand by the EASME. In order to tolerate ticket price fluctuations, a special contingency margin of 10% of the total flight costs will be foreseen in the price estimates. The contractor should to the extent possible, provide electronic tickets.*

Rail tickets: *Where more appropriate (generally for journeys not exceeding a one way distance of 400 km and not including a sea crossing which can only be made by boat), travel should be arranged by rail rather than air (first class for international journeys, second class for domestic journeys).*

Car: *A participant, who wishes to travel to an event by car, will be reimbursed up to the maximum cost of a rail ticket for the equivalent journey (first class for international journeys). The participant will be reimbursed a fixed rate of 0.22€ per km when the first class rail fare cannot be*

*defined. If several participants travel by the same car, only one reimbursement will be authorised. Evidence of the journey by car must be received from the participants.*

*Please note that the above travel and subsistence expenses will be reimbursed by the EASME on the basis of eligible costs actually incurred and only if:*

*\* Justified by used transport tickets and other supporting documents;*

*\* Purchase is made in accordance with the instructions described above and those provided in the contract*

Different price options will not be accepted and will entail the refusal of the offer.

### **3. EVALUATION AND AWARD OF THE CONTRACT**

#### **3.1. Evaluation steps**

The evaluation is based on the information provided in the submitted tender. It takes place in three steps:

- Step 1: Verification of non-exclusion of tenderers on the basis of the exclusion criteria;
- Step 2: Selection of tenderers on the basis of selection criteria (economic and financial capacity of the tenderer and technical and professional capacity of the tenderer and the performing team);
- Step 3: Evaluation of tenders on the basis of the award criteria (technical and financial evaluation of the offer).

Only tenders meeting the requirements of the preceding step will pass on to the next step.

#### **3.2. Exclusion criteria (Articles 106, 107 of the Financial Regulation)**

Tenderers shall provide a declaration on their honour (see Annex 3), duly signed and dated by an authorised representative, stating that they are not in one of the situations of exclusion listed in this Annex 3. In the case of a joint tender, the declaration on the honour shall be provided by all of the members of the group.

The declaration on the honour is also required for identified subcontractors whose intended share of the contract is above 20%.

The successful tenderer shall provide the documents mentioned as supporting evidence in Annex 3 before signing the contract and within the deadline given by EASME. This requirement applies to all members of the consortium in case of joint tender and to subcontractors whose intended share of the contract is above 20%.

The contracting authority may waive the obligation for a tenderer to submit documentary evidence if such evidence has already been submitted for another procurement procedure and provided the documents were issued not more than one year earlier and are still valid. In such cases, the tenderer



must declare on his honour that the documentary evidence has already been provided in a previous procurement procedure, provide reference to that procedure, and confirm that there has been no change in situation.

Without prejudice to the application of penalties laid down in the contract, candidates or tenderers and contractors who have made false declarations or substantial errors, committed irregularities or fraud, or have been found in serious breach of their contractual obligations may be excluded from all contracts and grants financed by the EU budget for a maximum of five years from the date on which the infringement is established as confirmed following an adversarial procedure with the contractor. That period may be extended to ten years in the event of a repeated offence within five years of the date referred to in the first subparagraph.

Candidates or tenderers who have made false declarations, submitted substantial errors, irregularities or fraud, may also be subject to financial penalties representing 2% to 10% of the total estimated value of the contract being awarded. Contractors who have been found in serious breach of their contractual obligations may be subject to financial penalties representing 2% to 10% of the total value of the contract in question. The rate may be increased to 4% to 20% in the event of a repeated infringement within five years of the date on which the infringement is established as confirmed following and adversarial procedure with the contractor.

### **3.3. Selection criteria**

Tenderers must prove their economic, financial, technical and professional capacity to carry out the work subject to this call for tender.

The evidence requested should be provided by the contractor and/or each member of the group in case of joint tender and subcontractor whose intended share of the contract is above 20%. However, a consolidated assessment will be made to verify compliance with the minimum capacity levels.

#### **3.3.1. Economic and financial capacity criteria and evidence**

In order to prove their economic and financial capacity, the tenderer (i.e. in case of joint tender, the combined capacity of all members of the consortium and identified subcontractors) must provide evidence of an average annual turnover of at least one and a half times the maximum value of the contract as specified in Section 2.3. for the past three years. They should demonstrate their financial capacity with one or more of the following:

- ✓ The completed "simplified balance sheet" and "Simplified Profit & Loss Account" completed for the last three years (Annexes 2.1 and 2.2.);
- ✓ Copy of the profit & loss account and balance sheet for the last three years for which accounts have been closed;
- ✓ Failing that, appropriate statements from banks;
- ✓ If applicable, evidence of professional risk indemnity insurance.

If, for some exceptional reason which the Contracting Authority considers justified, a tenderer is unable to provide one or other of the above documents, he or she may prove his or her economic and financial capacity by any other document which the Contracting Authority considers appropriate. In any case, the Contracting Authority must at least be notified of the exceptional reason and its

justification in the tender. The EASME reserves the right to request any other document enabling it to verify the tenderer's economic and financial capacity.

### **3.3.2. Technical and professional capacity criteria and evidence**

The tenderers must have the necessary expertise, technical and professional capacity to carry out the tasks described in Section 1.4.

#### ➤ Criteria relating to tenderers:

The tenderers must prove that they fulfil the following criteria:

- A minimum of three (10) years of professional experience and specific knowledge in providing support services assisting European Small and Medium Enterprises in the area of internationalisation (experience developed within the Internal Market and Third country markets are both needed and mandatory. This includes support in the purely commercial field as well as in that of international innovation through the exploitation of Transnational Technology Transfer, knowledge, Research based opportunities and all other relevant means.
- A minimum of ten (10) years proven experience in managing and organising high-level Business to Business (Matchmaking Brokerage events) events in Europe and at international level outside Europe.
- A minimum of five (5) years of professional experience in the field of drafting reports, surveying techniques, collection of data, qualitative analyses, conducting data analysis, foresight analysis and drafting recommendations, with a proven successful track record of publications and studies performed, in particular in the areas relevant to this call for tenders);
- A minimum of five (5) years of professional experience in web tool/site design and development and management as well as good knowledge of IT tools;
- Very good command of the English language at native speaker level or equivalent and high quality written language skills in English, including proven experience in journalistic drafting, editing and (re)writing of texts in English to draft reports, write articles for the web, prepare newsletters and draft policy recommendation.
- Any tenderer with a professional conflict of interest will be rejected on the basis of the non-fulfilment of the selection criteria relating to professional capacity.

#### ➤ Criteria relating to the team delivering the service:

The team delivering the service should include, as a minimum, the following profiles:

- Project Leader Manager: education: at least up to Master Degree and or equivalent professional experience. Professional experience: at least ten (10) years in areas relevant to the tasks and purposes of the project.

- Senior Experts: Education: at least up to Master Degree and or equivalent professional experience. Professional experience: at least ten (10) years in areas relevant to the tasks purposes of the project.
- Junior experts: Education at least up to Master Degree or equivalent professional experience Professional experience: at least three (3) years in areas relevant to the tasks and purposes of the project.

N.B.: Should the tender be presented by a consortium at least one Senior expert should be appointed per each contractor involved.

Language quality check: all members of the team should have B2<sup>36</sup> level language skills in English, as attested by a certificate or proven by past relevant experience. Those members involved in the drafting of the deliverables/Reports/Guide book on Internationalisation must have a higher level of English language skills (C1/C2<sup>37</sup>).

#### ➤ Evidence

The following evidence will be provided to prove fulfilment of the above criteria:

- List of relevant services provided in the past ten years, with sums, dates and recipients, public or private. The most important services shall be accompanied by certificates of satisfactory execution, specifying that they have been carried out in a professional manner and have been fully completed;
- Detailed curriculum vitae covering relevant educational and professional qualifications of up to two A4 pages for each of the team members. The CVs must specify:
  - The different diplomas obtained (copies of which may be requested by EASME where appropriate);
  - Languages spoken;
  - Expertise and experience relevant to the subject matter of the present invitation to tender;
  - For the project leader, proof of experience in project management in areas/subjects relevant to the project gathered within the last five (5) years. In addition five 5 other years of experience in areas/subjects relevant to the project for a total of ten (10) years.
  - For the senior experts, proof of experience in areas/subjects relevant to the project within the last 10 years.
  - For the junior experts, proof of experience in areas/subjects relevant to the project within the last three (3) years.

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<sup>36</sup> Level envisaged by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment, abbreviated as CEFR. The CEFR describes language ability on a scale of levels from A1 for beginners up to C2 for those who have mastered a language. Information on the CEFR can be found on the Council of Europe website: [http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Cadre1\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Cadre1_en.asp) Self-assessment grids can be found at <http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/en/resources/european-language-levels-cefr>

<sup>37</sup> Levels envisaged by the CEFR, see previous footnote

- In addition to the table provided in Annex 5, a summary table indicating the members of the team and describing their roles and involvement in each project phase. It should also include the number of hours/days each team member will spend on each project phase.
- Any other document which is considered useful

### 3.4. Award criteria

The **quality** of the tender will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- **Overall quality of the proposal (maximum 10 points – minimum threshold 60%)**

This criterion serves to assess the overall clarity of formulation and presentation of the tender. The tenderer should be able to present a complete, consistent and detailed offer in a concise manner, demonstrating his/her understanding of the tasks to be performed as well as overall coherence of the planned work to be carried out in order to achieve the objectives and avoiding superfluous quotes from these tender specifications or reference to irrelevant information.

- **Project management: adequacy and reasonableness of the resources allocated (maximum 10 points – minimum threshold 60%)**

This criterion serves to assess the overall adequacy of the project management (in terms of detailed timetable/roadmap and organisation of the work to be done), the efforts and the human, financial and technical resources allocated for each of the 4 project phases based on the objectives of pilot project, the indicative methodology and description of tasks.

- **Quality, relevance and technical strength of the proposed approach for the identification, selection and training of SMEs.**

**(maximum 25 points - minimum threshold 60%)**

This criterion is meant to assess:

- 1) The adequacy of the proposed approach for the identification and selection of SMEs based on their potential and interest to Internationalise and the balance of their geographic distribution among COSME countries and number of SMEs in the Pilot Project..
  - 2) The adequacy of the proposed methodology to carry out training on SME Internationalisation to be provided in phase 2 (individual training at SME premises) and phase 3 (collective training provided before the organisation of the Brokerage Events in the 5 selected Third Country Markets.
- **Quality, relevance, innovativeness, technical strength of the methodology and actions proposed to carry out all envisaged Matchmaking activities in the pilot project.**

**(maximum 25 points - minimum threshold 60%)**

This criterion will assess if the quality, relevance innovativeness and technical strength of the methodology proposed by the contractor are suitable to lead to tangible results in terms of achievement of Business/Innovation deals in Phase 2 (distance Partnering activities implemented from selected SMEs' premises) and Phase 3 (Brokerage Events organised in the targeted 5 Third country markets).

- **Innovativeness, quality, relevance, completeness and coherence of the proposed approach to set up a methodology to turn the findings and outcomes of the pilot project into sustainable actions to be mainstreamed into relevant EU Policy actions and Enterprise Europe Network operations.**

**(maximum 30 points - minimum threshold 60%)**

The main purpose of the Pilot Project subject of this call for tenders is to identify obstacles keeping dynamic SMEs from internationalising their activities and to find ways to overcome these difficulties, support and encourage European enterprises to expand their businesses into Third country markets. Sustainability of the findings is the key purpose of the whole exercise. Therefore the methodology, envisaged content, user friendliness proposed to prepare the Guide book on SME internationalisation will be of central importance for the purposes of this call.

The maximum total quality score is 100 points (corresponding to 70% of the final score).

The above criteria will be assessed on the basis of the supporting documents and/or details provided in the tender, as listed in Annex 4, and any other documents that the tenderer considers useful for this purpose.

Tenders which do not obtain at least 60% of the maximum score for each of the award criteria and at least 70% of the overall score will not be admitted to the next stage of the evaluation procedure.

The EASME will award the contract to the economically most advantageous tender as stated below.

- The corresponding contract will be based on the draft contract annexed to the present invitation to tender, completed on the basis of the data provided in the selected tender.
- EASME reserves the right not to select a contractor if the price of the offers proposed exceeds the budget allocated to this project.

- **The total price (corresponding to 30% of the final score)**

The formula used to rank tenders and to calculate which tender offers the best value for money incorporates the quality mark and the price, expressed in the form of indices.

After evaluation of the quality of the tenders, the evaluation committee will proceed with the financial comparison of the tenders retained for further consideration according to the following formula:

Score for tender	=	Cheapest price	*	100	*	price	+	total quality score (out of	*	quality criteria
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X	Price for tender X	weighting (30%)	100) for all award criteria of tender X	weighting (70%)
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### 3.5. Information to tenderers on the final evaluation

The EASME will inform tenderers of decisions reached concerning the award of the contract, including the grounds for any decision not to award a contract or to recommence the procedure.

The EASME will inform all rejected tenderers of the reasons for their rejection and all tenderers submitting an admissible tender of the characteristics and relative advantages of the selected tender and the name of the successful tenderer.

However, certain information may be withheld where its release would impede law enforcement or otherwise be contrary to the public interest, or would prejudice the legitimate commercial interests of economic operators, public or private, or might prejudice fair competition between them.

## 4. ANNEXES

The following documents are annexed to these specifications and form an integral part of them:

Annex 1: Draft contract (for information)

Annex 2: Letter of submission of tender including Simplified Balance Sheet and Profit & Loss accounts (to be filled in and signed by the tenderer)

Annex 3: Declaration on honour (exclusion criteria)

Annex 4: Technical tender form

Annex 5: Financial offer (price and breakdown of costs)

Annex 6: Power of attorney

Annex 7: Letter of intent for sub-contractors

Annex 8: Checklist for Submission